A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS’ PLANNING AND EFFICACY FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand experienced English teachers’ planning for student engagement and their sources of confidence in doing their work. Essentially, the two-fold case studies outlined the planning, thinking, and teaching of these teachers for student engagement. Qualitative methods were employed to generate, analyze, and report data. Specifically, four extensive interviews were conducted with each participant separately resulting in a total of eight interviews. In addition, the researcher conducted participant observations over a five-month period. The study was useful as it disclosed implications for teacher education, implications for research, and for teachers and teaching.

Findings revealed two new major concepts as integral to these teachers’ planning for student engagement: (a) responsive planning, and (b) self-reflective planning. Responsive planning concerned the planning that a teacher used after learning about students’ interests and adapting lessons while teaching (interactively), and developing new, and more engaging lessons in the future (proactively and postactively). In essence, the teacher used an engaging activity, journal writing, to learn about matters of interest among her students and used that new knowledge to engage in responsive planning. In addition, a teacher self reflected on her personal beliefs, philosophies, and theories of
action as she developed plans for student engagement. She used her own experiences and her commitment to racial and cultural enlightenment as a foundation for developing engaging lessons. In this sense, her teaching was exceptional as she was able to obtain the students' interests because of the amount of effort she put into her work. Among others herein, these concepts have implications for research and theory.

While both teachers engaged in long range planning—developing lessons from month to month during the summer, the research revealed that the most extensive, and effective planning for student engagement occurred during their shorter-range planning, wherein they planned from day to day or week to week. This was the case because the teachers were interested in deeply understanding the practical nature of the environment. Accordingly, the teachers learned from their students and became more astute to their interest everyday, and thus their planning was informed resulting in the planning that occurred short range.

This study outlined practical strategies these teachers used in planning for student engagement. Preservice teachers, novices, and experts alike stand to gain from the strategies that these teachers utilized through this process. Some of these strategies included: (a) watching the television programs the students watched, (b) listening to radio stations that the students listened to, inviting students over to the teacher’s house, and attending after school, extracurricular activities.

Finally, both teachers reported that the role of social acceptance and isolation among their colleagues became major sources of their confidence. These teachers persevered in spite of negative experiences, and their sources of confidence are discussed.
Future studies were recommended because replicate studies may better inform theory, research, and practice about these issues.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my (s)heroes:

Eunice Milner
Corine Williams
Delia Hall
Ludora Reeves
Annie Mae Stanley
Annie Domineck
Annie Lou Sutton
Lottie Jordan
Annie Harris
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But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 40:31

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This purpose of this study was to understand experienced English teachers’ planning for student engagement and their sources of confidence in doing this work. Essentially, the twofold case studies investigated and outlined the planning, thinking, and teaching of these teachers for student engagement. Specific research questions guiding this twofold inquiry were: (a) what is the nature of two teachers’ planning, thinking, and teaching for student engagement? And (b) what is the nature of these teachers’ confidence in doing this work? This chapter provides an overview of the entire dissertation specifying and clarifying issues salient to the understanding of this study. This chapter begins with a discussion of the impetus for this research.

The Impetus for this Research

A relatively new line of research has flourished focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy (Au & Jordan, 1981; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Mitchell 1998; Mohatt & Erickson, 1981 Montecinos, 1994). Theory related to culturally relevant pedagogy encourages teachers to believe that all their students can succeed and that failure is not inevitable for any group of students. Culturally relevant pedagogy, like engaged pedagogy (see, hooks, 1994), promotes emancipatory instruction—teaching that fosters a quest for freedom through student-teacher reciprocal reflections on the world, and their
circumstances. Moreover, as Ladson-Billings (1992) maintains, culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach that:

Serves to empower students to the point where they will be able to examine critically educational content and process and ask what its role is in creating a truly democratic and multicultural society. It uses the students’ culture to help them create meaning and understand the world. Thus, not only academic success, but also social and cultural success is emphasized (p. 110).

So, when lessons become “culturally relevant” to students in a realistic, holistic fashion, students are able to link their educational and out-of-school experiences. In addition, teachers allow students’ home environmental realities to serve as a foundation in culturally relevant pedagogy—a foundation that Ladson-Billings (1994) attributed to students’ cultural capital, or the expertise and experience that students bring into the classroom.

With the popularity of research on culturally relevant pedagogy prospering, I became increasingly interested in this concept but was concerned about the planning of such lessons. Certainly good lessons begin with good plans, so I was interested in teachers’ planning. While the empirical studies inquiring about culturally relevant pedagogy have provided insightful outlines of characteristics teachers should possess and use to implement it for their students, few studies have placed attention on the planning phase of providing these types of lessons. To verify this point, Osborne (1996) outlined perhaps one of the most concise summaries of characteristics of effective culturally relevant teaching. He listed nine principles about culturally relevant teaching from
ethnographic studies he conducted in North American and Australian cross-cultural and interethnic classrooms. From that work, Osborne (1996) asserted that:

- Culturally relevant teachers do not need to come from the same ethnic minority group as their students.
- Social historic-political factors outside the school constrain much of what happens in the classroom and must be understood by the teacher.
- Content and subject matter should be culturally relevant to students’ prior experiences, foster their identity, and empower them with knowledge and practices to succeed in society.
- Culturally relevant pedagogy should involve parents and families of students from marginal and mainstream groups.
- It is desirable to incorporate students’ first language into school programs and classroom interactions.
- Teachers should be warm to, respect, and academically challenge all students.
- Teachers should spell out the cultural beliefs on which the school operates.
- Teachers should become cognizant of culturally relevant classroom management strategies.
- Teachers should understand that racism is prevalent in schools and needs to be addressed.

While these nine principles are insightful, they do not address how such lessons are formulated—planning. Other studies focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy resemble Osborne’s work. They provide astute characteristics of culturally relevant teaching. What they do not provide are guidelines for planning lessons that are culturally relevant.
So, one impetus for this research concerned the developmental planning of teaching in culturally relevant ways.

A second momentum for this research concerns the notion of “culture” in culturally relevant pedagogy. From my analysis of a pilot study, and from my reflections of my own teaching of high school English, the notion of culture has been a nebulous concept that the literature has not been able to simplify for me, not even the anthropological literature. In other words, no specific definition is universally accepted nor that adequately captures the meaning of the word. Instead, its meaning(s) are negotiated among individuals to best suit their experiences and their epistemological rationales. Culture is not a static concept—“a category for conveniently sorting people according to expected values, beliefs, and behaviors” (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 3). Rather, culture is dynamic and encompasses various other concepts that relate to its central meaning. The supplemental categories that make up culture include but are not limited to identity (race and ethnicity), class, economic status, and gender. Drawing on this dynamic concept and the work of a number of researchers and theorists, (e.g. Dillard, 1998; Demerath, 1999; Ford, Tyson, Howard & Harris, 2000), I conceptualize culture to mean:

Implicit and explicit characteristics of a person that are developed through background and current experiences, knowledge disposition, skills, and ways of understanding that are informed by race (the color of one’s skin), ethnicity (history, heritage, customs, rituals, values, symbols), identity (how one perceives himself/herself), class (economic/resource situation), and gender.
These ways of knowing or seeing are often passed along through generations but are not necessarily determined as such by everyone. Through a pilot study, I discovered that some teachers refer to their group of students as a “culture” of individuals who share similar experiences. These teachers did not equate culture with race, gender, or ethnicity per se. Rather, their references to the culture of their students related to the commonalities that the students shared based primarily on the time in which they live in the world and their opportunities or the lack thereof in the world. Simply put, this research was also inspired by the notion of culture and how its meanings and perceptions are negotiated among teachers, particularly experienced teachers or those teachers teaching ten years or longer. Experienced teachers in the pilot study highlighted their disconnections with this new culture of students who where much different today than were they in the past.

This motivation is not to suggest that the work of Ladson-Billings and others has not been beneficial to students, particularly those who have been marginalized, and teachers. However, it is to suggest that teachers in my pilot study visualized a culture of students (not necessarily considering race, and ethnicity) who were much different than the teachers were as students, and thus, a culture of individuals in need of engaging lessons.

In addition, teachers in the pilot study also were concerned about preparing and implementing lessons that were “culturally relevant” as they often were concerned about their connections with this new wave of students in the twenty-first century. Simply put, the teachers in the pilot were referring to culture as time-bound—these new students in this “new” culture. So, to clarify and summarize this point, this research is driven by
how teachers develop lessons for student engagement that adheres to the “culture” of their schools. What does culturally relevant teaching mean for students who are privileged and of the majority? More specifically, this study was interested in what some of the strategies were for planning culturally relevant lessons for students who fall outside of the culture that is described in the literature that has previously addressed culturally relevant pedagogy—students who are European American and are economically advantaged. Is culturally relevant pedagogy a type of teaching that is appropriate for predominately White students? Are not students from more affluent environments a part of a culture that needs attention when teachers plan, and teach lessons? And, if so, what is the nature of such planning for students’ engagement?

The second portion of this research, focusing on teachers’ efficacy, is driven by my analysis of a pilot study. In that work, I discovered that some teachers were apprehensive about their ability to do this work—plan, and teach for student engagement. Some of them had reservations about the significant changes that students have endured over the past two decades. A more comprehensive discussion on “student changes” will follow in the section focusing on the significance of this research. In addition, the second portion of this study was inspired by my interest in the gaps in the literature connecting these important issues.

In sum, two issues motivated the second part of this research. First, through a pilot study, I was prompted by the participating teachers to inquire about teacher efficacy as those teachers highlighted uneasiness about creating lessons of student engagement in light of the increasingly changing group of students. Second, in view of the lack of
attention on these issues, particularly in a relational manner, I was inspired to conduct this research.

Significance of this Study

This research is important as the teacher thinking, planning, and confidence literature stands to gain tremendously from reports of these teachers’ work as supplemental and preliminary to other curriculum and psychological theories. In light of the decline of studies focusing on teacher planning, I contend that this research is advantageous for those concerned about the negotiations of practitioners in pursuit of developing engaging lessons. Certainly, teachers wrestle with a number of matters in planning curriculum. More importantly, the connections among these issues have not been investigated and linked.

A preponderance of the rationales, purposes, and significances of this research also dealt with the direct implications for theory, practice, and research. This research also was important for student engagement in schools across the United States. Not only does this research provide insight into theory related to these issues, but it might also be helpful to practitioners as there are strategies outlined in chapter six. In addition, because students have changed tremendously over the past decade, this research speaks to how two teachers have dealt with the changes. Some of these changes concerning diversity among students represent social, economic, ethnic/cultural, and linguistic variations.

In addition, this research is significant to other students who are not engaged in lessons because of an “out of touch” connection between them and their teachers. Simply stated, this research is significant to students and the teachers who teach them. With such
goals in mind, this research has the potential to be significant to teachers, students, and to teacher education in general.

The next section of this chapter addresses an important part of this research; that is, recognizing the obvious relationships between this research and the curriculum, the next section of this dissertation elaborates on these connections.

This Research and the Curriculum

Research has classified teachers’ work as uncertain and complex (Clark & Peterson, 1986; McCutcheon, 1995). Moreover, the work of teachers has been associated with other professions like medicine and law—that is, much of the work of professionals is not accomplished through technical rationale (see Reid, 1997 for more on this). Rather, it is through intellect and experience, achieved through reflection, that effective work is achieved. Because their work is unpredictable and cannot always be dealt with by prescribed formulas, teachers make important decisions through their reflective lenses (Schon, 1983). Through their reflective lenses, important decisions, planning in this study, are made that bear considerably on the curriculum. If curriculum is understood from a broad perspective, one that is defined as “what students have the opportunity to learn” (McCutcheon, 1995) under the direction of schools, curriculum guides, school districts and the like, then teachers have a huge responsibility in this decision making process.

To clarify this extensive perspective of curriculum, Eisner (1994) categorizes it in three interesting ways. First, the explicit curriculum concerns student-learning opportunities that are overtly taught and stated in documents, policies, and guidelines, such as the graded course of study. The implicit curriculum, a second type of curriculum,
is intended or unintended but is not stated or written down. This curriculum is taught primarily through the nature of schools, and communities. A third type of curriculum, the null curriculum, deals with what students do not have the opportunity to learn, which also contributes to student learning opportunities. Thus, information that is not available for student learning is also a part of the curriculum.

Because teachers engage in various forms of knowledge negotiation in planning lessons for student engagement, they are logically addressing curricular issues. As educators, they rely on different knowledge to plan the curriculum that may relate to these types of curricular that Eisner outlined. Surely, it is through their underlying beliefs and meanings that teachers develop lessons to satisfy student engagement. So, even the null curriculum is related to teachers’ work in planning, as it is from their beliefs, and philosophies that information is not available for student learning. In addition, another strand of this research concerning teachers’ confidence relates to these types of curricular (implicit, explicit, and null). Specifically, teachers teach what they feel confident in teaching. This confidence may reflect their beliefs, and philosophies about the quality and the importance of knowledge while other areas of confidence may deal with their personal aptitude in content. In both instances, teachers’ confidence informs student-learning opportunities.

Given the multifaceted breadth of this research, several concepts are in need of elaboration. These concepts include teachers’ forms of knowledge and thinking, teachers’ planning, teachers’ sources of confidence, and student engagement. The next section briefly discusses these concepts.
Teachers’ Forms of Knowledge

Teachers rely on a bank of knowledge that is generated from their experiences, the contextual nature of their teaching, and their subject matter. This knowledge of teachers has been categorized as practical knowledge, classroom knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. While teachers may not discuss their expertise in these knowledge terms, through various studies, experts have come to understand the complex span of teachers’ knowledge through these categories. In addition, teachers are often unaware of some of their tacit knowledge, but that knowledge still exists.

To illuminate, the personal practical knowledge of teachers deals with past experiences, and it highlights the contextual nature of teachers’ work. The contextual nature of teachers’ work may include the students that they teach, the school, and the community in which they teach, the economic and intellectual statuses of the students and the community, as well as administrative support or the lack thereof. Moreover, the practical knowledge of teachers is shaped by situations (Clandinin, 1992) and is sharpened and crystallized through processes of “reflection in action” (Schon, 1983). Therefore, one form of knowledge teachers rely on in planning is their personal practical knowledge.

A second form of knowledge that teachers possess is classroom knowledge. This form of knowledge refers to the knowledge teachers have about the classroom and everything inherent in it. Much like teachers’ practical knowledge, classroom knowledge concerns the body of knowledge that guides functioning(s) of the classroom. For example, teachers’ classroom knowledge ranges from how to motivate and discipline students, to the appropriate means for taking roll, and organizing lunch reports. In
addition, teachers’ classroom knowledge may include their knowledge about procedures in referring students for special needs, and involving teachers’ assistants/paraprofessionals in the teaching and learning process. Certainly, teachers’ classroom knowledge is broad, and it highlights the enormous complexities of teachers’ work. Simply put, teachers’ classroom knowledge has to do with the functioning systems of their classroom, and it includes a range of expertise that aid teachers in planning. There takes a large amount of knowledge for teachers to handle the many demands placed on them to effectively run the classroom, and their classroom knowledge assists them in handling those demands.

Teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge represents their reliance on both subject matter expertise and their knowledge about teaching or conveying that content (Shulman, 1987). From this perspective, teachers rely on knowledge that is dependent on both their subject matter proficiency and their teaching ability. So, this form of knowledge requires teachers to engage in a form of negotiation and reliance that connects both content and pedagogy. Plausibly, more experienced teachers are better competent in utilizing both of these forms of knowledge together in their work than are novices. As Shulman (1987) asserts, it is through both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge that the most meaningful lessons are developed for student learning.

From these forms of knowledge, and from the overt curriculum, the implicit curriculum, and the null curriculum, teachers engage in negotiation and decision-making that ultimately result in what students have the opportunity to learn. More specifically, teachers develop plans for student learning from their various forms of knowledge. Through planning, teachers reflect and depend on their knowledge to develop lessons that
suit their students' needs for engagement. When considering the planning and decision making of teachers, Eisner (1994) writes:

Teachers inevitably have a range of options that they can exercise in the selection, emphasis, and timing of curricular events. Even when they are expected to follow certain guides or books in which activities and content have already been determined, there are still options to be considered and choices to be made by teachers with respect to how those materials will be used and the ways in which what is done in one particular area of study will or will not be related to what is done in other areas of curriculum. These decisions are, of course, decisions bearing on the curriculum; they influence the kind of opportunities for learning and experience that children will have (p. 126).

What Eisner explains here relates to McCutcheon’s (1995) position, relative to teachers' decision making. She maintains that teachers transform curriculum policies and materials to such a degree that it is more appropriate to consider them as curriculum developers themselves than mere curriculum implementers.

Plainly, the range of inquiry and literature related to teacher decisions is extensive. Within this array, part of this research focused on the planning dimension of decision-making. The following section is brief, acknowledging that chapter two provides comprehensive reviews of these areas.

Teacher Planning

Phillip Jackson (1968) served as a forerunner in the research on teacher planning. He identified qualitatively cognitive differences in the planning of teachers before (preactive), during (interactive), and after (postactive or reflective) classroom interaction.
Pre active planning concerns teachers’ planning before they actually teach. This planning may be mentally constructed, but the basic idea behind pre active planning focuses on the organizing and preparation that teachers conduct in foresight of their actual teaching. Research has shown that teachers write down only sketchy pre active plans when compared to their more expansive mental ones. Interactive planning concerns the planning that teachers engage in while actually teaching. In other words, teachers are actually planning (largely mentally) while they are carrying out lessons that are often developed during the pre active phase of planning. In addition, teachers engage in planning after teaching. This planning is reflective and also could be mentally developed. Certainly, each of these phases of planning relates and connects to each other.

In sum, teachers plan before teaching (pre active), during teaching (interactive), and after teaching (post active or reflective). Much of this planning is mentally constructed and occurs at various times of the day. These various phases of planning connect and depend on each other. Because the foci of this research have not been linked, this dissertation begins making connections among them. The discussion shifts now to an introduction to these connections.

Connecting Teacher Planning to Forms of Knowledge

The knowledge of teachers and their planning are linked. Teachers make planning decisions from the knowledge they have obtained from various forms of knowledge, theorize about their decisions from their actions, and use that knowledge to engage their students. Calderhead (1996) classified six main features of teacher planning--the various levels of planning, the informal nature of planning, the creative
dimension of planning, the practicality and the contextual or situational dimensions of planning, the importance of flexibility in planning, and the knowledge base of planning—it is important to note that these features are not separate nor are they necessarily linear. Similarly, teachers' knowledge is also non-linear and separate. Instead, each contributes to the entire scheme of teachers' work, and they rely on each other.

In addition, not only do the various features rely on each other in teachers' work, but it is from teachers' knowledge that planning occurs. This is the case for novices and experienced teachers alike. Experienced teachers often rely on knowledge that has developed from years of teaching. Novices rely gravely on their knowledge constructed from student teaching, theory, content courses, methods courses, and other practicum internships from college, as well as from their background experiential histories of days when they were students themselves. Indeed, regardless of the level of experience for the teacher, there are significant connections between teachers' planning and the manners in which they negotiate, understand, and utilize their knowledge.

In sum, teachers rely on their practical knowledge, classroom knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge in planning what students can learn. This knowledge is used in all phases of planning. Again, these phases of planning include the planning of teachers before teaching (preactive), during instruction (interactive), and after teaching (postactive or reflective).

Teachers' Sources of Confidence

Another facet of this research in need of elaboration concerns teachers' confidence. The term confidence in this research refers to teachers' efficacy. Both concepts, efficacy and confidence, will be used interchangeably throughout this
document. Bandura (1996) defined efficacy as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required and designated types of performances” (p. 391). This appraisal is cognitive, not affective like the self-evaluations inherent in self-esteem, self-worth, and the like. Similarly, teacher efficacy, a form of efficacy that is specific to teaching, concerns teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to do their work. Moreover, teacher efficacy has been defined as “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to effect performance” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977), even with the most difficult students (Armor, Conroy-Oseguera, Cox, King, McDonnell, Pascal, Pauly, Zellman, 1976). In fact, teacher efficacy is one of the few personal characteristics of teachers that are correlated with student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Self-efficacy theory predicts that, “teachers with a high sense of efficacy work harder and persist longer even when students are difficult to teach, in part because these teachers believe in themselves and in their students” (Woolfolk, 1998; p. 393). Put simply, teachers’ confidence concerns their thinking about their ability to perform a specific task.

Specifically, this research addressed the nature of teachers’ sources of efficacy in doing their work. These four sources of efficacy, as identified by Bandura (1986), are: (a) mastery, (b) physiological, (c) social persuasion, and (d) vicarious. Clearly, these sources are experiences that influence levels of efficacy. To clarify, mastery experiences concern the confidence or efficacy of individuals that are developed from actual performances of specific tasks. Mastery has been identified as the most significant contributor to teachers’ efficacy as it is through teachers’ actual experiences that their levels of confidence are most informed.
A second source of efficacy, physiological experiences, deals with the confidence of teachers that are derived from bodily, semantic experiences. Pajares (1996) identified several states of emotion that relate to teachers' confidence: anxiety, stress, arousal, and fatigue. This source focuses on teachers' levels of efficacy when dealing with tasks and the emotional states resulting from them.

Verbal persuasion, the third source identified by Bandura, relates to teachers' confidence through discourse from others such as friends, students, and/or colleagues. Of course, this source of efficacy depends heavily on the verbal persuader. Specifically, verbal persuasion experiences depend on the trustworthiness, expertise, and credibility of the persuader (Bandura, 1986).

A final source of efficacy, vicarious experiences, concerns those experiences and tasks that are modeled by someone else and the reality of those influences on teachers' confidence. In other words, vicarious experiences concern the extent to which a person's confidence is informed by watching other people perform a similar, specific task, or even reading about it in articles and textbooks. From this source, teachers' confidence is informed. Using these four sources of efficacy as a premise, the second strand of this research addressed the ways these sources influenced these two teachers' confidence in planning for student engagement. The final portion of this study in need of elaboration is student engagement. The next section discusses student engagement.

Student Engagement

The final dimension of this study in need of clarification here is the notion of engagement for students. Teachers were allowed to define this notion in the study. In other words, I was concerned about what constituted student engagement, as the
participants perceived it in this inquiry. This section of the chapter briefly addresses the ways student engagement has been conceived in the literature.

Student engagement has been investigated in a number of ways. Accordingly, researchers interested in student engagement from a psychological and quantitative perspective, focused primarily on “engaged time” and “time on task” in determining the persistence of student engagement and the role of teachers on such time. These studies focused on pupil’s attention span over the course of academic days and provided the literature with interesting insights. Interestingly, these studies revealed that “engaged time is simply a theoretical construct for which we have a few good indicators, especially negative ones (the “off-task” indicators)” about the amount of time students actually spend engaged in lessons (Scriven, 1985). Another point is important to make clear here; that is, student engagement is difficult to measure despite the various instruments people have developed to do so. This point attributed to my desire to have teachers’ refine this term in this research.

Another perspective on student engagement deriving from bell hooks’ (1994) idea of engaged pedagogy, it offers insight into issues of student engagement considering cultural variations among students. Through this perspective, student engagement is conceived as a reciprocal responsibility of both students and teachers, particularly when the students are from underrepresented groups of people such as African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. In this sense, students are not only taught, but teachers are also educated about the nature of students’ interests in pursuit of engagement. hooks’ perspective is related to Ladson-Billings’ work on culturally relevant pedagogy, and her
view is quite different from the research centering on "time," a measurable variable, at the forefront of more mainstreamed studies.

So, student engagement has been investigated through a variety of different lenses. From such research, educators are better informed about the intricacies of student engagement. However, in light of such varying views and conceptions of student engagement, I am confident that the participating teachers are best equipped to define it because of their years of expertise in the teaching profession and the idiosyncrasies inherent in their particular settings and situations.

The next section discusses connections among teacher efficacy, planning and student engagement.

Connecting Teacher Efficacy, Planning and Student Engagement

Just as teachers’ plans are informed by their knowledge, their planning is interconnected with their confidence. Foundationally, teachers’ efficacy has been investigated and linked to specific tasks. From these studies, research revealed significant relationships between teachers’ confidence and their performance—the nature of risks they will take for instance. With these issues in mind, teacher planning is not only informed by their knowledge, their planning is also associated with their confidence in their ability to perform that specific task. In addition, it only makes sense, for example, that teachers who feel highly confident will be willing to take greater risks than teachers with a lower sense of self-confidence (and maybe this accounts for lots of the differences between novices and experienced teachers.)
These connections between teacher efficacy and teacher planning for student engagement are important to consider. The sources of efficacy (mastery, physiological, verbal persuasion, and vicarious) may contribute to teachers’ efficacy in planning for student engagement. Certainly, it is at the mastery stage that the most significant indicator of teachers’ confidence in planning for student engagement likely occurs. In other words, teachers’ planning during teaching (interactive planning) is likely the best source for determining teachers’ confidence. So, if teachers were confident that their students are engaged during their actual lesson (or during their interactive planning), their efficacy would likely be high or strong. Of course, this confidence may continue or transfer only when the teacher plans for the same or similar lessons, with the same or similar students. This point recognizes the specific nature of efficacy.

Additionally, verbal persuasion, another source of efficacy, may inform teachers’ confidence in planning. For instance, novice teachers may be verbally persuaded during their preservice experiences to enhance their belief in their abilities to plan for student engagement. More experienced educators, like cooperating teachers or university supervisors, may verbally convey confidence boosters to novice teachers that inform novice teachers’ beliefs in their ability to plan for student engagement. Likewise, students’ feedback might enhance this belief in teachers across experience. Hence, verbal persuasion may occur during any phase of planning, particularly during collaboration among colleagues during preactive and/or postactive planning.
For the novice, vicarious experiences may greatly inform their planning for student engagement. In other words, as preservice teachers shadow the planning processes of veteran teachers, they may become more confident in their abilities to plan for student engagement. In addition, as novice teachers read high quality descriptions of it, they may be able to envision themselves doing it. In this way, novice teachers may watch or read the manners in which experienced teachers negotiate their lessons interactively to keep students engaged. Through the veteran teachers’ expertise, novices may become more confident in their personal planning for student engagement.

The final source of efficacy, physiological or emotional experiences, may also inform teachers’ confidence in planning for student engagement. Because this source relies on the physiological or semantic states of individuals, teachers’ efficacy may be influenced during their interactive phases of planning. So, if teachers are in disarray emotionally preparing for a lesson or even during one, their confidence may be affected.

The next section of this chapter addresses issues of research design and research methods. Because chapter three of this dissertation provides a comprehensive discussion of these matters, this section is brief.

Methods and Procedures

Considering the research questions, qualitative research methods were employed in this study. Why qualitative methods? Because the research questions and the major issues underlying this research concerned the nature of these teachers’ planning and confidence in an in depth analysis, the best way to study these matters was with qualitative methods. Specifically, the case study approach was utilized to understand
these issues in a naturalistic environment. Through participant observations and interviews, I purposely selected two high school English teachers.

**Research Setting and Participant Sampling**

Two essential criteria contributed to the selection of the research setting for the study: (a) accessibility (my ability to gain entry through the bureaucratic demands of the school district), and (b) proximity (within 20 minutes from the university). Two expert teachers (those teaching ten years or longer) were identified and selected to participate in this study during my pilot study. These participants in this study met the following criteria: (a) high school English teachers, (b) reflective and articulate teachers, (c) experienced teachers, (d) teachers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and (e) teachers willing to participate.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Two major data collection techniques provided the framework of the study: (a) participant observations, and (b) interviewing. Deriving from ethnography, the first data collection technique employed was participant observation. This method has been discussed as observation carried out when the researcher is playing an active participatory role in the research scene (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). The term participant in this study referred to my involvement, as researcher, participant, observer, and participant observer, in the routines of classroom life.

For more than five months, I observed the classroom instruction of the teachers along with regular classroom life in the classroom. Consequently, observation consisted of my taking field notes on issues relating to the teachers and the classes’ routines and specifically noting occurrences that related to the research questions.
The second technique employed was interviewing. Because the interview became the main mechanism through which data were collected, I conducted four separate, individual interviews with each participant. The interviews lasted 45 minutes to an hour. Clearly, a total of eight interviews were conducted with the participants. Appendix A outlines the interview protocol for this research. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed for analyzing and coding.

**Analysis and Coding of the Data**

I, as researcher, personally transcribed many tapes from interviews, and all field notes from participant observations to continuously immerse myself in the data. This personal immersion with the data assisted me in the formulation of new interview questions conceptualized from “grounding” evidence (see, Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I typed interview transcripts, and participant observation field notes; I reviewed and (re)organized them and the findings by categories. Further, in future data collection, I focused on themes that developed. To clarify, I used what was previously learned as a foundation to other inquiries for clarification and elaboration; that is, past findings in this study assisted me in labeling and categorizing future findings, resulting in triangulation. Codebooks were developed in each case. By way of member check, the teachers in the study received complete copies of the interview transcripts and were met with to review findings. Finally, all forms of data were analyzed weekly and stored and locked in my home office.
The next sections of this dissertation provide an overview of this study followed by limitations of the study.

Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one established the research questions used to guide this inquiry, discussed the significance of this research, clarified matters, and provided an overall introduction to the study. Chapter two provides a review of the related literature for this research. Chapter three details the methodology and research design for this study. Chapter four presents the first case study of this research. Chapter five provides the second case study for this research with the final chapter, chapter six, providing cross case analysis of the two cases and the research in general. Chapter six also addresses final issues and implications from this research.

Limitations of this Research

There are likely some lessons embedded in this research that some teachers may find helpful in “the pursuit of curriculum” (Reid, 1997), as I was not interested in generalizing to a population. As a result, one of the goals of this research is transferability rather than generalizability. Even though I was not concerned with the notion of generalizability, criticism still may be made about the low number of participants in the study. More participants in this study probably would have increased the comparative/contrasting dimensions of this study. Such an increase in numbers, however, may have forced me to go into less depth, which would have likely resulted in a more superficial report of more participants. This was simply not my goal and desire.
Ultimately, the limitations of this study did not prevent me from presenting high-quality case studies that illustrate and attend to the nature of the research questions. Even with these limitations made explicit, I am confident that this research was professionally conducted and beneficial.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through case studies, this research outlines two teachers’ planning for student engagement and their sources of confidence. As inspired by the research on culturally relevant pedagogy and the lack of previous researchers’ explaining convergence among the major areas of this study, this investigation provides insight into the planning practices of these teachers for student engagement. Put simply, the purpose of this research was to document these teachers’ planning for student engagement with the goal of informing the literature about the convergence of the various strands of this investigation and providing insight into the development of lessons that satisfy student engagement.
CHAPTER 2

A Look at Literature Related to Teacher Planning, Thinking, and Teaching

For Student Engagement

Chapter one established the research questions, discussed the significance of the study, and provided an overall introduction to this study. To recap, this study addressed the following issues: (a) the nature of two teachers’ planning, thinking, and teaching for student engagement; and (b) the nature of these teachers’ confidence in doing this work. Specific research questions concerning this twofold research were:

- What is the nature of two teachers’ planning, thinking, and teaching for student engagement? And

- What is the nature of these teachers’ confidence in doing this work?

Given the multifaceted nature of this research, several strands of literature were investigated. The first section of this chapter reviews the literature on teacher planning, followed by a review of the literature on teachers’ forms of knowledge and teachers’ sources of confidence, then an examination of student engagement.

Teacher Planning

Over the past two decades, extensive empirical and theoretical literature has accumulated documenting the role, importance, and challenges embedded in teacher planning and in the thinking and decision-making of teachers. One reason for such
extensive research on teacher planning is the recognition that teachers’ planning directly influences what students have the opportunity to learn. Moreover, in many cases, it is the teacher who decides what learning is key, what instructional methods are meaningful, and how to motivate students and maintain interests (McCutcheon, 1995), all of which falls within the realm of teacher planning. Further, teachers’ decisions bear significantly on the curriculum—what students have the opportunity to learn under the direction of teachers and schools. Accordingly, as this review will illustrate, much of the research on teacher planning has been in elementary schools, because it is in these schools that teachers have the greatest influence over what is taught and how instruction takes place.

Phases of Planning: Preactive, Interactive & Postactive

Three important phases of teacher planning include: (a) preactive (before teaching), (b) interactive (during teaching), and postactive or reflection (after teaching). Fundamentally, teachers plan before they actually teach based on their projections about what might actually occur during the lesson. Similarly, teachers plan during lessons—although they may not realize it. They often mentally construct plans of action that attend to the realities of lessons as they unfold beyond the events envisioned during preactive planning. Thus, teachers decide how to deal with matters that occur during lessons, resulting in interactive planning. Teachers’ postactive or reflective plans often are developed from their preactive plans and their interactive plans. In a sense, postactive planning serves as a precursor to the next round of preactive and interactive planning. Therefore, postactive planning is a significant part of the planning cycle.
Jackson’s (1968) research on life in classrooms served as a forerunner in the study of teacher planning. Using qualitative methods, Jackson identified differences in teachers’ cognitions about planning before (preactive), during (interactive), and after (postactive or reflective) classroom interaction. From this work, scholars began viewing planning as a process, one that is cyclical and dependent on earlier and later phases. Subsequent studies refined this conception by describing preactive and postactive cognitions as deliberative and evaluative while interactive cognitions were described as immediate and spontaneous (Clark & Yinger, 1979; McCutcheon, 1980). This literature revealed that teachers’ planning decisions are specific to situations, and many of them are made spontaneously—almost intuitively. As a result, these studies revealed important findings, but because of the situational or idiosyncratic nature of planning, the findings were not usually generalizable, even though the results may ring true to many teachers.

Because much of the research on teacher planning is situation-specific, complex, and unpredictable, studies have continued to develop. For instance, educational researchers have become increasingly interested in analyzing the organizational dimensions and levels of planning to better understand this part of teachers’ work. For the most part, this inquiry has been conducted using interviews in which researchers ask teachers to reflect on their planning. Other methods include researchers’ classroom observations and teachers’ “thinking out louds” while planning. Additionally, researchers have analyzed teachers’ personal/professional journals that include reflections during the various phases of planning. Basically, teachers described their thinking and rationales about their planning decisions in these journals.
Recognizing the nebulous nature (through some scholars’ views, ontology and epistemologies) of a non-behavioral means of investigation, some researchers began videotaping teachers during the interactive phase of planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Both the teachers and the researchers watched these videotaped lessons later, allowing the teachers to recall and articulate their thinking and rationales about their planning decisions pertaining to the behaviors captured on the videotapes.

Interestingly, Clark and Peterson (1986) report that “the kind of thinking that teachers do during interactive teaching does not appear to be qualitatively different from the kind of thinking they do when they are not interacting with students” (p. 258). The connection between teachers’ interactive planning and their preactive and postactive (or reflective) planning led Jackson (1986) to conclude that teachers do not merely plan before lessons but also while teaching and that, again, teachers are constantly making decisions in pursuit of effective lessons and student learning based on the situation. It is through these phases of planning, preactive (before teaching), interactive (during teaching), and postactive or reflective (after teaching), that researchers have attempted to understand the overall scheme of teacher planning. Within these phases are six features of teacher planning that capture the research on teacher planning. The following section will discuss these six features as distinguished in the literature.

**Six Features of Teacher Planning**

Perhaps Calderhead (1996) conceptualized the most suitable categorization of the overall scheme of teacher planning. He outlined six main features: (a) the various levels of planning, (b) the informal nature of planning, (c) the creative dimension of planning,
(d) the practicality and the situational dimensions of planning, (e) the importance of flexibility in planning, and (f) the knowledge base of planning.

First, as stated by Clark and Yinger (1979), teachers plan at six main levels—yearly, term, unit, weekly, daily, and lesson. These levels are not separate and distinct; rather, they inform each other. To produce logical, well-structured lessons for students, the teacher coordinates the various levels. So, a teacher’s planning at the beginning of the year requires breaking the plans up into terms, the terms into units, the units into weeks, the weeks into daily, and the daily into lessons. For the novice teacher, perhaps the most significant of the levels is the yearly plan because it provides a foundation for many of the routines, patterns, and expectations for the future. For the expert or experienced teacher, unit planning has been reported as the most significant level, followed by weekly and then daily planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Clark & Yinger, 1988).

Of course, these findings do not apply in every individual case, and teachers may plan effectively at various levels throughout their professional experience. For instance, McCutcheon and Milner (forthcoming) discussed an expert high school English teacher who developed a comprehensive course for an entire academic year on computer discs with relevant lessons (readings, assessments, homework, etc.). This British literature course was a new course for the teacher, however, he used his teaching expertise, conferences and collaboration with previous teachers of the course, and the curriculum guide to develop what he terms text discs—all using a yearly plan of action. Similarly, McCutcheon (1980) investigated the planning practices of 24 elementary teachers. Through her inquiry, she discovered that both expert and novice teachers engage in a
variety of effective levels when planning for a range of reasons. Consequently, teacher planning is rarely isolated to specific levels regardless of the teachers’ preferred planning level; instead, teachers are constantly planning in a continuously evolving process.

Second, for Calderhead, planning is seen as an informal process. The writing down of plans has been reported most effective in an informal “grocery list” format, similar to a “things to do” list written down primarily to trigger the memory of teachers (McCutcheon, 1980). Yet, Clark and Peterson (1986) report that teacher education programs spend a substantial amount of time preparing teachers to write formal plans (a point that has likely decreased in more recent years). Scholars, however, have found that the writing of formal lesson plans among teachers is usually done to adhere to administrative mandates but that the process of writing lessons down is not generally beneficial for teachers. Rather, the research indicates that teachers report that the writing down of formal lesson plans is time consuming and useless in the development of effective lessons (McCutcheon, 1995; Calderhead, 1996). Therefore, much of teachers’ planning is of an informal nature—an informal process that McCutcheon (1980) classifies as “mental planning” and Morine-Dersheimer (1979) and Smith and Sendelback (1979) describe as “mental images.” Both descriptions here connote an informal mental act or planning process that is not necessarily written down or elaborated upon in professional conversation.

As McCutcheon (1995) described it:

Teachers have in mind a general approach and a sequence for the lesson. They envision it in action and rehearse what they will say, what questions to ask, when to distribute which materials, what to assign to practice or for evaluation
purposes, what difficulties are likely to occur, and how long the lesson is likely to take. (p. 46)

This process of mental, informal, planning occurs at any time of the day. For example, if a teacher reflects on the day’s lesson in the car during his or her drive home from school, the formulation, development, and assessment of lessons are occurring. The process is still planning and informs successive lessons.

Third, planning has been characterized as creative. Studies of teachers’ cognition processes indicate that planning encompasses both a problem finding and a problem-solving phase (Calderhead, 1996). Consequently, teachers envision potential problems through their reflective lenses in the midst of all phases of planning to promote creative lessons. This creative feature of planning is vital as teachers assess their individual situations and prepare to deal with problems to create learning for all students. The assortment of problems that teachers attend to is broad. For example, teachers are forced to deal with students from a variety of intellectual levels. For instance, if a teacher knows that his or her third period class has a large number of students who have attention deficits, the teacher might make creative allowances for those students by planning lessons that might be more engaging for them. On the other end of the spectrum, teachers also are aware of students who need lessons that are more challenging; thus, lessons are created to satisfy the various learning modalities of the students in the class. Again, teachers envision where potential problems might occur and plan to alter, alleviate or solve the problems using their creativity. Sardo-Brown (1988) and Yinger (1980) remind us that effective planning requires the creation of ideas and the reflection of one’s knowledge about teaching to best seek and solve problems in the classroom.
Accordingly, teachers rely on their various forms of knowledge to develop and create lessons.

With this in mind, Calhead’s feature on creativity concerns the developmental endeavors of teachers that are complex. Teachers conceive of the subject matter, consider the students they teach, reflect on the conditions of the classroom, among others conditions in creating and plan lessons that may be effective with regards to these entities. When discussing creativity in planning for teachers, Woolfolk (2001) informs us that:

In order to plan creatively…teachers need to have wide-ranging knowledge about students, their interests, and abilities; the subject being taught; alternative ways to teach and assess understanding; working with groups; the expectations and limitations of the school and community; how to apply and adapt materials and texts; and how to pull all this knowledge together into meaningful [planning and] activities (p. 475).

In other words, teachers must be willing to deviate from their pre-established lessons and plans, including planned uses of curriculum materials such as textbooks, to meet the varying needs of students. In sum, this dimension concerns the actual planning developments of teachers when creating lessons. Certainly, creating lessons for students requires a great deal of effort and creativity.

Fourth, planning must allow for flexibility. Compared to novices, expert teachers have advantages in becoming more flexible in their planning (Calderhead, 1996). Experts are able to alter planning to accommodate their students while enacting lessons and when reflecting and developing new lessons. These experts can draw upon a
repertoire of memory plans (and often plan books and journals), which are conceptions of how particular types of lessons are acted out, or how particular lessons are taught (McCutcheon, 1995). The flexibility of teachers during all stages of planning is an integral part of student learning and thus an integral part of teacher decision-making.

Plans, for teachers then, reduce but do not eliminate uncertainty. Even the best plans cannot control everything that occurs in classrooms (Calderhead, 1996). Further, evidence suggests that when teachers over plan, or plan too extensively (filling every minute and sticking to the plan regardless), students learn less than they do when teachers are flexible in their planning (Shavelson, 1987). Clark and Yinger (1988) advises that beginning teachers should think of their plans as “flexible frameworks for action, as devices for getting started in the right direction, as something to depart from or elaborate on, rather than as rigid scripts” (p. 13). In a case study conducted by Milner and McCutcheon (in review), an expert teacher described flexibility as “allowing students to take you into left field to get their [the students’] interests” (p. 19).

Fifth, for Calderhead, practicality and an awareness of contextual or situational dimensions play key roles in planning. Teachers’ planning is particularistic, situational, and idiosyncratic (Levstik, 1989; McNeil, 1986; McCutcheon, 1980). In examining the atmospheric nature of teachers’ work, McCutcheon (1995) posits:

Theoretically, the individual teacher must simply determine what learning is primary, what teaching methods should be utilized to reach the greatest number of students, how to motivate students, and then [how to] implement those decisions. In reality, though, each teacher develops an idiosyncratic set of concepts, beliefs and images about what to teach, how students learn, how to treat the curriculum
guidelines, how to treat other adults, how to motive students, and how to evaluate them (p. 34).

What is known about context and planning is based mostly on studies of classroom specific aspects of context such as subject matter or student ability. But the contextual dimension of planning is concerned with the needs and expectations of the entire learning environment as well as the practical realities of particular situations, even though only classroom contexts have received the major attention in the research. For example, McCutcheon (1981) concludes that the nature of teachers’ planning can be influenced by the expectations that exist within the school and the community. Teachers take what they are provided (e.g., student deficiencies, graded course of study, curriculum materials, district/state mandates) and plan lessons. When formulating lessons, teachers might consider students’ socio-cultural variations, academic proficiency disparities, external interests (i.e. basketball, reading, drawing) and many other characteristics. Further, planning considerations might include professional or faculty characteristics of the school climate, such as support or the lack thereof from the administration, provisions of opportunities for professional development, collaborative opportunities among colleagues, and the value systems of administrators, colleagues, and parents (Milner & McCutcheon, in review). Thus, the milieu of school and community life is important in teacher planning.

The final feature of planning described by Calderhead (1996) is the role of the knowledge base of teachers. As Woolfolk (2001) describes in the creative feature of planning, the knowledge base of teachers is integral to teacher planning. This knowledge base of teachers has been thoroughly investigated and categorized as pedagogical
knowledge, practical knowledge, and content and/or subject matter knowledge by scholars such as Shulman and Sykes (1986), Elbaz (1983), and Shulman (1987), respectively. When planning lessons, teachers draw on an assortment of knowledge that aids them in their planning. For instance, it is from teachers’ pedagogical and practical knowledge that they are able to plan lessons that attend to instructional needs of students and the environmental and communal demands of the school and community.

Because they have not yet accumulated the enormous range of knowledge needed for effective teaching, novice teachers have been criticized for a lack of effectiveness in planning lessons (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Calderhead, 1987; Sardo-Brown, 1990). In contrast, experienced teachers have a knowledge base that allows them to be more effective in all phases of planning. Although novice teachers are likely to be less effective in planning than are experts, the novice teachers are constantly learning, and their knowledge is increasing with experience. This knowledge often is constructed through trial and error (Milner & McCutcheon, in review).

The second strand of this research that is germane for the current study highlights teachers’ forms of knowledge. Of course, it is from their knowledge that teachers develop their plans. Teachers rely on their reflections and experiences through all phases of plans. These forms of knowledge are broad, yet associated, and teachers develop plans to adhere to student and administrative needs in pursuit of student engagement. The following section reviews the literature on teachers’ forms of knowledge.

**Teachers’ Forms of Knowledge**

Teachers possess an enormous amount of knowledge. However, the knowledge base of teachers is the subject of some tensions in the literature. These tensions concern
the discrepancies embedded in the literature about the nature of knowledge for teachers (e.g., Bruner, 1985; Shulman, 1987). Some of the differences in the development of knowledge concern epistemological positions and divergent understandings of the ways in which knowledge is constructed. Further, it is not clear whether knowledge can be measured or adequately investigated, how teachers’ knowledge is developed, and so forth (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1983; Munby, Russell & Martin, 2000; Shulman, 1987). These and other perplexities lead to fundamental questions about teachers’ knowledge that must be discussed when attempting to understand teachers’ planning and thinking. Shulman (1987) listed these unanswered questions:

Is enough known about teaching to support a knowledge base? Isn’t teaching little more than personal style, artful communication, knowing subject matter, and applying the results of recent research on teaching effectiveness? (Pp. 5-6)

Similarly, Jackson (1986) opens his chapter “On Knowing to Teach” posing unanswered questions such as the following:

What must teachers know about teaching? ... What knowledge is essential to their work? Is there a lot to learn or just a little? ... How is knowledge generated and confirmed? Is not much of what guides the actions of teachers anything more than opinion, not to say out-and-out guesswork? (p. 1)

Although some of these and similar questions may seem, and are meant to be rhetorical, others are insistent and finger in the literature.
Categories of Teacher Knowledge

In an attempt to understand the documented knowledge of teachers, the following section will discuss the major categories of teachers’ knowledge: (a) practical knowledge, (b) classroom knowledge, and (c) pedagogical content knowledge.

Practical knowledge. Related to classroom knowledge, practical knowledge is teachers’ personal, realistic, or general understanding about their work. It refers broadly to the knowledge teachers have of classroom situations and the setting dilemmas they face in carrying out action in these settings (Carter, 1990). Carter explains that practical knowledge is shaped by “teachers’ personal history, which includes intentions and purposes, as well as the cumulative effects of life experience” (1990, p. 300). Hence, as Doyle (1986) asserts, teachers make complicated interpretations and decisions under conditions of inherent uncertainty; to achieve this, they engage in practical thinking that leads to an action appropriate to the particular situation, which is often developed from teachers’ personal histories. Such practical knowledge evolves out of “reflection-in-action” (Schon, 1983; 1987). Schon’s concept of reflection in action and reflective practitioner theories concern the complexity and uncertainty of situations that all professional practitioners—whether doctors, lawyers, architects, or teachers—face in their work. The dealings of such uncertainty, according to Schon, cannot be solved by technical rationality. Rather, the uncertainty and complexity of their work is handled through their practical, reflective lenses.

Elbaz (1983), through a case study of a high school English teacher, defined the character of practical knowledge in teaching in five broad domains: (a) self, (b) milieu (setting) of teaching, (c) subject matter, (d) curriculum development, and (e) instruction.
In other words, teachers’ practical knowledge includes the knowledge teachers have about their community, their course content, their pedagogy, and themselves. In a sense, it is through teachers’ practical knowledge that all other forms of knowledge are developed. Further, scholars have concentrated on specific teaching episodes in the classroom and on personal practical knowledge defined as an indication of how teachers know a situation (Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1984, 1985). This work rejects Schon’s (1983) assessment of problems in favor of an emphasis on principles, patterns, and practical rules. In other words, these studies purport that knowledge is not separate from the knower but a part of him or her.

In conclusion, practical knowledge is what some refer to as a teacher’s general overall knowledge. The knowledge that teachers possess about the routines of school life and resources is part of their practical knowledge. For example, such knowledge reflects an awareness of how to handle a student in need of special testing, counseling, tutoring, and the resources/support staff available to meet these needs. Experienced staff and faculty who might not be certified to serve in this capacity to meet the student needs might best attend to these needs. For example, if a student is in need of mentoring, the handling of the mentoring might be embedded in the teacher’s practical expertise in providing the assistance. Consequently, teachers handle situations based on experiences that worked in the past. Hence, this knowledge also implies an understanding of the needs and aims of the community and the school, which could be a practical understanding of students’ dealings with violence outside of school or hostile classmates in school. In short, the practical knowledge of teachers encompasses a general understanding of other subjects and a practical comprehension and awareness of the
world and/or society in general. This knowledge is based on personal experiences and what has succeeded or failed in similar situations in the past.

**Classroom knowledge.** A dimension of practical knowledge is classroom knowledge. The examination of teachers’ classroom knowledge is based on the assumption that it is generally possible to understand what teachers know that enables them to perform within their classrooms (Carter & Doyle, 1987). Two frameworks guide the construction of such knowledge. The first framework is an ecological perspective, which focuses on the demands of the teaching and school environments. That is, teachers’ classroom knowledge reflects their understanding of the classroom setting, the school, and the community; for it is through this knowledge that teachers are able to facilitate lessons that are relevant and effective for students. Therefore, the ecological perspective relates closely with teachers’ practical knowledge as both rely on communal settings categories to inform their work. This knowledge allows teachers the opportunity to make curricular and pedagogical decisions relevant to their environmental realities; thus, teachers’ classroom knowledge is situated in and is directly reflected by the ecological construction of its constituents-the school, the community, and the classroom.

The second framework is a schema-theoretic approach, which focuses on the organization of knowledge connected to on-going events in relation to the environment (Carter, 1990). For example, as Doyle (1986) explains, classroom knowledge and management as a “cognitive activity based on a teacher’s knowledge of classroom event trajectories and the way certain actions will affect situations” (p. 2). In other words, the second framework suggests that teachers begin to organize their knowledge and connect their established expertise to situations actually occurring in the classroom. For example,
a teacher refers to the manner in which he or she successfully handled a disruptive student in the past to guide the handling of a similar disruptive situation, resulting in what Carter calls a schema-theoretic approach. His or her reliance on that situation becomes organized in such a way that it becomes easier for teachers to recognize and link past problems with present ones.

**Pedagogical content knowledge.** Pedagogical content knowledge concerns the ways teachers understand, represent, and convey subject matter to their students. Pedagogical-content knowledge advances what teachers are aware of in relation to their content/subject matter, and how that knowledge is implemented or translated into their teaching decisions. Shulman and Sykes (1986) state that pedagogical-content knowledge includes:

Understanding the central topics in each subject matter as it is generally taught to children of a particular grade level and being able to ask the following kinds of questions about each topic: what are core concepts, skills and attitudes which this topic has the potential of conveying to students...What students’ preconceptions are likely to get in the way of learning (p. 9)?

Likewise, Shulman (1986) stresses the importance of both pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. In the past, major emphasis was placed on teachers’ content knowledge, and researchers did not focus on teachers’ pedagogical knowledge. Decades later, the focus shifted to the importance of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge rather than content. Shulman (1986) discusses rationales of equivalent importance of both pedagogical and content knowledge, and McCutcheon and Milner (forthcoming) support this view, stressing the equal importance of both concepts. Hence, it is a convergence of
teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge that informs this conception of pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers are expected to handle demands of their situation, know their subject/content, and effectively execute or teach the subject matter to their students.

From these forms of knowledge, teachers are able to “theorize,” rationalize, or conceptualize about their decisions and their work in general based heavily on their own empirical research. Of course, most teachers do not think of themselves as researchers, but essentially, they conduct action research about the nature of their work through their daily tasks such as planning. The results of this ongoing action research are the teachers’ theories of action. Such theories derive from their actions or their expertise. The next section discusses teachers’ theories of action.

Teachers’ Theories of Action

Because teachers make decisions “on their feet,” often without referring to theoretical constructs, researchers are increasingly concerned with the significance of teachers’ practical and professional knowledge (Clandinin, 1985; Connelly & Clandinin, 1984, 1985; Elbaz, 1983). However, these terms do not imply that teachers act without any overarching principles to organize their actions deriving from various connective forms of knowledge. Researchers have termed these personal theories--teachers’ theories of action--because they are sets of philosophies, postulates, and principles that teachers have developed and constantly develop about the nature of their work. Wexler (1974) contends that the development of teachers’ theories of action requires that they become aware of the rules [concepts, and rationales] they use to determine automatic responses and decisions. Further, the theory of action literature has focused on the importance of
the various types of knowledge teachers possess (Argyris, 1982; McCutcheon, 1995) and the significance of teachers’ articulation thereof (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986).

Accordingly, McCutcheon (1995) posits that there are direct connections between teachers’ theories of action and the manners in which they see the world.

Additionally, Eisner (1994) reminds us that theory is about the general; teachers work with the particular. Further, he alluded to teachers’ abilities to do their work as art forms. Hence, the work of teaching is sculptured and crafted through practicality. It is not scientific and fully predictable, which makes teachers’ decisions difficult to follow in a linear fashion, and their work is not completely defined based on a particular theory learned in college. Instead, the theories of teachers are “works in progress”-theories, like plans, are constantly evolving.

In order, then, for education to benefit from teachers’ practical and professional knowledge, as organized in personal theories of action, teachers need a way to articulate their theories. Prior to this interest in teachers’ theories of action, the nebulous nature of teachers’ work (specifically knowledge and thinking) was even fuzzier because there was not a common language for it. As explained by Connelly and Clandinin (1985), teachers’ personal practical knowledge is “that body of convictions, conscious or unconscious, which have arisen from experience, intimate, social, and traditional, which are expressed in a person’s actions” (p. 362). In light of this understanding of teachers’ personal practical knowledge, their theories of action depend on a set of stated or unstated assumptions about their work (Argyris & Schon, 1974), principles that guide their appreciations, decisions, and actions (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986), and interrelated concepts and beliefs they have about their work (McCutcheon, 1995). Teachers’ theories
of action are developed with a number of important factors in mind and rely heavily on
two particular facets of practical knowledge: (a) experience and (b) tacit knowledge.

Teachers’ past experiences are important in the development and
contemplation of their theories of action—certainly, teachers’ lenses are shaped by their
lifelong experiences (McCutcheon, 1995). From this standpoint, the view of Carr and
Kemmis (1983) seems appropriate:

All practical activities are guided by some theory…for teachers could not even
begin to “practice” without some knowledge of the situation in which they are
operating and some idea of what it is that needs to be done. In this sense anybody
engaged in the “practice” of educating must already possess some “theory” of
education which structures his [or her] activities and guides his [or her] decisions
(p. 110).

These theories are not just a result of the current school environment; rather, their
theories of action are impacted by their total life experiences. Carr and Kemmis’
inclusive language of “all” dictates a historical base for teachers, particularly novices.

This practical knowledge of teachers is constructed; it seems, from those experiences,
including the time teachers spent as students as well as other personal experiences.
Therefore, teachers’ background experiences, or personal biographies, are important
factors to consider in the development of their theories of action and their underlying
positions about why they act as they do.

In addition to personal experiences, tacit knowledge is an important factor in the
construction and understanding of teachers’ theories of action. As research has indicated,
teachers know more than they might be able to articulate (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986)
or consistently portray (Argyris & Schon, 1974). This type of knowledge that might not be expressed is referred to as implicit or tacit (Argyris, 1982; Polanyi 1967). Tacit knowledge contributes to teachers’ work, although they are not necessarily aware of its impact. In a sense, tacit knowledge is second natured and becomes a part of the teachers’ work through experience. As McCutcheon (1995) explains it, “Through reflection on their practice and professional conversations, teachers uncover some of this tacit knowledge, which they can examine, weigh, and articulate” (p. 37). Through this type of reflection, teachers refine their practical theories of action and develop deeper understandings of them.

Teachers develop theories of action through what they believe to be logical intentions, although teachers’ theories and work in general are not necessarily linear and predictable. Thus, they might tacitly assign tasks that dictate the implicit, hidden, or unstated curriculum based upon rational but tacit patterns of cognition. Tacit knowledge concerns the knowledge that teachers possess but of which they are unaware. For example, a teacher might have students pick up paper off the floor at the end of class in pursuit of fulfilling an implicit curriculum goal; that is, students should be considerate of janitorial staff or simply that students should pick up after themselves. Doyle (1986) classifies teachers’ management of the classroom as a cognitive activity contingent upon teachers’ knowledge of the likely paths of events in classrooms and the way specific actions affect situations. Therefore, the way teachers organizes their classroom, or the manners in which they assign group interactions among students, are factors relative to the contextual nature of the classroom and thus are tacitly constructed from experience. This tacit knowledge might be filtered or fostered through a number of experiences.
beyond the classroom such as teachers’ experiences with their own children (Milner & McCutcheon, in review). As the research of Argyris (1982) stresses:

People have intentions about what it is that they are trying to accomplish. The degree to which they are aware of their intentions varies, but so far we have found that their actions are intentionally rational. Their actions are explicitly or tacitly designed to achieve some intended consequences (p. 41).

Moreover, Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) posit that, if asked to explain the reasons for their actions, teachers could provide reasons, yet they might not think about those reasons or rationales otherwise. To a certain extent, then, teachers’ decisions are informed by internal factors or knowledge that could be termed tacit. Along with past experiences, this tacit knowledge forms an important knowledge base for teachers’ theories of action.

Finally, McCutcheon (1982) argues:

Clearly, an important aspect of theory creation is to know our own ideology, values, and beliefs about various matters related to the curriculum and society. This clarification and dredging up of our own values and belief system is an ongoing process, but must be brought to consciousness and made deliberate. Until we know a particular value we hold, it holds us—we are not in possession of it; it affects our work and thinking although we are unaware of it. Since we make use of these values and beliefs in our theory building, we must be aware of them.

Part of this research concerns the thinking that teachers engage in when planning for student engagement. So, the research on teachers’ theories of action is important to consider. It seems that this consciousness that is described here is most appropriate for teachers.
The third strand of this research, teachers’ sources of efficacy and confidence, will be reviewed in the next section of this chapter.

**Teachers’ Sources of Efficacy**

The third strand of this research concerns teachers’ sense of efficacy. Specifically, this study examines the sources of teachers’ confidence that they can plan successfully to insure student engagement in lessons. The concept of confidence is best captured in research by Bandura’s notion of self-efficacy.

Broadly, the concept of self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1996), refers to “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required and designated types of performances” (p. 391). In other words, self-efficacy is concerned with the manner in which individuals cognitively judge or appraise their capabilities to be effective in achieving their specific goals. This appraisal is cognitive, not affective like the self-evaluations inherent in self-esteem, self-worth, and other self-beliefs. Moreover, self-efficacy is distinct from these conceptions of self in that it is specific to particular tasks, and it is a judgment about task capability (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Related to education, students are more likely to learn if they have a high level of self-efficacy; that is, if the students believe that they are capable of doing, or at least learning to do, the task(s) needed to reach their specific goals (Bandara, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Woolfolk, 2001).

**Teacher Efficacy**

Similarly, teacher efficacy, a form of efficacy that is specific to teaching, concerns teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to do their work. Specifically, teacher efficacy has been defined as “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the
capacity to affect performance” (Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977) even with the most difficult students (Armor, Conroy-Oseguera, Cox, King, McDonnell, Pascal, Pauly, Zellman, 1976). In fact, teacher efficacy is one of the few personal characteristics of teachers that are correlated with student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Self-efficacy theory predicts, “teachers with a high sense of efficacy work harder and persist longer even when students are difficult to teach, in part because these teachers believe in themselves and in their students” (Woolfolk, 2001, p. 389).

Most importantly, research on teaching has reported that teachers’ efficacy, or teachers' thinking and belief systems about their ability to perform a specific task, often is reflected in their actual performance. Beginning with the research of Barfield and Burlingame (1974), investigations of teacher efficacy have continued for several decades. A major strand of such research has focused on the effects of teachers’ beliefs on student performance. This literature informs us that teachers with a high level of efficacy believe that they can control, or at least strongly influence, student achievement and motivation (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and other studies have concluded that such a relationship does exist (Armor et al, 1976). Hence, teachers’ conceptions about their abilities to perform specific tasks impact how well their students learn and achieve. Other research has investigated the relationship between teacher efficacy and student motivation (for example, Midgley, Feldlaufer & Eccles, 1989).

Additionally, teacher efficacy is related to other variables such as teachers’ classroom management tactics and strategies (Ashton & Webb, 1986). In their work, Berman et al. (1977), Smylie (1988), and Guskey (1988) found that teacher efficacy is
related to the ways in which teachers motivate and innovate in classroom lessons. This finding relates to the interactive phase of planning. These studies link teachers’ beliefs about their own capabilities to teacher decisions and actions that lead to student learning.

Sources of Efficacy

Bandura (1986, 1996) identified four sources that inform efficacy. These four sources include: mastery experiences, physiological or emotional experiences, social persuasion experiences, and vicarious experiences.

Mastery experiences. The first source Bandura identifies, mastery experience or enactive attainment, is concerned with past experiences and performances and how they predict future levels of efficacy. In other words, if past performances have been successful for an individual, that individual’s self-efficacy will be higher when contemplating the same or a similar task in the future. This notion supports the old cliché ‘practice makes perfect’ - in this case, practice/experience/prior performances and one’s thinking and beliefs about those experiences bring about a conception of mastery, which informs future performance and levels of efficacy. So, from these mastery experiences, individuals either become more or less confident in their abilities to repeat that specific task in the future, depending upon their past successes or failures. This ultimately results in another familiar, more contemporary cliché, ‘been there and done that.’

It is important to note here that attributions influence expectations about the future. That is, a belief that success is attributable to internal or controllable causes, such as ability or effort, would most likely enhance self-efficacy, whereas a belief that attributed success to externals causes, such as luck or level of task difficulty, might diminish efficacy (Bandura, 1993; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). This notion is consistent
with predictions inherent in the motivation literature that shun extrinsic motivation and embrace the potential for intrinsic motivation. Likewise, cognitive processing of mastery attainment stresses the importance of taking credit for successes and failures and not perceiving outcomes as outside or external to individuals. As conceptualized by Pajares (1996), “Individuals gauge the effects of their actions, and their interpretations of these effects help create their efficacy beliefs. Successes raise self-efficacy; failure lowers it” (p. 2).

Although mastery or enactive attainment generally has been identified as the most influential source of efficacy (e.g. Bandura, 1993; Pajares, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), one study (described in a later section) argues that self-efficacy is more strongly influenced by vicarious efficacy when individuals are in situations where cultural differences are salient (Miñer, Husband, & Milner, 2000).

**Physiological and affective states.** Pajares (1996) identifies several physiological states that affect efficacy: anxiety, stress, arousal, and fatigue. As a source of efficacy, physiological and emotional states are concerned with the extent to which one is able to maintain his or her emotional composure—the amount of control over the nervousness often inherent in attending to experiences and performances. Nervousness or emotional “turmoil” might be associated with reflections about previous experiences, or it might arise from concerns about the unknown. Hence, a means for handling current anxiety might be derived from the ways that individuals conducted themselves during prior experiences and thus, the beliefs about these emotions influence future performances and levels of efficacy. People might reflect on what they did to relax or ease the tensions of the moment in the past, allowing them to move beyond the physiological and emotional
dilemmas of meeting and conquering new challenges. Again, this process informs levels of efficacy. Moreover, the expectation of success and failure in controlling physiological and emotional states is closely related to how people interpret the meanings of arousal and the extent to which it causes and predicts success or failure.

**Social persuasion.** The third source of efficacy, social persuasion, might involve encouraging discourse or specific performance feedback from a family member, a friend, a teacher, or a colleague. For instance, social persuasion might include the general conversations among family members about the ability of an individual to successfully complete a specific task. Such persuaders might encourage or offer words such as ‘you can do this or that,’ or ‘you have what it takes.’ Further, such persuasion might most effectively serve in conjunction with, or in addition to, other forms of motivation; that is, it might not be effective independently but can increase self-efficacy in a supplemental way. Hence, social persuasion might boost self-efficacy, which leads a person to initiate a task, attempt new strategies, or try hard(er) to succeed (Bandura, 1982).

The level of effectiveness of persuasion depends on the trustworthiness, expertise, and credibility of the persuader (Bandura, 1986) as well as other relationship factors that influence the manners in which people allow themselves to be “persuaded” by others. For instance, the research of Milner, Husband, and Jackson (2000) reported that African-American graduate students were more apt to listen and relate to their African-American professors; these findings stem from the graduate students’ cultural/racial connections with them. The research alluded to the reality that when being persuaded or motivated to persevere through graduate school, the African-American graduate students felt that their African-American faculty members were better able to relate to their struggles and were
thus more trustworthy in their advice, more knowledgeable about their graduate students’ issues, and ultimately more credible in the persuading process forthrightly because of their cultural/racial connections.

Accordingly, teachers might provide motivational pep talks based on their experiences and thus inform efficacy. In sum, social persuasion involves uncovering the verbal judgments of others and has been classified as a weak source of efficacy information (e.g. Pajares, 1996); however, as the research of Milner, Husband and Jackson (2000) reveals, verbal persuasion can be a strong source of efficacy under conditions of trustworthiness and expertise (particularly when culture/race is considered).

Vicarious experiences. Lastly, vicarious experiences are “those in which the skill in question is modeled by someone else” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, 1998 p. 212). Further, researchers remind us that the impact of these experiences is directly influenced by the extent to which the observer identifies with the model. As Pajares (1996) states, “vicarious experiences are produced by the actions of others...when people are uncertain about their own abilities or have limited prior experience, they become more sensitive to it” (p. 2). Thus, vicarious efficacy, or a sense that ‘if he or she can do that, then I can, too’ is most effective when the actor’s context is clearly similar to the observer’s.

In an examination of vicarious efficacy, Milner, Husband, and Jackson (2000) reported that the African-American graduate students participating in their qualitative inquiry found themselves doubting their “place” in the academy. They were not convinced that they had what it took to succeed in their respective graduate programs. Their efficacy was enhanced through their interactions with African-American faculty.
The participants, as African-American students, were apprehensive about the unknown, their academic demands, and the power structure of higher education. However, much of their success in the program was attributed to watching “people who look like me,” who had already achieved their goals, and were successfully navigating through the system. Through this research, a new concept, cultural vicarious efficacy, was developed.

Cultural vicarious efficacy deals with the ways individuals identify with the experiences and actions of others who have successfully endured similar experiences. Specifically, when individuals find themselves in situations where another culture historically has dominated, then significant sources of efficacy for those individuals are the successes of others in the setting who share their cultural heritage.

Measurement of Teacher Efficacy

Although the research and theory about teacher efficacy have grown and have provided compelling, even profound, results, the measurement of efficacy is still developing. Originating out of a psychological perspective, the majority of teacher efficacy studies to date used quantitative measures. These studies predominantly focused on self-reports of the knowledge and belief systems of teachers. To achieve these measures, researchers have used Likert scale questionnaires about teachers’ beliefs and conceptions of self, students, and teaching. Fortunately, these quantitative measures have afforded social science with data about a large number of individuals, which might be generalized. Additionally, these measures have provided support for the “appealing idea, that teachers’ beliefs about their own capacities as teachers somehow matter” (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998, p. 202), and researchers report significant findings in almost every study.
Barfield and Burlingame (1974) conducted the earliest studies of teacher efficacy. Using a 5-item Political Efficacy Scale instrument without alterations, they attempted to measure teacher efficacy. They discovered that teachers with a low sense of efficacy were less humanistic, or less sensitive, in their beliefs about controlling students than average or high efficacy teachers. Using the Political Efficacy instrument as a base, Brogdon (1973) developed a teacher efficacy instrument designed specifically with teachers in mind. Using a Likert scale, the new teacher efficacy scale included 10 items, instead of the five in the original Political Efficacy Scale. Results from this scale correlated with teacher satisfaction and with teacher competency as rated by their district superintendents (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1996).

About two decades ago, researchers from the RAND organization, working on a project related to elementary and secondary Title III programs, added two items to a much longer scale (Armor et. al, 1976). RAND’s two items were grounded in the social learning theory of J. B. Rotter and addressed the attribution of control. Teachers were asked to rate the following two items on a 6-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items were:

(RAND ITEM #1) When it comes right down to it, a teacher can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.

(RAND item #2) If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students. (Armor et al, 1977).
Decades later, the RAND items are still one of the most frequently used methods to measure teacher efficacy. Perhaps this is because the two added items have been able to capture the cognitive essence of teacher efficacy.

The two RAND studies brought about interest among researchers; however, they were concerned about the reliability of the two-item scale. This question of reliability led scholars to develop longer, more comprehensive instruments. Many of the new instruments turned to Bandura’s self-efficacy perspective for theoretical grounding. Essentially, two conceptual strands of research have developed in the last two decades, one in the RAND/Rotter’s tradition, and the other from Bandura’s social cognitive theory and his construct of self-efficacy. These two strands were developed with the goals of producing efficacy measures that were longer, more reliable, and more accurate in assessing teachers’ cognitions.

Measurements using Rotter’s theory. Rotter’s theories concerned the locus or control of reinforcement. The question was whether teachers’ reinforcement-conceived of as student learning—was under the teachers’ control (internal) or was outside of their control (external). For instance, building from Rotter’s theories, Rose and Medway’s (1981) 28-item Teacher Locus of Control (TLC) required teachers to attribute responsibility for student successes and failures by choosing between two competing explanations for the situations described. Half of the items on the instrument described situations of student success while the other half described student failure. One explanation for each success situation attributed the positive outcome to the factors internal to the teacher such as skill whereas the other explanation assigned responsibility outside the teacher, usually to the students or perhaps the home environment. Similarly,
for each failure situation as described, one explanation provided an internal teacher attribution while the other provided an external one.

Rose and Medway (1981) reported that the TLC was a stronger predictor of teacher behaviors/actions than was Rotter's (1966) internal-external (IE) measure. Essentially, the TLC predicted teachers' willingness to implement new instructional techniques, whereas Rotter's IE scale did not. Further, teachers who were high in internal responsibility for student learning in schools with large student populations of disadvantaged students gave fewer disciplinary commands, while high internal teachers who taught in more privileged environments called on non-volunteers more frequently and had students engaged in self-directed activities more often as opposed to taking a more top-down approach to their classes (Rose & Medway, 1981).

In keeping with Rotter's theory, Greenwood, Olejnik, and Parkay (1990) dichotomized teachers' scores on the two RAND questions and identified four efficacy patterns (other teachers can/I can, other teacher can/I can't; other teachers can't/I can; other teachers can't/I can't). These scholars discovered that teachers with high efficacy on both measures (e.g., teachers can/I can) had more internally oriented scores on the TLC for both student success and student failure than did teachers with low scores on both (e.g., teachers can't/I can't). Further, teachers who were low in both personal and general efficacy (teachers can't/I can't) had higher stress than teachers with low personal but high general efficacy (teachers can/ I can't) or teachers with both high personal and high general efficacy (teachers can/I can) (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Guskey (1981) developed a 30-item instrument to measure Responsibility for Student Achievement (RSA). Consistent with attribution theory (Weiner, 1979, 1992),
participants were required to distribute 100 percentage points between two alternatives, one stating that the teacher caused the event and the other stating that the event was caused because of factors outside the teacher’s immediate control. Four types of causes were offered for success or failure: (a) specific teaching abilities, (b) the effort put into teaching, (c) the task difficulty, and (d) luck. These studies and findings structured their work in the tradition of Rotter.

**Measurements using Bandura’s theory.** Tschannen-Moran et al., (1998) explain Bandura’s conception of self-efficacy:

Self-efficacy beliefs influence thought patterns and emotions that enable actions in which people expend substantial effort in pursuit of goals, persist in the face of adversity, rebound from temporary setbacks, and exercise control over events that affect their lives (p. 210).

In addition, social cognition theory proposes a second kind of expectation; that is, outcome expectancy, which is distinct from efficacy expectations. Efficacy expectation concerns the individual’s conviction that he or she can coordinate the necessary actions to perform a task. Outcome expectancy is the individual’s estimate of the likely consequences of performing that task at the expected level of competence (Bandura, 1986). So, the efficacy question pertains to whether an individual has the ability to organize and perform the actions necessary to accomplish or achieve a specific task at a desired level. The outcome question concerns the likely results and consequences if an individual does or does not accomplish or achieve the task at that level. Therefore, efficacy expectations precede and help form outcome expectations.
The Teacher Efficacy Scale created by Gibson and Dembo (1984) is the most frequently used measure following Bandura’s conceptual framework. By interviewing teachers, Gibson and Dembo developed a 30 items, 6-point Likert scale. The Gibson and Dembo instrument provides a global, more in-depth measure of teacher efficacy than the RAND items. Two subscales emerged from factor analysis; these subscales are personal teaching efficacy and general teaching efficacy. Gibson and Dembo suggested that the general teaching efficacy scale captured Bandura’s notion of outcome expectancy whereas the personal teaching efficacy scale assessed Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy. Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) disagree, however, and suggest that general teaching efficacy is not a measure of outcome expectation.

Ashton and Webb (1986) also attempted to follow in Bandura’s strands of outcome expectation and efficacy expectation by relating them to the two dimensions of teacher efficacy (e.g. personal efficacy and teaching efficacy). Ashton and Webb (1986) posit that the two RAND items measure both constructs. Simply, they propose that RAND item #1 assessed Bandura’s outcome expectancy dimension and that the RAND item #2 assessed Bandura’s efficacy expectation dimension. Again, this assertion has been questioned by others who study teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) and new ways to measure efficacy are being developed (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, in press).

Qualitative methods. Ashton and Webb (1986) introduced interviewing and classroom observations, two qualitative research design techniques, in their investigation of teacher efficacy. Their interviews asked participants to respond to questions such as, “How can you tell if you are achieving the objectives you have just identified?” (Ashton
& Webb, 1986; p. 185). The researchers found that teachers within a middle school structure and philosophy had a higher sense of efficacy than teachers with a junior high school structure and philosophy. Indeed, Ashton and Webb discovered that middle school teachers were better satisfied with their teaching structures and thus had higher expectations for students’ academic success and/or achievement. However, they also reported that teachers had more difficulties with collegial relations within middle school settings. This is interesting considering their overall attitudes about their teaching structures and philosophies. Based on their interviews of both middle school and junior high teachers, Ashton and Webb also report several factors contributing to lower teacher efficacy. These factors include: excessive role demands, poor morale, inadequate salaries, low status, and lack of recognition. Moreover, professional isolation (as referred to in terms of collegial relations), uncertainty, and alienation tended to weaken teachers’ efficacy beliefs.

The use of qualitative methodology is limited to a few researchers other than Ashton and Webb. Using qualitative inquiry exclusively, a recent cross-cultural study of teacher beliefs (Burke-Spero, 1999) has provided insight into our general understanding of measuring teacher efficacy. Because many instruments and measures have traditionally been developed to understand and predict the knowledge and beliefs of the dominant culture (i.e. European-American men), these measures may not capture the efficacy beliefs of other groups. One reason for this mismatch may be that there are significant differences in people’s perceptions of what constitutes success and failure, based on their cultural and racial experiences.
In the absence of a new cross-cultural quantitative scale, qualitative investigation permits us to take into account other important considerations such as gender and culture. Clearly, Burke-Spero’s study illustrates the need for continued development of ways to measure and understand teacher efficacy that reach beyond the dominant culture. In her study, she found that some novice and beginning teachers were efficacious about their duties in general but were low in efficacy when asked about their work in relationship minority under-privileged, inner-city students. These discrepancies were not identified using standard quantitative measures of efficacy. As Burke-Spero’s study illustrated, different types of questions, those relevant to culture, need to be included in the study of efficacy if generalizations are going to be appropriately slated to the entire population. Further, as Ashton and Webb’s (1986) work portrays, there is value in the use of qualitative methods in the attempt to really understand the efficacy of teachers.

So, what have we learned from this research? Teachers’ sense of efficacy has been revealed to be a powerful construct related to student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and sense of efficacy. Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy are open to new ideas and more likely to experiment with new methods. Further, they tend to exhibit greater levels of planning and organization. Efficacy influences both teachers’ persistence when things do not go well and their resilience in the face of adversity. Research also reveals that teachers with high efficacy are less critical of students when they make errors (Ashton and Webb, 1986) and work longer with students who are struggling (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Clearly, teachers’ levels of efficacy are integral to their success in the classroom.
As these literature reviews have revealed, teachers' forms of knowledge and possibly their sources of efficacy or confidence inform teachers' planning. Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks of teachers is the planning for student engagement. The final strand of this research concerns student engagement, and the next section of this chapter reviews that literature.

Student Engagement

It is important to note that this research allowed the teachers in the study to define student engagement through their reflections and experiences. This section discusses student engagement from different perspectives, not necessarily in ways outlined by the teachers in this study. The literature focusing on student engagement is quite extensive and varied. Researchers conceptualize student engagement in diverse ways, and thus the meanings and definitions of engagement are quite varied. For instance, the engagement of students has been conceptualized as “pupil attention,” “pupil time-on-task,” or “pupil engagement.” This strand of inquiry, focusing on “time on task” has a broad history that has been popular among scholars interested in student engagement. Time-on-task studies generally were conducted using quantitative research methods. From these studies Scriven (1985) concluded that engaged time is a theoretical construct that has provided a few good indicators, especially negative ones (the ‘off-task’ indicators).

This line of research uncovered differences in teachers’ allocations of time. Karweit (1989) reported that in one school the time allocated to mathematics ranged from 2 hours and 50 minutes a week in one class to 5 hours and 55 minutes a week in a class down the hall (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Clark & Yinger, 1988; Doyle, 1983). Accordingly, it is not uncommon for one teacher to spend three or four days on a given
topic for lessons, such as the Harlem Renaissance, and another teacher (with the same curriculum requirements and expectations) to spend 30 minutes on that topic. Often these variations in engaged time are dramatic, and students’ learning opportunities are significantly influenced. Further, it is not unusual for one teacher to develop elaborate curriculum and supplementary materials for student learning on a certain topic, and another teacher to use only what is already provided through district and textbook instructional aids (Woolfolk, 2001). These inadequacies reflect some phase in planning.

Other studies concerning student engagement have ranged from inquiries investigating patterns of student engagement in instructional activities (e.g. Marks, 2000) to discussions outlining methods for strengthening student engagement (Strong, Silver & Robinson, 1995). In general, these studies revealed that it is important for teachers to be knowledgeable of and concerned about the amount of time available for student learning. In addition, it might seem logical that teachers be encouraged to expand the amount of time available for student learning. However, simply making more time for learning “will not automatically lead to achievement. To be valuable, time must be used effectively” (Woolfolk, 2001; p. 437).

**Defining Student Engagement**

Specific definitions of student engagement also vary. Student engagement has been defined as the “attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning” (Marks, 2000, p. 155). It has also been defined as students’ involvement with their school (Finn, 1989; 1993), their investment in and effort applied in learning, understanding or mastering knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992), and students’ motivation.
to do their work (Steinberg, 1996). Woolfolk (1998), and still others (e.g., Doyle 1983) relate student engagement to "engaged time" -- the time teachers and students spend actively involved in specific learning tasks. Essentially, student engagement concerns the interests, efforts, and connections students display in the classroom.

Because most of the aforementioned reviewed literature was conducted using quantitative methods, the following section highlights the work of bell hooks as her work has been conceived through qualitative inquiry-methods more closely related to this particular study. Moreover, this section outlines hooks' notion of engaged pedagogy, because, in my view, her discussion of student engagement best describes engagement and the complexities of it with students and teachers.

hooks' work is used primarily to provide a focal point where engaged instruction is concerned. Consistent with hooks, I believe that the teacher facilitates (and often dictates) what will occur in the classroom; much of my understanding of student engagement is developed from hooks. Because hooks constructs much of her work from Paulo Freire's work, I begin the discussion of hooks' notion of engaged pedagogy and student engagement with a discussion of Freire's major dimensional categories as they relate to engaged pedagogy and student engagement.

From a Foundation of Freire

In addition to providing a basic foundation for critical theory, Paulo Freire's work has contributed significantly to our understanding of engaged pedagogy and student engagement. Four main components of Freire's (1998) work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, guide and provide a foundation for these principles. These major categories include (a) the importance of authentic reflection in pursuit of liberation, (b) the
importance of real world phenomena in pedagogy with the oppressed in pursuit of liberation, (c) the importance of a realization of the various power structures and oppressive entities in pursuit of liberation, and (d) the importance of oral communication and politics in pursuit of liberation.

The practice of freedom: Authentic reflection. First, Freire’s work is primarily concerned with using education as the practice of freedom (1998). In other words, the major purpose of education in Freire’s assessment should concern a type of freedom that is connected to deep understandings of self, society, and thus human life experiences in general. Freire encourages simultaneous reflection on self and the world to uncover inconspicuous phenomena. He contends that “authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations, consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it” (1998, p. 62). When this reflection occurs, teachers and students alike begin to reflect authentically on past experiences beyond the walls of academe. Both groups ask themselves ‘why do I believe what I believe?’ and work together to find the answer. Hence, “As women and men, simultaneously reflecting on themselves and the world, increase the scope of their perceptions, they begin to direct their observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena” (Freire, 1998, p. 63). Students and teachers ask: what has happened to me in the world that influences my thinking and positions?

Real world phenomena. Second, Freire (1998) discusses the importance of real world phenomena in pedagogy with the oppressed in pursuit of liberation. This principle asks teachers to define pedagogy and to answer an important question: How do I, as
teacher, situate myself in the education of others? Is my knowledge superior to my students’? This principle relates closely to an analogy Wink (2000) uses when discussing critical pedagogy. She writes, “Pedagogy is to good interactive teaching and learning in the classroom as critical pedagogy is to good interactive teaching and learning in the classroom and in the real world” (p. 1). Hence, we know and understand life, politics, and school-related phenomena through our experiences in the world. This principle reminds us that rather than viewing their knowledge as superior to their students, teachers should appreciate the expertise of students and work as agents with the oppressed in pursuit of their emancipation. As a result, education is a practice of freedom. As Freire (1998) stresses, pedagogy of the oppressed is a pedagogy that must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the struggle to regain and capture their emancipated place in the classroom and in society.

In addition, this freedom must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freire (1998) writes: “Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea, which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion” (p. 29). This notion promotes a completeness that is achieved through constant pursuit of wholeness. When teachers make their pedagogy critical, extending good interactive teaching and learning beyond the classroom and into the real world, all entities involved become liberated in all facets of their experiences. Completeness for the oppressed begins with liberation. Until liberation is achieved, individuals are fragmented in search of clarity, understanding, and emancipation. This liberation is not outside of man or created or accomplished through some external force. Rather, it begins with a mental understanding and alteration. Consequently, emancipation is the precursor to
holism and completeness and thus to emancipatory education. Thus, when individuals begin to think differently, they live their lives differently-better-and help others do the same.

Knowing power structures. The third principle outlines the importance of a collaborative realization of the various power structures and oppressive entities in pursuit of liberation. Freire (1998) asserts that good teaching and learning does not evolve from a banking theory, in which teachers see their role in education...as “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositaries and the teacher is the depositor” (p. 53).

Rejecting the banking theory of education, Freire supports an education that is problem-posing. Similar to constructivism, this notion rejects a top-down pedagogy that would encourage teachers to make deposits “which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 1998, p. 53). This concept is important because individuals, whether teachers or students, are the experts on/about their experiences. The teacher, then, works in collaboration with the students to assist them in liberation.

This role of the teacher might be asking the right questions or helping students locate answers to questions and areas of interest, resulting in a teacher-student interaction that is dynamic minimizing the power of the teacher because knowledge and expertise are negotiated. Through problem-posing education, individuals develop their own power to perceive “critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality of process, in transformation” (p. 64). Stressing self-perception, problem-posing education bases its philosophy in creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality. Freire

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(1998) rationalizes the major differences in banking education and problem-posing education in this way:

...Banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-solving theory and practice take the people’s historicity as their starting point. Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming-as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompletion (p. 65). Problem-posing education allows students to decide what is needed in their lives to make them complete filling the void of fragmentation.

Freire further explains that teachers who support the banking concept of education perceive their work as follows:

Knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself [or herself] to his [or her] students as [his or her] necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute; he [or she] justifies his [or her] own existence. The students, alienated like the slave...accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher’s existence—but, unlike the slave; they never discover that they educate the teacher (Freire, 1998, p. 53).
This principle asks educators to answer the following questions: ‘Is my role of teaching superior to the experiences and expertise of students?’ ‘Is there knowledge to be learned from my constituents?’ ‘How do I situate and negotiate the students’ knowledge, experiences, and expertise?’

**Oral communication.** The fourth principle concerns the importance of oral communication and political consciousness in pursuit of liberation. This concept encourages individuals to ask themselves two important questions: (a) how do I situate myself politically? (b) Am I willing to speak on behalf of those who might not be able to speak for themselves? What is more, this principle recognizes the ominous implications and responsibilities inherent in the spoken word. When individuals speak, they are taking action and thus being political. Further, Freire stresses the importance of reflection before speaking, as reflection helps identify inevitable consequences. Clarifying these issues, Freire (1998) laments that:

> Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world…it becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action (p. 68).

When individuals speak, they take positions on issues and often-controversial topics, and they have an opportunity to transform the world simply through the spoken word. Because discourse is powerful, it is imperative for individuals to reflect before speaking. This reflection might be on behalf of the oppressed people who may be neglected, or
ignored in the discussion. When individuals speak truth, others might be challenged, even offended. Individuals need to be equipped for debate and comfortable with their positions.

In addition, Freire stresses the importance of action through the spoken word. This type of action through pedagogy does not necessarily have to occur in the classroom. Instead, this pedagogy (or teaching) might occur in other contexts, such as the teachers’ lounge, a faculty meeting, or the grocery store. These settings might elicit a voice for justice or emancipation for those who might not necessarily be able to speak for themselves due to their current circumstances. This notion of speaking invokes the tenets of enactment and activism. Speaking possesses a transformative dimension in which people respond to nonsense and requires a form of radicalism that may be frowned upon by others.

Freire reminds us that true discourse is a practice of freedom. He stresses the importance of genuine, authentic reflection in the pursuit of education on behalf of all people, not just a select few. Moreover, this principle encourages individuals to say something when they speak, as they are being political and transforming the world. This political education might force individuals to move beyond their comfort levels, yet it is an education that can ultimately lead to emancipation and justice for those individuals who might otherwise be excluded from opportunities.

Liberatory pedagogy. Drawing on Freire’s philosophy, Dillard (1994) asks three significant questions that help teachers develop a discourse of liberatory pedagogy: (a) From what political place do you stand? (b) Upon whose shoulders do you stand? (c) On
whose behalf do you do your work? In answering these questions, Freire encourages teachers to:

- Authentically reflect. This reflection should lead to self-realization and a reflection on behalf of other human beings (e.g. the oppressed), the power structures, and the like.

- Keep pedagogy connected to the students. In this sense, teachers should learn the life worlds of their students and help them understand their own cultural, experiential capital.

- Be conscious of the power they have. Teachers should demystify their power by participating in the tasks that they ask of their students and be models, not perpetuators, of the power structure.

- Say something when they speak; thus, they are transforming the world and being political. To encourage liberatory pedagogy, teachers should critically question everything and allow students to critically question everything as well.

The next section of this essay will discuss a major construct deriving from Freire’s work, engaged pedagogy.

**Engaged Pedagogy**

Introduced by hooks (1994), engaged pedagogy concerns a consciousness and an approach to teaching and learning that recognizes the politics involved in education, and it seeks to enhance instruction by reciprocal and authentic methods of connecting learning communities. Engaged pedagogy allows teachers and students to connect to each other and the lessons by acknowledging their differences, discussing individuals’ life experiences, and ultimately working together towards freedom. So, students become
engaged through a type of interactive process that allows both the students and teachers’
to be involved in the learning. Consequently, hooks (1994) views freedom as involving
awareness of the power structure and of other oppressive entities that hinder individuals.

hooks. As conceptualized by hooks, pedagogy as a practice of freedom recognizes
the authority of experience and the importance of voice as central components in engaged
pedagogy. These components acknowledge the reality that marginal groups or oppressed
groups are often without authority and their voices are often ignored or misunderstood.
Experience and voice in engaged pedagogy are linked to Freire’s assertion that all speech
is political. However, engaged pedagogy points out the significance and relevance of
oppressed and marginal voices in the journey toward liberation, whereas Freire’s view
places additional emphasis on the influences of the spoken word of those in power.
Explaining the importance of voice and experience in engaged pedagogy, hooks states:

As a teacher, I recognize that students from marginalized groups enter classrooms
within institutions where their voices have been neither heard nor welcomed,
whether these students discuss facts-those that any of us might know-or personal
experience. My pedagogy has been shaped to respond to this reality. If I do not
wish to see these students use the “authority of experience” as a means of
asserting voice, I can circumvent this possible misuse of power by bringing to the
classroom pedagogical strategies that affirm their presence, their right to speak, in
multiple ways on diverse topics (hooks, 1994, p. 84).

This pedagogical approach assumes that all students bring to the classroom
knowledge that is experiential, knowledge that matters, and knowledge that is
substantiated based on the students’ experience and expertise. Therefore, the recognition
of this authority and voice can indeed enhance learning experiences. Hence, hooks stresses the importance of a pedagogy that is reciprocal in nature, meaning that teachers realize that students come into the classroom with knowledge, expertise, and distinct voices of their own and in their own right. As a result, the teacher is not the only individual empowered to teach; rather, he or she learns from the knowledge students bring to the learning experience as well.

From this perspective, teachers are actively and consciously aware of and involved in a type of critical pedagogy that allows them, as facilitators with power, to be taught in the process of educating. Engaged pedagogy involves an awareness of self-actualization and discovery that leads teachers and their students to empowerment and ultimately allows them to become agents for emancipation and societal change. It is important to note that hooks’ engaged pedagogy stresses emancipatory teaching specifically in conjunction with the oppressed, usually students of color. Again, this concept reflects Paulo Freire, who reminds us that freedom comes by conquest not by gift (1998). In other words, Freire contends that it is not possible for educators or other individuals who understand oppression to somehow pass along emancipation to or for the oppressed by their authoritative speech. Rejecting such an “osmosis theory,” Freire asserts that emancipation might be achieved, instead, by the problem-posing concept of education. Accordingly, hooks (1994) reminds us that, “The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself” (p. 11). In this case, the teacher helps the oppressed become vigilant toward and eradicators of the powers that dictate future oppression. As a result, the
teacher is not the only, nor the main, arbiter of knowledge, instruction, and intellectual wisdom in engaged pedagogy.

This concept of engaged pedagogy is directly related to a teacher’s consciousness when making decisions. If teachers are actively involved in self-actualization and discovery, then they are constantly questioning their rationales for making decisions. Such questioning and examination might be otherwise suppressed by the rigors of school life. I suggest that teacher education programs should incorporate explicit reflection that asks teachers and student teachers to reflect on their life experiences. Such reflection might extend beyond their comfort zones to include a number of significant experiences (e.g., adolescent schooling, family values, and biases and prejudices). Thus, cultural and biographical dilemmas, struggles, successes, and triumphs might become explicit, and teachers may understand how these attributes influence their decisions. hooks (1994) encourages educators to begin the work of the teaching and learning process with strong examinations of themselves in pursuit of becoming more effective. No empirical research projects have attempted to determine what happens when such reflections occur, specifically in planning and levels of efficacy.

Applying hooks. Dillard (1996) discusses her role as a teacher educator and her position of authority in the process of learning about both her students and herself through reciprocal journal writing. Through this journaling, open dialogues between students and teachers provide avenues for student and teacher engagement, reflection, and awareness. The journaling allows for constant learning from all involved, improving their understanding of themselves and others through reflecting upon their rationales and positions in the world. The students are learning, and the teacher is also learning about
himself or herself and his or her pedagogical capital, the understanding the teacher has about the power of the various instructional resources available to him or her.

Additionally, engaged pedagogy stresses an educative process regarding human nature. In other words, this concept supports the notion that in order to teach effectively, teachers must be whole human beings in communion with the world rather than fragmented, disconnected beings (Macedo, 1993). With this commitment comes the awareness of privilege (see, McIntosh, 1993) or the lack thereof (see McCall, 1997) because of circumstances within and beyond a teacher’s control. For example, European-American teachers may become cognizant of the fact that they may have an advantage over other human beings in the world simply because of the pigmentation of their skin. African Americans and other marginal groups may become aware that they may be ostracized and treated unfairly based on their skin color.

This awareness of privilege is not loitered or lingered upon but instead used as a foundation to equip those individuals with the realities to deal with the particulars of their situation and to work hard to overcome them. Once individuals know and understand oppression and key contributions to it, they begin to become liberated through their expertise and tactics to deal with those things that are out of their control (skin color) and change those things that are (pedagogy). Such liberation is alluded to in the Christian serenity prayer. Moreover, they decide that through holistic affirmation (Vanzant, 1996) they will not operate in the business of oppression in the future. Rather, they do their work in pursuit of helping others, themselves, and ultimately the world.

As hooks (1994) explains, “Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are empowered by the process” (p.
Engaged pedagogy is concerned with a holistic education, one that is not separate from the reality of the world, an education that demystifies the power of the teacher over the student. When using this approach, teachers are constantly reflecting and becoming more cognizant of who they are and why they believe what they do. They are in tune with the reality that biography, culture, and race matter in individuals’ daily experiences (West, 1994; McCall, 1997) and should thus be a part of their pedagogical epistemologies, even if they do not have the same experiences as their students. As a result, engaged pedagogy (and similar forms of pedagogy that may use different names and classifications) promotes instruction that is culturally relevant and seeks to understand the repercussion of the many ‘isms’ (e.g. classism, sexism, racism) that individuals contend with both inside of and beyond the walls of the school. These issues are further elaborated upon in *A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching* by Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, (1995).

**SCORE.** Finally, Strong, Silver and Robinson (1995) explain that students are engaged by four essential goals: (a) success, (b) curiosity, (c) originality, and (d) relationships. These goals, as explained by these scholars, satisfy a particular human need. For instance, success in student engagement attends to the needs students have for mastery. Thus, teachers are encouraged to provide spaces for student success through their pedagogy. Second, student engagement relates to their curiosity. In other words, students are often most engaged when they have a desire or a connection for understanding. Originality focuses on the creativity and self-expression needs of students. This goal encourages teachers to involve the students’ interests and imagination in lessons. It is not enough for students to follow the standard lessons that are developed
by the teacher, but this goal stresses the need for student inventiveness, and autonomy to promote student engagement. The final goal, relationships, focuses on the need for collaboration and linkages among students—these associations should be connected to people they care about in and outside of school and should meet a basic need of interpersonal connectedness that motivates students through engagement.

This model, as Strong, Silver, and Robinson (1995) classifies using the acronym SCORE (with the E representing Energy), poses four important questions that teachers must ask themselves in order to score the level of engagement in their classroom. These four questions include:

- Under what conditions are students most likely to feel that they can be successful?
- When are students most likely to become curious?
- How can we help students satisfy their natural drive to create and foster good peer relationships?

These questions might aid in teaching that is engaging for students.

**Understanding Engaged Pedagogy**

Essentially, research concerning student engagement has been conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Those researchers concerned with students’ “time on task” used quantitative methods as they timed the number of minutes students were engaged in completing an activity, assignment, and the like. Other researchers using qualitative methods employed participant observations, and observations to understand students’ in naturalistic settings. In some cases, researchers recorded field notes on behavioral patterns of the students based on their observations, and later had
interviews with the students asking them whether they found assignments/tasks interesting.

This study used participant observations to understand students’ engagement, and interviews with teachers as they had observed student engagement. Basically, teachers were asked to discern whether or not students were engaged, and I observed whether lessons seemed engaging for students. These methods were consistent with those used by qualitative researchers who have studied student engagement.

Conclusions

As these literature reviews reveal, teachers rely on their practical knowledge, classroom knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge in planning for the curriculum. This knowledge is used in all phases of planning. These phases of planning include the planning of teachers before teaching (preactive), during instruction (interactive), and after teaching (postactive or reflective). In addition, there are likely some sources of efficacy—mastery experiences, physiological experiences, verbal persuasion, and vicarious experiences—that inform teachers’ planning about their ability to plan. Once more, teachers’ efficacy concerns their thinking about their ability to perform a specific task. One focus of this research is the thinking that teachers use in developing plans for student engagement. As the literature review exposed, there is a nebulous nature to “student engagement.” In light of this, teachers in this study were allowed to define it though their own experiences and reflections. Further, this literature review revealed an important point; that is, increasing student engagement will not necessarily increase student achievement. However, effectively increasing student engagement may likely increase students’ achievement.
In addition, there appear to be connections between teacher efficacy and teacher planning for student engagement. Certainly, it is at the mastery interactive stage that the most significant indicator of teachers’ confidence in planning for student engagement might occur. In other words, teachers’ planning during teaching is likely the best source for determining teachers’ confidence in planning for student engagement. So, if teachers are confident that their students are engaged during their actually lesson(s) (or during their interactive planning), their efficacy would likely be high or strong in planning for student engagement on that specific lesson. Of course, this efficacy would continue or transfer only when the teacher plans for the same or similar lessons, with the same or similar students in the future. This point recognizes the specific nature of efficacy.

Additionally, verbal persuasion, another source of efficacy, might inform teachers’ confidence in planning for student engagement. To recap, novice teachers might be verbally persuaded during their preservice experiences to enhance their belief in their abilities to plan for student engagement. More experienced educators, like cooperating teachers or university supervisors, might verbally convey confidence boosters to novice teachers that inform their belief in their ability to plan for student engagement. Likewise, students’ feedback might enhance this belief in teachers across experience. Hence, verbal persuasion might occur during any phase of planning, particularly during collaboration among colleagues during preactive and/or postactive planning. In addition, this persuasion might be relevant to teachers with varied years of teaching experience.

For the novice, vicarious experiences might greatly inform teachers’ planning for student engagement. In other words, as preservice teachers shadow the planning
processes of veteran teachers, they may become more confident in their abilities to plan for student engagement. In this way, novice teachers might watch the manners in which experienced teachers negotiate their lessons interactively to keep student engaged. Through the veteran teacher’s expertise, novices might become more confident in their personal planning for student engagement.

The final source of efficacy, physiological or emotional experiences might also inform teachers’ confidence in planning for student engagement. Because this source relies on the physiological state of individuals, teachers’ efficacy might be influenced during their interactive phase of planning. So, if teachers were in disarray emotionally preparing for a lesson or even during one, their confidence would be affected.

Essentially the thinking of teachers and their rationalizations and beliefs about why they do what they do (theories of action) would likely impact their planning decisions. And because teachers’ thinking about their abilities probably informs their theories of action, such as the level of risks teachers take in developing lessons to acquire student engagement. Teachers’ planning, then, is informed by their overall beliefs and rationales about their work, and their confidence likely informs the types of lessons that develop to get students engaged.
CHAPTER 3

QUALITATIVE METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter one established the research questions used to guide this study, discussed the significance of this research, and provided an overall introduction for this inquiry. Chapter two provided a review of the related literature for this research. This chapter details the methods used for this research and outlines specific design, sampling, and analysis issues related to this study. Given the breadth of the research questions and overall goals and purposes of the study, qualitative methodology was employed. Qualitative inquiry “is an umbrella term for various philosophical orientations to interpretive research” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 9). Qualitative research is a socially constructed inquiry of phenomena that is conducted through interviews, participant observations, observations, case studies, and/or document analyses (Eisner, 1991). Moreover, qualitative research attempts to develop an in depth understanding of the participants’ perspectives (Magoon, 1977; Patton, 1980).

In light of the researcher’s goal of understanding the nature of two participants’ planning for student engagement and the participants’ sources of efficacy in doing so, qualitative methods were best and most appropriate (as will be discussed). Specifically, the goal of this research was to answer the following research questions: (a) what is the nature of two teachers’ planning, thinking, and teaching for student engagement? And (b) what is the nature of these teachers’ confidence in doing this work?
Research Design

Considering the research questions and the major issues underlying this research, qualitative methods were most appropriate to conduct this investigation. Specifically, this investigation concerned the quality of these teachers’ planning and confidence in depth rather than a population sample of teachers’ planning and confidence. Moreover, this research was interested in understanding these matters in detail for meaning not in generalizations and predictions more associated with quantitative inquiry. Because this research was interested in the nature of these teachers’ planning and confidence in naturalistic settings, data collection techniques as a part of the qualitative paradigm were most appropriate and thus, the best way to study these research questions were through qualitative methods.

Recognizing that “planning is challenging to study because it is both a psychological process and a practical activity” (Clark and Peterson, 1986; p. 260), the researcher relied on past research designs on teacher planning to guide him through this inquiry (e.g. Clark & Yinger, 1979; McCutcheon, 1980; Sardo-Brown, 1988). Many of the techniques used in those investigations were incorporated in this study. With previous studies used as a foundation for this research, through interpretivism, the case study approach was used to gather and report data.

Interpretivism

Interpretive theory concerns “a clarification, explication, or explanation of the meaning of some phenomenon” (Schwandt, 1997; p. 73). The natural sciences explain behavior of natural phenomena and employ positivism in explaining causes. Some social science and human science research, particularly interpretivism interpret or understand
the meanings of actions. Within this array, interpretation is the same as hermeneutics or verstehen. Hermeneutics deals with researcher understanding and concerns the theory of interpretation as a particular methodology. In Peshkin’s (2006) words, interpretation focuses on:

...ordering, associating, and making meaning. It [interpretation] entails perceiving importance, order, and form in what one is learning that relates to the argument, story, narrative that is continually undergoing creation...interpretation has to do with a perespectival accounting for what I have learned, or the shaping of the meanings and understandings of what has gone on from some point of view (p. 9).

So, through interpretation, Peshkin stresses the necessity of voice, and point of view throughout the work.

In addition, through qualitative research techniques, interpretive theory draws on what Eisner (1985) calls the “referential function” of knowing. This approach attempts to point out some aspect of the world, thereby allowing individuals to experience some phenomenon by way of vicarious participation. In pursuit of experiencing a phenomenon, several forms of understanding or interpretation can be implemented. These forms include, for example: naturalistic, constructivist, phenomenology, and hermeneutic.

So, this research utilized interpretive theory to ascertain data for this research. The next section elaborates on the case study theory as this research encompassed two single case studies.
The Case Study.

Schwandt (1997) posits that, “...a case study strategy is preferred when the inquirer seeks answers to how or why questions” (p. 13). Considering the “how” and “why” categories of this research, the case study is most appropriate for the question as posed in chapter one. The case study draws attention to the question of what specifically can be learned from a single case. This method is systematic, and it stresses specific, unique (or idiosyncratic), bounded (or restricted) methods of inquiry rather than generalities drawn from the researcher’s interpretation (Stake, 1994). Case research inquiries are concerned about what is common and what is particularistic in a study, yet the end result regularly presents something unique (Stouffer, 1941). Such uniqueness is persistent with the nature of the case, its historical background, the physical setting, and other contexts, including economic, political, legal, and aesthetic or visual categories—dimensions inherent in ethnography (Stake, 1994). For example, a case examining a teacher’s planning might incorporate the overall interpretation and understanding of subsections of that case such as the students (diversity, scholastic level, interests) for whom the teacher plans, the administration, school life, and so forth. Stake (1994) further reminds us that case studies do not “require examination of diverse issues and contexts, but that is the way that most qualitative researchers do them” (p. 238).

Stake (1994) further outlines three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. The intrinsic case study stems from the researcher’s interest in a particular topic and his or her desire to understand and interpret that phenomenon. It is not necessarily undertaken because it can be linked to other theory. In other words, this inquiry does not have to develop from other theoretical foundations. Further, intrinsic
cases are not representative of other cases, and they do not illustrate distinct traits or problems. Instead, they are cases that might represent hunches or premonitions that derive from the researcher’s personal interests, experiences, and research agendas.

Unlike the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study is concerned with a particular case and is conducted to provide insight into an issue or refinement of a theory. It is related to theory building or grounded theory-based inquiry (see Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Moreover, the instrumental case study “plays a supportive role, facilitating understanding of something else” (Stake, 1994; p. 237). As this research was designed to build on previous literature on teacher planning (e.g. McCutcheon, 1995) and teacher efficacy (e.g. Woolfolk, 1998), many of the characteristics embedded in the instrumental case study were employed using interpretative theory.

Finally, the collective case study is an instrumental case extended to several cases. In other words, the collective case study focuses on several collectively investigated cases with the goal that individual cases will lead to greater knowledge about a larger collection of cases on similar topics (Stake, 1994). This research additionally employed many of the tenets of the collective case, as it investigated two different cases with the goal of understanding these issues. In addition, the instrumental case tenet of theory building was employed as this research built on previous teacher thinking literature.

In essence, previous curriculum and cognitive theories provided the foundation for investigative questions in this study. Specifically, characteristics of both the intrinsic case study and the collective case study were used in this study. The intrinsic case relates to the researcher’s desire to build on some of the theories as previously investigated. In addition, this research investigated two individual cases—a collective case dimension.
So, this research embraces theoretical implications of both the instrumental case study and the collective case study.

Two data collection techniques were used in this study: (a) participant observations, and (b) interviewing. The next section of this chapter explains these techniques in detail.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Deriving from ethnography, one data collection technique used in the study was participant observation. This method has been defined as “observation carried out when the researcher is playing an established participant role in the scene [observed and] studied” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; p. 248). Attempting to observe these teachers in a participatory manner, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explain it as vital “to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behavior” (p. 42) and to establish the researchers’ participation early. The term “participant” in this study referred to the researcher’s involvement in the routines of classroom life. These routines were consistent with both student and teacher activities. For example, this participation included the researcher completing some of the assignments and tasks of the students. In some cases, the researcher edited student composition/term papers during student peer editing, and in other instances, the researcher served as a group facilitator during group discussions and work. Other activities included the researcher assisting the teachers with some of their minor tasks like straightening desks and picking up paper in the classroom between classes. The researcher often dialogued with each teacher about manners in which they might improve their work, a routine that often occurred among the teachers in the faculty work area. Additionally, the researcher attended a drama play, mainly in an
observational capacity, to develop a deeper understanding of the contextual nature of the school beyond the regular school day and classroom life. On a continuum, the researcher would have been closer to the observation end as most of his time was spent in an observational capacity.

In participant observation, the researcher’s awareness of self is important because it affects observational interpretation. Patton (1990) reminds us that the researcher is the main instrument for data collection in participant observation. Clearly, the researcher becomes the mechanism and the main arbiter of data collection through participant observation, an important duty of the researcher that must be recognized and understood. When participant observation is employed in the case study, “the issue is whether one describes the world of the subjects as they [the participants] interpret it (emics) or according to the conceptions of the observer (etics)” (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991; p. 101). Consequently, as Stake (1994) posits, the case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of the researcher learning about him or herself in the process (subsequent section will address these important matters of the “self” in participant observation).

In this study, again, the researcher observed the classroom instruction of the teachers along with regular classroom life. In this sense, observation consisted of the researcher taking field notes on issues relating to the routines of each teacher and the class’ routines, and the researcher specifically noting occurrences that related to the research questions. The researcher observed each of the teacher’s English courses over a five-month period. These observations occurred 1-2 days per week. Both teachers taught
a variety of English courses. These varieties included different academic tracks, grade levels, and subject matter.

The other primary technique used was interviewing. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain, “Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings” (p. 361). Hence, interviewing becomes both the tool and the object—the art of socialization, an encounter in which both parties (the interviewers and interviewees) learn from the experience. Seidman (1998) asserts that the interview involves a combination of life history and informed assumptions. He also suggests that the interviewer seek answers to open-ended questions so that the participants might reconstruct their experiences within the topic under study with little interruption from the researcher. Embracing these views, the interviews with the participants lasted 45 minutes to an hour. I typically posed questions and allowed the participants as much time needed for both reflection and response.

The interview became the primary technique for collecting data. Consequently, eight interviews were conducted individually with each participant. The interviews were usually conducted during the participants’ lunch or planning times. Appendix A provides the interview protocol. Of course, other questions often developed throughout the interviews, and many of those issues, as raised from the interviews, are discussed in the individual cases (chapters four and five). In addition, the interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The interview questions asked what Patton (1990) proffers as the six kinds of questions available to the researcher: those pertaining to experience, opinions, feelings, knowledge, sensory awareness, and background.
Research Setting

Two basic criteria contributed to the selection of the research setting for this study: (1) access, and (2) proximity.

Access: A process of gaining entry. Fundamentally, gaining entry to the research setting, hereafter referred to as Ritz High school, was achieved through adhering to guidelines inherent in the bureaucracy of the school system and the university. Because this research involved the participation of human beings, several guidelines had to be met before the research began. A proposal, along with other university-mandated forms, was submitted to The Ohio State University Human Subjects committee. A committee of experts reviewed this proposed research study through the proposal and provided human subject clearance before this research occurred (protocol number 00E0198). Further, the researcher was required to submit a proposal that detailed the research questions; time of study; requirements of the school (i.e. facilities, administrative needs, teachers, etc.) to the Ritz county school district and to the school principal.

From a pilot study, I had developed relationships of trust with the administrators and teachers that enabled and ensured clearance for this research. In light of the bureaucratic mandates of obtaining site clearance for research in the local school district, site accessibility was key in the researcher’s selection of Ritz High School. So, because of the researcher’s established reputation, access was permitted.

Proximity: A negotiation of time. In addition, because of university demands placed on me, the location of the site was also important. In many instances, I found myself negotiating time between the university and Ritz High. As a result, along with accessibility, proximity was also important. The researcher had to be able to drive to the
selected site within 20 minutes. In addition, there were times when the participants
couraged me to visit the school on a day that was not previously scheduled. In these
cases, I needed to be able to drive to the site within 20 minutes. Ritz High School met
this criterion, which also contributed to its selection.

Because one other school did not meet the first criterion (accessibility), Ritz High
became the site for this research.

Preparing for Data Collection

Before data collection began, each teacher was met with individually and
provided with written and oral overviews of the nature of the research project. All
participants, including the school principal, received complete copies of the research
prospectus along with written consent forms. Participants were given a copy of the
consent form for their own records. Subsequently, oral consent was solicited during
future data gathering procedures and techniques (e.g. during interviews). The participant
consent form outlined all forms of data collection and all purposes/uses of the data, and it
advised that the participants were free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation
at any time without prejudice to them, the school, or the community. In addition, to mask
and ensure the anonymity of the participants, the communities, and the schools,
pseudonyms were used in both cases.

Ritz High School

Ritz High school is an economically affluent, blue ribbon, midwestern suburban
high school. It accommodates 1649 students with a mostly homogeneous group of
enrollees. Specifically, 86% of Ritz High students are European American, 4% are Black
or African American, 0% is Hispanic American, 10% are Asian American, 0% is
America Indian, with 2% speaking limited English, 2% from coming from low income homes, 7% receiving special education, and a 3% turnover rate.

In 1982, the Secretary of Education established the blue ribbon award. In the first year of the program’s existence, public schools from 42 states and the District of Columbia participated. Since then, public and private schools in every state in the Union, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have joined the ranks of this honor. For the first three years, the program identified only secondary schools for consideration. In 1985, the Secretary of Education expanded the program to include elementary schools. Consequently, the program now honors elementary and secondary schools in alternate years. Middle schools currently participate in the program with secondary schools as there is not a separate honoring program specific to them. Throughout the program’s seventeen-year existence, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored 3,982 schools. Of those, 248 schools have been successful a second time, 29 schools have been recognized three times, and one school has received recognition four times. The honor of “blue ribbon” was bestowed upon Ritz High almost four years ago.

According to a Ritz county realtor, houses in the district range from $150,000.00 to $300,000.00. It was one of two high schools in the Ritz county district and was known for competitive soccer and lacrosse teams. Constructed in 1992, the school building was brick, and the architecture was moderately new and sophisticated. Carpet aligned a large portion of the commons area, and it resembled a coffee shop rather than a school cafeteria. Students often congregated here before school began, during lunch, and after
school. The hallways were light and airy, and refined artwork was displayed throughout halls, including original pieces by Ritz High seniors.

Because teachers were not assigned to personal classrooms, their classroom settings varied. The classrooms were typically carpeted with one computer in the corner of the room and a telephone for emergencies, both usually stationed near the teacher’s desk. In the corner of most classrooms was a 24” television with adjoining VCR access. Many of the rooms had both living and artificial flowers to accentuate the room. The teacher’s desk typically was in the front of the classroom, and student desks were typically arranged facing the teacher’s desk. Additionally, both participants in this study held some of their classes in one of the four I-MAC computer laboratories. The computers in these labs were on long tables circling the perimeters of the walls. Consequently, there was large open space in the center of the labs. Each lab also had TVs and VCRs in the ceiling at the corner of the room.

The Faculty Workroom

Because teachers were not assigned to their own personal classrooms, each teacher had a desk in the faculty workroom. This workroom was separated by partitions and the teachers’ working areas were often described as their “cubby wholes” as teachers had a small amount of space to navigate through. More specifically, each teacher had a desk with a small amount of cabinet space over his or her desks. This work area was purposely designed to promote deliberation and collaboration among the faculty at Ritz High School. The teachers’ desks were arranged and sectioned off by department (i.e. English, Foreign Language, Science and so forth). Quite often, food and snacks were strategically placed throughout the workroom compliments of Ritz High teachers.
Telephones were available with divider walls to enhance privacy along with faculty restrooms. There were no windows in the workroom, but artificial plants were placed on many teachers’ desks along with inspirational calendars with quotations.

**Participant Selection**

Two teachers were purposely selected for this inquiry rather than a larger number. The researcher was interested in conducting in-depth research, advice that Donmoyer (1990) and McCutcheon (1995) stress as integral in maintaining credibility and interpretation in research. A larger number of teachers would have made it difficult to go into depth—resulting in a more superficial analysis of the cases. These two teachers were identified by the researcher while working on another research project at Ritz High school. These teachers met five criteria for selecting teachers for this research: (a) English teachers, (b) reflective and articulate teachers, (c) experienced teachers, (d) teachers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, and (e) teachers willing to participate.

English teachers were purposely selected because English was required for all high school students at Ritz High each year. Because of this requirement, and the wide range of students having to enroll in English courses, teachers might be more committed to developing lessons for student engagement. As a result, English teachers were purposely selected. I determined reflective and articulate during informal interviews with them prior to the research. During the selection process, the participants discussed the nature of their work and portrayed exemplary reflective lenses in responding to the researcher’s questions on a number of issues. In addition, the selected teachers were quite articulate and clear about the nature of their work, which also contributed to their
selection. Such reflectivity and articulation were a criterion because in order to understand teachers’ thinking, deep reflection and articulation were important.

Criterion c (experienced teachers) referred to teachers teaching ten years or longer. This was important because the researcher was interested in how teachers’ knowledge and confidence developed from experience over the years. Novice teachers would not have worked in this study because their knowledge is still immature (and is in a more developing stage). The fourth criterion, racial/ethnic background was important for comparative purposes—that is, the researcher was interested in determining whether there were significant differences in the participants from this perspective.

Because two other teachers did not meet criteria a (English teachers), c (experienced teachers), and one other teacher did not meet criterion b (reflective and articulate teacher), the two selected teachers were chosen by the researcher.

Participating Teachers

The first teacher, hereafter called Barbara, is a female European American English teacher who lives in the Ritz county school district. She has been teaching in the district for twenty years. Barbara is well read and a member of a book club. She is married and has two children who have both graduated from another high school in the district. Barbara has earned a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in English Education, and she began teaching at age 37. She is ‘sweet-spirited’ and friendly. In other words, she has a gentle personality, and it appears that she has relentless patience with her students and people in general. More clearly, she has a pleasant demeanor and can easily be classified as a loving mother—she has a maternal instinct to her teaching and interactions (this will be elaborated further upon in the data analysis chapter). She stands
at around 5’6” and resembles, in a stylish way, Barbara Walters, syndicated reporter. Now in her early to mid-fifties, she is actively involved in exercise. Barbara enjoys gardening, dogs, cats and the outdoors. She walks her dogs daily and attributes it as part of her stress release. During her times of leisure, she enjoys photography, plays, books, and music.

The second teacher, hereafter called Johnetta, is a female African American English teacher who also lives in the Ritz county school district. She has been teaching in the district for eleven years but has been teaching for twenty-six years total. Educationally, Johnetta has earned a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in international education, a Masters in community regional planning (MCRP), a Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree in English Education, and a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Education, double majoring in English and speech. Having started a family in her mid-thirties, she is in her late forties and is a divorced, single mother of two elementary school-aged children. She is ‘strong-spirited’ and speaks with force and assurance. Physically, Johnetta resembles Johnetta Cole, President Emeritus of Spelman College and professor of Anthropology at Emory University. Standing at about 5’7”, she is self-described as “Afro-centric.” Having been the only African American teacher at Ritz High until this school term, she wears African attire some days. Most often, her hair is twisted or braided accompanied by a headband or scarf. Energetic and passionate, Johnetta keeps her students laughing and ‘entertained.’ She enjoys reading, traveling and, most of all, her own children.
Data analysis can be described as a process, one that involves an ongoing, continuous, engagement that begins the moment the first data are collected (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Embracing this process, I personally transcribed most of the interview tapes to continuously immerse myself in the data. This assisted the researcher in the formulation of new interview questions and other grounding endeavors (see, Strauss, 1998). Coding was used in this study to help analyze and interpret the data. Consequently, a codebook was developed. In Richards and Richards' (1994) words coding consists of “labeling passages of the data according to what they are about or other content of interest in them (coding or indexing), then providing a way of collecting identically labeled passages (retrieving)” (p. 446). More specifically, all forms of data were analyzed weekly. Data were coded by hand.

The data was presented in a case format, adopting a narrative style—one that was represented in a story design with a beginning, middle and ending that revealed the teachers’ perceptions and experiences (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). These narratives not only presented the data of the participants but also provided the voice of the researcher to distinguish his views from the participants’, distinctions purposely included to decrease tensions. So, the presentation of data was multi-vocal and encompassed both the voice of the participants and the researcher.

Tensions

In addition, qualitative researchers have continually been questioned about the credibility of their work (Eisner, 1991; Patton, 1990). Many of these questions stem from scholars who hold different epistemological and ontological positions and are unfamiliar with the basic philosophies of opposing paradigmatic research theories. The term
epistemology in this research refers to the nature of knowledge and justification—that is, epistemology provides justification for researchers’ uses of particular methods. So, one’s epistemological position has to do with the manners in which he or she perceives the world and how knowledge is developed and constructed. The term ontology, as used in this research, refers to the nature of reality and is concerned with understanding the kinds of things and people that occupy the world (Schwandt, 1997).

Integrity and Credibility

Because this research was a qualitative study, there had to be a clear knowledge of the structures available to maintain integrity and credibility in the study. The qualitative research literature contains valuable and useful treatments of such issues and tensions (see, for example, Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). Further, it was important for the qualitative researcher to be mindful of the central questions of credibility while conducting and reporting the research. With this in mind, this research was conducted and reported with explicit discussions of three central questions concerning credibility as outlined by Patton (1990): (a) What techniques and methods were used to ensure the integrity, validity, and accuracy of the findings? (b) What does the researcher bring to the study in terms of experience and qualifications? (c) What assumptions undergird the study? Using these questions as a guide, this section discusses some of the tensions of this study.

Two Central Tensions

Two central tensions arose in this study. First, the researcher’s subjectivity and issues of “self as researcher” was a source of tension in the study, precisely in participant observation. The researcher became aware of his prejudices, biases, and the like
throughout the inquiry. Such awareness began with researcher reflections. The researcher reflected in a personal journal throughout the research project and focused on issues that resonated from his past experiences and the manners in which those experiences related to his current experiences and research. Researcher journaling occurred after the visits to the school and was guided throughout the findings of the research, data analysis, and writing reporting. Consequently, the researcher’s positions and experiences were brought to consciousness. So, the researcher situated himself in the research and remained aware that the findings from the study reflected “a set of norms and values about what is worth examining and how. Sometimes values are implicit in the questions we ask, in the operational definitions we use, or in how we conceptualize an act” (Thomas, 1988; p. 21). The researcher consistently asked himself: how do I situate myself as an African, an American, an African-American, a male, and a former English teacher with views, perspectives, and positions deriving from all these components, which directly reflect my worldviews of realities? Accordingly, the researcher’s subjectivity was made explicit through this investigation by attending to Erikson’s (1992) question: How do I represent my own voice and the voice of others at the same time. The researcher’s weekly journaling reflected his biases and again, were made overt in his reporting of the research distinguishing his personal voice from the voice of the participants. Such overtness was consistent with what Peshkin (2000) calls “problematics” in which he intersects his interpretations of findings with his personal subjectivity to maintain his positions and biases throughout the reporting of data. He explains problematics asserting that “throughout the problematics, I have intended to clarify the intersection of my subjectivity and what I incorporated in my interpretation. I
do this not for the sake of confession or self-indulgence but to clarify the sources of my imagination that underpin my interpretation and, ultimately, my representation of what I learned…” (Peshkin, 2000; p. 9).

Second, the tension of teacher concerns/issues versus the researcher’s personal agendas and goals developed. In other words, the participants in the study often focused their attention on issues that were inconsistent with the researcher’s goals and purposes. For instance, the participants often talked about issues not salient to this research like disruptive students, parental involvement, and evolving change in the school district, racism, and administrative conflicts. As Eisner (1991) reminds us, the qualitative researcher should use inductive analysis—allowing the research to guide points of interest, categories, themes, and patterns. Consequently, the researcher allowed the participants in the study, and the research itself, to guide much of the inquiry and did not permit the defined research focus to completely dictate the research. However, much of the participants’ divergence was respectfully listened to and observed until they were ready and willing to address issues salient to this study. Throughout the inquiry, the researcher was mindful that he was the learner in the situation, and the participants were the experts of their experiences and thus what was most important to them.

Beyond tension: Toward credible research. Eisner (1991) informs us that evaluating the effectiveness of qualitative research in education is based on “the degree to which it illuminates and positively influences the educational experience of those who live and work in our schools” (p. 2). He outlined six essential criteria that can be used to evaluate the credibility of qualitative research. These criteria were employed in this research. First, Eisner stresses that qualitative research should be field focused. For
longer than three months, this research was conducted in a local suburban high school. Second, qualitative research should articulate and explicitly discuss “the self” as an instrument (particularly in participant observation). As previously stated, the researcher reflected on and revealed “the self” component in this research. This criterion was adhered to mainly through the researcher’s personal journaling. Accordingly, the researcher strives to systematically uncover his biases and prejudices throughout this dissertation.

Third, Eisner advances that qualitative research should be interpretive in nature. Implementing the theoretical constructs of the case study, this research was interpretive in nature. Through interpretations, the researcher was able to use his prior experiences juxtaposed with the interpretations of the participants to understand this research. Fourth, qualitative research should make the researcher’s voice/positions in the study clear and overt during reporting discourse(s). As chapters four through six will show, the researcher’s voice is overtly articulated throughout the findings of this study. Fifth, qualitative research should stress the particulars and idiosyncratic dimensions of the study—this notion relates to the concept of transferability and stresses the importance of an emphasis on this research, in this school, with this teacher and so forth, and rejects the traditional notion of generalizability. Acknowledging this criterion for credible research, this research consistently highlights the findings of this study and does not attempt to generalize the findings of the study. Rather, it emphasizes the potential of the study for other teachers in a transferable way. That is, these data are not revealed to be generalized as they cannot—considering the low number of participants in this study and the large population of teachers in schools and the variability among them. Instead, there may be
findings that a teacher or a number of teachers might relate to through their own work and benefit from, resulting in transferability.

Finally, Eisner emphasizes the importance of coherence, insight, and instrumental utility (or relationships to other theory and research findings as mentioned in the case study discussion) to enhance the credibility of the research. Addressing this emphasis, other methodological expertise and theory were constantly referenced to provide insight and guidance for this research. The researcher followed each of these six principles to promote and ensure credible research. Moreover, these six principles have been used to substantiate qualitative research and have proved to be useful in maintaining credible research.

Additionally, the following approaches have traditionally been utilized to lessen the tensions and questions of “the trinity” in qualitative research: member checks, and data triangulation.

**Member checks.** By utilizing the suggestions of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher crosschecked his work through member checks. In member checks, it is important for the researcher “to find a way to allow for the participants to review the material” to reduce ambiguity and misleading assumptions made by the researcher (Janesick, 1994, p. 216). Most often, complete interview transcripts, final reports, and the other relevant data were provided to each participant. These documents were provided to the participants throughout the study to provide them with opportunities to correct and/or clarify any information that might have been inaccurately interpreted or misconstrued by the researcher. In some cases, the participants were called at home after school hours and on the weekends to clarify matters. In most cases, the researcher used
the suggestions and clarifications made by the teachers to clarify or refine the findings in the study. However, in a very few instances the researcher and the participants disagreed. On these scarce occasions, both the researcher’s interpretation and the participants’ are revealed with rationales and clarifications for both disclosed.

In addition, conventionally, anthropologists and sociologists have adopted and incorporated a kind of member check that allows an outside reader, a reader who is external to the researchers’ discipline, to read their field notes, interview transcripts and data reports. Through a dissertation-writing group, the researcher utilized this technique. Specifically, colleagues from a variety of disciplines read the researcher’s data interpretations from interviews and field notes. On a few occasions the researcher’s personal journal was read by the other four group members two of whom were outside the researcher’s area of study. This was done for an additional crosschecking point.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation is meant to be a heuristic tool for the researcher and is not limited to three types of methods or perspectives in qualitative research (Patton, 1990). Rather, triangulation represents the usage of multiple sources of collecting data in order to achieve and substantiate findings. As Denzin (1978) points out, there are four basic types of triangulation. Data triangulation concerns the use of a variety of data sources in a study to substantiate findings in a study. A second type of triangulation, investigator triangulation, occurs when the use of several different researchers or evaluators collaborates to dictate and analyze or interpretive data. Theory triangulation reflects the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data; that is, interpretation is accomplished through a variety of interpretational lenses by different researchers in pursuit of data analysis. Fourthly, methodological triangulation concerns
the use of multiple methods to study or investigate a single problem or case (e.g. a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods or observation and interview).

Additionally, Janesick (1994) amends this list with a fifth type of triangulation, interdisciplinary triangulation. Moving beyond the psychometric discourse and worldview, she recommends using a type of triangulation in education that is borrowed from other disciplines, such as art, sociology, history, dance, architecture, and anthropology, an emendation that Eisner (1994) stresses as well. Embracing these theories, this research adhered to data triangulation by employing multiple data collection techniques (interviewing and participant observation). Further, a combination of case study characteristics was implemented in this study remaining consistent with theory triangulation. Plainly, triangulation surfaced when recurrent themes and findings occurred among a variety of data techniques and sources of interpretations.

The next section specifies the timeframe, and benefits of this study.

Timeframe of the research. Data collection began in mid September and continued through January. Another part important part of this research concerns reciprocity and benefits of this study. The final section of this chapter discusses the beneficial and reciprocal nature of this research.

Conclusions

Perhaps one of the most important dimensions of this research concerned the notion of reciprocity to the participating teachers, participating school, and the field of teacher education in general. This idea of reciprocity, in a sense, relates to the integrity of the study and the trustworthiness established by the researcher. One of the most important contributions of this research concerned the direct benefits to the teachers who
participated in this study. The teachers and the researcher often discussed their work. In many instances, the teachers solicited feedback and suggestions from the researcher about their teaching methods and strategies to make them better. This was especially accurate for Barbara in the study. For example, she and the researcher typically had in depth conversations about her lessons before or after class. Barbara commended the researcher for assisting her planning and her thinking about the manners in which she constructed lessons. Further, as a self-described introvert, Barbara and the researcher discussed strategies to increase her confidence. This will be discussed later in her case. The teachers and the researcher often spoke on the phone about their work and vowed to remain in touch. In other words, the teachers were committed to helping the researcher with his work as was the researcher with them.

Through this investigation, these teachers informed the researcher that they became more effective because, through their reflections and articulation about these reflections, they became more knowledgeable of and cognizant about decisions that worked, their decisions that did not, in planning for student engagement. In addition, as a participant observer, the researcher helped the teachers in daily task-related activities (as previously discussed), and assisted in student learning (i.e. disseminating/passing out papers, assisting in group discussions, and so forth). Ultimately, these duties of the researcher as a participant, assisted the teachers in their work—a dimension of reciprocity. Certainly, these participation opportunities benefited the researcher with triangulation from interactions with the students and in other areas. Accordingly, his participation and assistance in these endeavors complemented his understanding and interpretations of the findings.
Finally, teacher education in general, curriculum supervision, and curriculum development stand to gain new insights from this research as there are gaps in the literature on these important issues. Again, this perception is not to suggest that these findings ought to be generalized to the entire population of teachers, teacher education, curriculum supervision, and curriculum development. Such a generalization would be inconceivable given the number of teachers participating in this study. It does suggest, however, some important didactic lessons discovered through this research, another important dimension of reciprocity in conducting research that might be transferred to some of these entities.
CHAPTER 4
Planning, Thinking, and Teaching for Student Engagement:

A Case Study of a High School English Teacher

_No one else would know if I were a sloppy teacher or not. Nobody really knows what you do in your class; it’s pretty much your little sanctuary. It’s you and the kids, and they’re the most important for me. I do my work for the kids._

Mrs. Barbara Albright

This Teacher

Mrs. Barbara Albright has been teaching for 19 years and is a member of the Ritz county community. She and her husband have two children, a son now twenty-six years old and a daughter now twenty-nine, both of whom attended the other high school in the district. Their children are currently successfully employed in different states. Well read, Mrs. Albright is a member of a book club, and she enjoys gardening, pets, photography, music, and theater. Now in her mid-fifties, this European American woman is actively involved in exercise. She walks her dogs daily and counts it part of her stress release.

Mrs. Albright earned a Bachelor of Science degree in English Education, and she began teaching at age 37. ‘Sweet-spirited,’ friendly, yet passionate and knowledgeable, Mrs. Albright usually wears a smile on her face. It appears that she has relentless patience and energy with her students and people in general. She has a pleasant
demeanor and a maternal, nurturing instinct to her teaching and interactions, a point that will be elaborated upon later. Standing at around 5’6”, Mrs. Albright resembles Barbara Walters, syndicated reporter and hostess, in a stylish, sophisticated way.

The actual setting of this research is important in light of the nature of the research questions. The next section addresses the school, and community setting in which this research occurred.

This School and this Community

Mrs. Albright has spent all of her years of teaching in the Ritz county school district, teaching at Ritz High School since its construction in 1992. The Ritz High School building itself was brick and the architecture was moderately new. The hallways were light and airy, and refined artwork was displayed throughout the halls, including some original pieces by Ritz High seniors. The school was built primarily to accommodate the growing number of students in the district, and it has become nationally recognized for merit scholars and excellence in teaching. Indeed, Ritz High School is an economically affluent, blue ribbon, Midwestern, suburban high school. The blue ribbon award was established in 1982 by the Secretary of Education to honor schools that met a list of criteria regarding teaching, academic achievement, and school community. A wider discussion of the blue ribbon award was provided in chapter three, but Ritz High received the award four years ago.

Ritz High School accommodates 1649 students with a fairly homogeneous group of enrollees. Specifically, 86% of Ritz High students are European American, 4% are African American, 10% are Asian American, with 2% speaking limited English, 2% coming from low-income homes, 7% receiving special education, and a 3% turnover rate.
Classrooms Settings at Ritz High

Because teachers were not assigned personal classrooms, their classroom settings varied. In the corner of most classrooms was a 24” television with adjoining VCR access. Many of the rooms had both live and artificial flowers to accentuate them, and the teacher’s desk typically was in the front of the classroom, with student desks arranged facing it—a display that seemed to welcome direct instruction where the teacher stands in front of the class and lectures while the students take notes and pay attention only to the teacher who is “on stage.” All classrooms had a chalkboard, and many classrooms had overhead projectors, and slide show access projectors with viewing screens hanging from the chalkboard.

Mrs. Albright, along with most teachers of English at the school, conducted some of her classes in one of the four I-MAC computer laboratories in the school. The computers in these labs were on long tables circling the perimeters of the walls in the room. Consequently, there was large open space in the center of the labs, which is where Mrs. Albright typically was stationed during her class sessions there. Each lab also had TVs and VCRs in the ceiling at the corner of the room. One laboratory had just received a brand new class set of I-MAC computers, and of course, laser printing accessible to all students at no cost to them.
Because the school administration stressed collaboration, another important
dimension to Ritz High was the faculty workroom.

The Faculty Workroom

Because teachers were not assigned to their own personal classrooms, each
teacher had a desk in the faculty workroom. Each teacher's workspace was separated by
partitions, and those working areas were often described, as Mrs. Albright put it, as their
"cubby holes" because teachers had a small amount of space to navigate through. More
specifically, each teacher had a desk with a small amount of cabinet space above.
According to Mrs. Albright, this work area was purposely designed to promote
deliberation and collaboration among the faculty at Ritz High School. Additionally,
teachers' desks were arranged and sectioned off by department (i.e. English, Foreign
Language, Science and so forth). Quite often, food and snacks were strategically placed
throughout the workroom compliments of Ritz High teachers. Telephones were available
with divider walls to enhance privacy, and faculty restrooms were available in the
workroom area. There were no windows in the workroom as it was in the center of the
building with hallways surrounding it, but artificial plants were also placed on many
teachers' desks along with inspirational calendars with quotations, and pictures of
teachers' families, friends, and even students.

In order to more deeply understand the context of this research, the next section of
this chapter discusses the community in which this research occurred.

Homes in the Ritz county district ranged from $150,000.00 to $350,000.00
according to a realtor. However, there were a considerable number of apartments in the
district that were leased to individuals and families at varying prices. For instance, one-
bedroom apartments in the district ranged from $550.00 per month to $850.00 per month. For a three-bedroom apartment in the district, occupants paid from $750.00 per month to $1200.00 per month. Many of the streets in the community were filled with trees, neatly manicured shrubbery, running/jogging-tracks, and several parks were available throughout the community. In many ways, the community was reminiscent of the suburbs that were often portrayed in previous television episodes of such series as 90210, and Melrose Place.

To elaborate on the economic status of the community, one day, I asked a student to help me understand the context of the school and community. Her response to me was straightforward, yet quite directive: “Go look in the student and teacher parking lot.” I embraced this request and the message became clear to me: Many of the teachers and students at this school were wealthy. Indeed, the cars in the parking lot ranged from new Volkswagen Beetles and Toyota Corollas to a wider selection of Sport Utility Vehicles, BMWs, Mercedes Benzes, and Lexuses. With an introduction to this teacher, school, and community established, the discussion shifts now to the particulars of this case.

Mrs. Albright’s Planning

This section discusses Mrs. Albright’s planning, beginning with the long-range proactive planning or planning that occurred before she taught during the summer. The discussion then moves to her shorter-range planning.

Long-range Proactive Planning

Unlike many teachers, Mrs. Albright has recently begun planning her courses from semester to semester. I am referring to this planning as “long-range proactive planning” to distinguish it from short-range proactive planning—wherein planning is
done day-to-day or even week-to-week. As Mrs. Albright describes it, long-range preactive planning is “my goal this year because it takes the stress out.” She began this new task of long-range preactive planning during the summer by purchasing a large easel board “to write down dates and ideas for lessons, and it has worked so well” for her. While she had three courses to plan to teach (freshman World Literature, Junior American Literature, and Senior British Literature), she had previously taught all of these courses several times in the past, which allowed her opportunities to reflect on or “think about” her past experiences thus informing her current planning. Much of her work in this long-range preactive planning consisted of organizing information by skimming the index and table of contents of the respective textbooks and selecting literature that she would cover. She also reviewed previous notes she had taken on the respective courses’ readings and reflected on the types of projects and assignments that she had used in the past. In addition, she planned in this way by “brainstorming about some of my interesting prior lessons, and I think about new ways of handling assignments.” As she further explained, “I also think about more concrete things like proficiency exams, and agreements the other teachers and I have made about authors and readings most appropriate to include in the courses.” These decisions essentially transferred into departmental decisions that nearly all of the teachers followed.

In her long-range preactive planning for her three courses, she first organized and developed the writing assignments she would employ for the semester. This was done mainly because Mrs. Albright believed that “writing was the key to effective teaching and learning in the classroom.” As she put it, “writing is probably the most critical stage during a high school student’s career.” With writing as a starting point in her planning of
her courses, she used the board to organize and to strategically select papers’ due dates for her classes during time periods that would not overlap among her courses.

Considering her emphasis and strong belief in writing, her thinking here was simple—“quality grading.” She had discovered that when there were multiple sets of papers to grade from different courses “all coming in at the same time, my feedback was not as good as I like it to be.” So, because Mrs. Albright felt so strongly about the importance of writing, she organized her courses in ways that the students’ papers would be turned in at different times, and she would be able to offer considerable, more helpful, feedback on them. This was because, “The students learn from the comments and feedback I give them on their writing.”

In addition to concentrating on the writing assignments among her classes, Mrs. Albright also focused on the literature and readings she would cover during the semester. Simply, her reading assignments typically resulted in a form of writing that addressed issues specific to that passage or genre of reading. After focusing on the major writing tasks that her students would engage in such as term papers and analytic papers, Mrs. Albright then organized the literature the students would read, considering the amount of time the literature would likely take (reflecting on her previous experiences with it) and the type of writing she would want them to engage in afterwards. Much of this organization began with the readings that “had to be covered by all ninth, eleventh, and twelfth graders, then I was able to add some of my favorites and the favorites from the students [as she discovered through written evaluations].” Consequently, she selected readings in a sequence that would “allow me to assign the writing in ways that would be perfect...if it takes two weeks to read Lesmiserable in the freshman class, then the
writing assignment would need to be due a week later allotting three weeks to cover the entire unit. The juniors and seniors would then need to have assignments that would last much longer or shorter. This way I can get the papers back to them with quality feedback. It’s so important.”

Although Mrs. Albright was an experienced teacher, it was important to remember that this was the first year she had planned using long-range proactive planning, and it seemed to work well for her because “the students know what they’re doing until we break, and they have known it since the beginning of the semester.” In the past, Mrs. Albright explains that her planning was done day-to-day and occasionally week-to-week primarily because “I typically don’t see the big picture. [Rather,] I am sort of detail oriented.” This is important as Mrs. Albright stressed better organization through long-range proactive planning. She taught me of her struggles with organization throughout her tenure as a teacher of English:

I feel so much more organized planning this way. When I first started teaching, my supervising teacher, years ago, said that I wasn’t very organized. I think it’s so important to be organized. It doesn’t come easily for me, and I have struggled with this for years. I think you start [planning] that way...by being organized. Recognizing that she was not very organized, Mrs. Albright believed that this new way of planning was best for her because it kept her and her students on track. This has been most advantageous for her primarily because “I appear organized even when I may not really be,” a point that Mrs. Albright explained as key in effective teaching and learning. According to her, “students’ll know if you’re winging it. Organization is key.”
With her long-range preactive planning established, it was during Mrs. Albright’s short-range planning that she focused more directly on student engagement. This was the case mainly because as Mrs. Albright explained, “you never know what the student needs are going to be. They are so different, so for me to tell you that I can do an exceptional job planning for student engagement during the summer is absurd.” Accordingly, a new concept, responsive planning, emerged as related to Mrs. Albright’s thinking, planning, and teaching with student engagement in mind. The next section addresses this important dimension of this study.

Responsive Planning

Mrs. Albright engaged in what I am calling responsive planning—the developing of lessons based primarily on what is learned from day-to-day and week-to-week about the contextual nature of the course, students, school, and the world. In this way, she learned of the idiosyncrasies of the situation and responded to those needs and issues based on what she came to understand about the context. Mrs. Albright was satisfied with the way her long-range preactive planning worked for her, but she asserted “to plan with student engagement in mind, I have to be less general and more directive. You have to plan with your students in mind. These kids are so different these days. You never know what kind of group you’ll get. So, you know, I can’t completely plan over the summer for my class that starts in the fall before I’ve met them. You see?” While she wrote down and generally organized her courses during the summer through long-range preactive planning, most of her planning for student engagement occurred during her short-range preactive planning. Essentially, this planning was done reflectively. In her words:
I never write the plans down in detail anymore…but it’s a mental thing—[it’s] in my mind. It’s [writing down plans] not stressed as much here [by administrators] like it used to be. You know what you want them to do, and you think about it, bounce it off other people, and put it into practice.

When Mrs. Albright did write down information relative to plans, the writing was done to prompt her memory. Specifically, she wrote information in a to do list format, and they were often coded in ways that would be holistically understood only by her. As well, she often wrote down dates and time periods, as chiefly constructed during her long-range planning, for assignments and units—a task that she related more to organization than anything else. However, while Mrs. Albright wrote down only dates and time periods and so forth during her planning, she was sure to add “but I have my goals in mind, and the themes, and objectives for the day all mentally organized.”

**Student Engagement for Mrs. Albright**

Student engagement was important to Mrs. Albright because she found that when students were engaged, “they are more likely to put forth effort, learn, and perform well.” An important point to be made here is that while Mrs. Albright has always realized the importance of student engagement, she has developed even stronger concerns about it as the population of students she teaches has changed. As Mrs. Albright explained, “students today are a lot different than they were when I started teaching 19 years ago.” With this in mind, student engagement means something different now to her than in the
past, and she recognized that she employs “a greater amount of effort in planning to keep
the students engaged.”

Connecting Through Common Concern

Mrs. Albright explained that an essential part of her thinking about lessons for
student engagement concerned the notion of commonality that she and the students
shared on various levels. In her words:

First of all, I like kids and feel we really can share some things in common—
music, films, books, current events, such as the school shootings and other
disasters. We are all part of the world, so I don’t look at it as trying to be one of
them, but more like what do they think about these things? Sometimes it is just
for conversation, and sometimes I really want to know what they think about the
kids who feel the need to shoot guns, what they would do about it, if they could,
things like this. It just keeps me connected to them...I try to stay informed to the
current events to refer to in class and to use them when they fit. For example, my
seniors need ideas for research topics so this is one way to help them find current
topics. In thinking about these current events, I have taken To Kill a
Mockingbird, a freshman book, and added The Little Rock Nine by Ernest Green
and The Tuskegee Air Men as books for connections to To Kill a Mockingbird,
and to current topics. The kids like this best.

Mrs. Albright was clear that she remained abreast of events that were important to her
students, as individuals who live in the world. She was able to do this by watching
movies, and television programs (i.e Finding Forester, the news, the latest Survivor
Series), reading what her students may read (such as books), listening to what they listen

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to (like music) and so forth. In this way, she explained in this passage above that students ought to feel connected to these events and each other in ways that “help them think about common disasters that on some levels impact all human beings.” As she further explained, “students better appreciate and put forth more effort when they can relate somehow to the lessons.” Through my observations, it also appeared that the students wanted to have their opinions heard and respected without being contradicted simply because of their ages. Many of them presented adult images—personas that displayed precocious attitudes that demanded respect in a number of ways. This might have been the case because they often lived “adult lives” in many respects: they made their own dinner, worked 15-30 hour a week part-time jobs, purchased their own clothes, and made their own rules to some extent. Indeed, these students had opinions about most issues, and Mrs. Albright was able to connect to them because she honored this and engage in this responsive planning.

So through her responsive planning, Mrs. Albright was sure to learn about issues to which the students may connect. With this expertise, she was able to develop, organize, (re)develop, and (re)organize lessons that linked to students’ outside knowledge and ways of knowing, all of which greatly informs their lives and engagement. This was made overt when, as she explained, she incorporates new readings during her short-range planning based primarily on issues that developed through these common concerns.

Accommodating Students’ Authoritative Selves and Meaning Making Capabilities

Mrs. Albright provided a wide range of choices because the students wanted them. She learned quickly in her classes that students wanted to have input as they asked, “can we select our own topics for the paper, or why can’t we choose our own groups?”
She developed lessons, then, responsively that not only addressed the English Department’s goals but also allowed for students to have choices and make meaning. In her words:

    Choices for students are a part of the English curriculum at [Ritz High School].
    You saw that in our semester classes versus yearlong selections at other schools.
    You can also see that by the choices we give at every level in selecting independent books to read for an assignment, choosing a topic from many or choosing one of two or three short stories to read.

And because she came to realize that students wanted choices, she developed both written and verbal evaluations for her students—a responsive planning technique. She informed me that:

    I have found in my evaluations that students always like choices. Sometimes it would be easier and maybe more thorough to have one class read the same things, (many times I do just that), but I try to give them more than one book or assignment to choose from. In US lit, I allow them to read a book they really like--any practical book by an American author (even if it is an adult book as long as it is not one that could be seen as obscene) for their literary analysis paper. It is one of their favorite parts [selection of a book to analyze].

Indeed, a major component of planning for student engagement for Mrs. Albright concerned responsiveness—one that allowed her students to give her both oral and written feedback on assignments and to develop and implement that information accordingly. The feedback was taken into consideration during her short-range preactive planning. She explained:
Evaluations are an important part of goal setting, and I started it much because I wanted to improve, and how do you know if the kids think it is valuable or fun or challenging if you don’t know what they are really thinking. Asking them is OK, but you will get only the talkative ones, so I also like to ask for a written evaluation, especially on certain aspects of the lesson. When students think it is valuable, they get into it more. Also, they respect the activity, so the results overall are better and more enjoyable to read and grade. I just asked my freshmen, enriched class, to evaluate the website search I have asked them to do. They all wrote yes, they enjoyed it and found it helpful, and they thought the assignment was valuable, but they had criticisms about two parts: they wanted to choose their own groups, and they wanted more time to research the topics. The first concern doesn’t bother me because they are given times to choose on so many other areas. But the extended time to search is needed for me when I do this again next year. I also found out that some could not see the connection of the topics with *To Kill a Mockingbird*, so I need to do a better job explaining prejudice and racism, and the need for tolerance. To me, it was clear but these freshmen need more direct discussion on the reason for the search.

These choices were made overt, and the students preferred writing assignments that were personal in nature. As she puts it:

I also found that most students value and are more engaged in papers they write that has personal meaning to them, not ones just for an assignment. That is one reason I have tried to add writing assignments that are more personal to them. For example, I added “what is a personal journey of yours that will show your dreams
or struggles?” They had to add allusions from two pieces of literature they read on the unit, but any two, to their papers.

Mrs. Albright explained that students need and appreciate choices in their work, and she responded in the development of future lessons. Her goal and challenge was to “think about ways I might expand their choices in reading and completing work.” Again, the students seem to be in need of connections and Mrs. Albright uses these opportunities to connect with them. Driving home this point, Mrs. Albright continued:

There’s so much out there, such a big school...I had one freshman who said, I like to read your comments, [Mrs. Albright], and she’s the only one that said this, but I think that means there are more. But, you know, I think that’s a way of connecting.

In addition, she considered trust when planning for student engagement during the short-range preactive planning. As she explained it:

I do believe there is a trust element because they want to have a relationship with a teacher who listens to them and tries to plan with them in mind. Students do get tired of busy work, and it needs to have meaning to them. I am trying more to explain why the assignment is needed. The evaluation helps me to see if I am succeeding in this way. Trust is also used because I tell them I will modify my assignment next year for the other students.

Essentially, students at Ritz High wanted, and demanded in some cases, to know how their work was relevant, and why they were being asked to complete certain assignments. On some cases, students questioned teachers: “why are we doing this? What does this have to do with English or my life now or in the future?” Indeed, Mrs. Albright
understood that if she was going to be successful, she needed to show the students the relevance to their work, engaging in responsive planning.

Mrs. Albright’s Plans Enacted

From her long-range preactive planning, Mrs. Albright developed calendars that outlined due dates and assignments for each of her classes. So, “each student in my courses received a monthly calendar that specified dates and times that specified when assignments were due.” In this way, the students have a sense of what will happen next. On a few occasions, students would ask, “what are we doing next?” As Mrs. Albright explained, there was a time in the past when that question would “stress me out,” but because everything is written down on this calendar that she had organized during her long-range preactive planning, she was able to respond to such a student requesting, “let’s see. Take out your calendar and let’s look together.” Accordingly, as Mrs. Albright explained, “the students having the calendar does not necessarily mean they are consistently on track; however, you know, it helps remind me where we are, how much time I can spend there, and where we need to move.”

As noted during the discussion of her responsive planning, Mrs. Albright was quite committed to improving student writing. Her teaching was usually filled with independent and group work that would allow the students the opportunity to write. Moreover, in discussing her teaching, Mrs. Albright explained:

I start with where the kids are. But this philosophy is one I did not begin with. It is through my evolution of teaching that I have come to consider the kids first…My best work is really not lecturing…you know, discussions can be okay, but I even have to work at helping the discussions occur because I’m not a very
verbal person. [Plus], I like to see them [students] blossom and make meaning...this can be done, I think, in other ways not necessarily in me standing up lecturing to them and them listening and taking notes.

In light of Mrs. Albright not being a “very verbal person,” her teaching typically consisted of projects, group work, and writing tasks. This is not to say that Mrs. Albright never engaged her students in discussions. However, these discussions allowed the students to take a position and defend it with authority—in a way that did not present Mrs. Albright as the main arbiter of knowledge. This was likely due to the responsive nature of her planning and teaching.

To better illustrate the responsive nature of her thinking, planning, and teaching, the following section describes a class session in Mrs. Albright’s American literature course.

The Authority of Knowing: Teachers and Students as Experts Alike

Students wander into the classroom only a few seconds before the bell sounds wearing coats, sweaters, and sweatshirts with logos like Gap, Abercrombie, Fitch, Eddie Bauer, and Polo. It is obvious that this is the first class period of the day as many of them warm their hands by brushing them together or blowing in them having just left the winter breeze. Mrs. Albright smiles at a few of them as they enter and says “cold out there, isn’t it?” The students nod their heads in great disgust. They are not happy with the grimness of the midwestern weather and the fact that this is the first period of the day likely does not help.
The bell sounds to start class, and Mrs. Albright inquires, “how are things going, guys?” The students talk for a while without order and then one voice takes over and everyone else listens: “Terrible, [Mr. Williams] is giving us a history test today. My science project was due yesterday, and our essay in this class is due tomorrow.” Another student joins the venting, “I worked last night, and my mom still made me do the dishes when I got in; I’m tired.” This dialogue continues for at least five minutes with Mrs. Albright interrupting from time to time “too bad; I’m sorry to hear this. You guys need a break.” Finally she ends the conversation asking, “Well, how was the worksheet on punctuation? Was it helpful?” Again, students begin talking amongst each other, however, this conversation is a lot quieter as the students seem less interested in responding to this inquisition.

Mrs. Albright writes a quote from Thoreau’s Walden on the board that read: Men lead lives of quiet desperation. The assignment is simple; the students are to write a few sentences describing whether they agreed with this point or not—a straightforward pedagogical approach. Again, the students mumble to each other for a few seconds and then begin constructing sentences in their notebooks and on loose-leaf paper. After a few minutes, Mrs. Albright speaks, “OK gang, we know that Thoreau wrote this statement in the 1800s. Is this still appropriate today? What do you think? Do we agree or disagree?” A student speaks, “No, this isn’t true anymore. There’s so much today with technology and all. Most people want to be involved and keep up with what’s happening.” Another chimes in “no way, people really appreciate the simple things in life.” “I disagree,” a third student adds, we are living in the best times today because we have so many conveniences and opportunities.” Mrs. Albright looks a bit confused. She
interrupts, "I don’t understand. What do you mean?" The same student is forced from Mrs. Albright’s perplexity to explain further. He speaks, "Things are much more convenient than in the 1800s; nobody wants to go back to those old times. We wouldn’t even know how to act without the comforts and conveniences of the world today."

Another student counters, "the world would be better if we didn’t have all these things. You know what they say—the love of money is the route of all evil." "I guess," Mrs. Albright responds, "but why would Thoreau write this at that time. We know that he moves to seclusion for two years at one point in his life. What was he really saying by doing this? What was happening with him?"

In this passage, several issues seem important about Mrs. Albright’s teaching. First, she typically allowed the students the opportunity to do some writing to "gather their thoughts and of course for organization—organization is so important, Rich."

Second, even in a discussion setting, Mrs. Albright was not the main person speaking. Rather, she served as more of a facilitator than teacher in this respect. The students were allowed to take a position and defend it by virtue of being "people with something to say." In addition, Mrs. Albright appears confused at some point throughout the discussion. This was done because "the students have to think critically. I sometimes play devil’s advocate with them so that they can go deeper, you know? They’re bright kids, Rich, and they need to expand on their ideas so that they [their ideas] might be better developed."

This class session ended with Mrs. Albright providing the students with six journal prompts to elaborate on for homework. These journal responses were another main component of Mrs. Albright’s teaching. Keeping in mind that Mrs. Albright felt
quite strongly about the importance of writing, she discovered a way to have her students write and engage at the same time. In her words, she explained this as “another form of engagement that I incorporated. I don’t have to be lecturing for there to be engagement occurring.” In addition, she used these journals to respond to students on other tasks.

**Communicating Volumes Without Talking: Student Engagement Through Journal Writing**

Coupled with class discussions in which students are engaged, another form of engagement for Mrs. Albright’s students was achieved through journal writing. As Mrs. Albright explained, “students are not likely to talk about their feelings, problems, you know, and concerns in front of their peers,” however, she sensed a special need for all of her students to “express their reservations about their past, present, and future through journal writing.” This was also important as Mrs. Albright learned that the students enjoyed writing about themselves. So, in this sense, she was responding to the students by planning journal prompts that focused on them personally. Journal writing was important because students “need to express their reservations that they might not talk about in a group.” Some of their reservations concerned the stress due dates and other demands at home and in their courses. Many of them encountered pressure from their parents for good grades, choices for college, friendship and acceptance, and yes, even first loves. Mrs. Albright, explained that in her later years of teaching “these kids,” she discovered a major need for them to express themselves to a person who was genuinely concerned about them. She discovered that students are more likely to link the assignments to their lives through journal writing. Put simply, she discovered that the students were engaged when they wrote about themselves and she engaged in responsive
planning to accommodate this. In an interview, Mrs. Albright elaborated on this, explaining:

You know how they talk about the male and how violent...and yet some of the boys, the seniors, the freshmen, are just so sensitive...They are the ones who write about missing their fathers or their mother died or something...

Hence, she has come to understand that engagement for many students comes through their chances to “write their troubles away...and they ought to be able to express themselves as people with something to say.” So, again, this is a good example of this notion of responsive planning. Not only did journal writing provide an opportunity for the students to express themselves, it also provided Mrs. Albright with occasions to be engaged with the students. In other words, Mrs. Albright communicated with her students through the journals and offered encouragement as well as scholastic expertise and guidance. This was done by the written feedback that she actually wrote on the individual papers (more on this in the next section of this chapter).

To elaborate on the responsive nature of Mrs. Albright’s planning she explained that, students took a journal assignment meant to address a specific issue from a story or novel, for example, and turned it into personal vignettes and experiences. Mrs. Albright further taught me about her role in what she describes as the “power of journal writing”:

...I’ve learned in the last year or so, [when I respond], those comments need to be informational, but they also need to respond to that students. So I try really hard to make a couple of comments about how thoughtful they are, or just something, or this experience must have been real unusual...because, I think,
we're all looking for someone to connect to or something to connect to. Journal writing is so powerful.

Communicative reading and responding: Teachers must also engage. An important part of journal writing for Mrs. Albright concerned the responses she provided to her students. Her responses to her students were just as important in the overall scheme of the exercise according to her. In this way, this highlighted responsive teaching. Because the students often wrote about “serious issues that were resonating with them,” Mrs. Albright understood the importance of her role in responding. For instance, as she explained:

Sometimes the girls’ll write things like ‘Mrs. Albright, I feel so ugly.’ It is important when a student writes something like that to respond in a way that changes their thinking about themselves. So, I try to respond by saying something like ‘but you have such beautiful hair.’

Again, the students seem to be in need of connecting, and Mrs. Albright uses these opportunities to connect with them. As she described, this gives her “an opportunity to mentor her students” in ways that she probably could not otherwise. The students, as Mrs. Albright explained, were looking for someone to connect with, and Mrs. Albright understood the situational context quite deeply—the students had a lot of demands, and they were often “stressed and needed someone to listen to them without actually talking.”

In further elaborating on her thinking behind journal writing, she explained:

I think it’s important [journal writing], and I know some of the kids laughed when I first started journals with Thoreau. And, I just said, you know, most classes on a college level in English have journal responses… I write a journal every week in
my class at OSU [also], and they kind of looked at me with respect...[and] I think anytime I’ve done that [journal writing], the students are honest. They say things that you may never know about them otherwise. That helps me with the planning because I get a sense of what’s going on with them. There really isn’t a way for me to really know how they’re doing if they don’t tell me.

Highlighting the responsive nature of her work, and from what Mrs. Albright learned from the students in the journals, she began having the students “write more composition papers that focused on them personally as students as well.” Moreover, in Mrs. Albright’s words, “I am trying to balance papers between expository writing and personal writing (based primarily on what she learned from the students). I also try to blend the two when possible.”

Additionally, the quality of work that Mrs. Albright received, based primarily on their journals, improved tremendously because she allowed the students to focus on issues important to them in their writing. From Mrs. Albright’s assessment, the students put much more effort in their work when it dealt with issues that they, as students, enjoyed doing—work that most often focused on matters salient to their experiences and ways of knowing. She clarified this point stating, “the papers they write now are more about themselves, and they seem to like those papers and put forth more effort.” She further teaches me about the link between expository writing and personal experiences: “This is an age of self-exploration. If they are involved in the topic, they will remember it.”
Finally, I was convinced of the power of journal writing for student engagement when Mrs. Albright summed up her thinking about journal writing:

They’re [students] in search. That’s what it’s about. I found that…one of them, you know, is describing a loss in the family, just like Holden [from the novel Catcher in the Rye] had a loss of his little brother. His brother died of leukemia. And it’s amazing what they tell you. I mean, Richard Wright, we did it [journaling] on the father/son connection, and [they] had to write about their own fathers and mothers, a little bit different from this. And there’s so much honesty. It’s sad. Yet those can become ways to mentor…you never get that if you just ask for content only; that’s what I’m trying to say.

Interestingly, Mrs. Albright used the communicative art of reading, writing, and responding to journals as a way to mentor her students. By responding to her students, she was able to develop bonds with them that she was skeptical about developing in a lecture or discussion format. So, with these students, at this particular time, at this particular school, “personal” journal writing was important to the students and to her understanding of their practical realities. The students needed journal writing as a means for personal outlets, and Mrs. Albright needed them in order to acutely understand and “respond” to her students.

In the next section, the discussion changes to Mrs. Albright’s flexibility in planning.

Flexibility and student freedom: Meeting student needs. Certainly, Mrs. Albright’s interactive planning varied, and she often found herself adjusting her lessons while teaching to respond to student interests. Some days the students “are just not with
me, so I have to keep this in mind. Like, for example, the juniors that you see after lunch, I have to be flexible with that group. The kids have so much going on in their lives, and I have to respect that. If they are not with me, then I have to find a way to accommodate that—even if it means covering something the next class session.”

A flexible moment in American literature. Mrs. Albright’s was responsive and flexible in a number of ways, and some of her class sessions would have likely been unsuccessful if she was not. For instance, one of her American literature courses met the last block of the day, which meant that all students in the class had eaten lunch by the time they made it to her class. Mrs. Albright had preactively, and creatively developed a lesson where the students had to develop an interesting way to introduce their “choice book” to the rest of the class. She allowed the students to talk about this with their classmates to get feedback on their ideas. A few times the students got restless, it seemed, and Mrs. Albright has to remind them “we should only be talking about our books.” Finally, a brave student speaks, “Mrs. Albright, we are hungry. We got back from COSI late, and some of us didn’t get to eat.” Mrs. Albright asked more about the field trip that many of the juniors went on earlier during the day. Finally she gives in, “Go downstairs to the store and also see if there is something left in the cafeteria.” The students are happy. One of them asks, “Can we eat in down there in the commons?” Mrs. Albright answers, “No, the custodians have likely cleaned down there, so bring it back up. Now, I’m only doing this if you hurry. Get a snack—something to carry you through, and come right back here.” The students leave, and in a few minutes, they are back. Mrs. Albright does not seem aggravated. Rather, she seems content that she
figured out what the problem was and responded; when the students return, they eat and start again on their work.

Mrs. Albright has to postpone the choice book assignment until the next class as she met the basic needs of her students: they were likely not going to cooperate if they were hungry, and the quality of their work would thus be compromised. Mrs. Albright responded to the students’ needs, was flexible, which likely increased the learning, and cooperation among the students.

As well, generally, Mrs. Albright “yearned for the opportunity to focus on student issues and concerns during teaching.” In fact, Mrs. Albright believed teachers ought to be flexible if learning was going to occur in the classroom. In her words:

I think it’s critical to be a flexible teacher. If you are not, you will not make it in education. That’s something that people [teachers] need to work on. So, if you come in there, and you think that you have to have this activity and you don’t do it, then you prioritize what is really essential (sic). If it shifts, it’s ok.

Mrs. Albright’s contention here is so strong that she asserted that teachers may not be successful if they are not flexible or responsive, a point that was thoroughly discussed in chapter two. So, an important part of her planning was during the interactive phase as students made connections with issues that she often did not preactively plan to address. Consequently, she possessed great flexibility in her abilities to “meet my students in left field.”
The discussion shifts now to Mrs. Albright’s postactive planning.

**Verbalize it: Collaboration is key in reflection.** Mrs. Albright talked extensively about the influence of, and benefits from verbalizing her ideas, and plans through collaboration. Such collaboration was most effective with other colleagues in the faculty workroom. These collaborative experiences were impromptu and occurred at any time of the day. In addition, she often talked to her very supportive, yet critical, husband. The conversations with her husband typically consisted of Mrs. Albright talking about a lesson and his asking questions that he believed might be useful.

She benefited from the support and feedback from her colleagues in the English department at Ritz High and “I often modified and restructured my planning from talking with them,” some of whom were novices. Such collaboration with her colleagues occurred both preactively and postactively. That is, Mrs. Albright typically collaborated with her colleagues before teaching, particularly when she was teaching a new or expanded lesson. In her words, “It’s especially helpful, you know, to talk to others [teachers] who have already covered a work [book, novel, story].” Much of her talk with her husband, however, transpired postactively or reflectively as she “vents to him about the day’s goings on” at the end of the day. Such articulation helped her crystallize and develop future lessons and understand what occurred.

Another important point that likely contributed to Mrs. Albright’s collaboration is the fact that collaboration at Ritz High School is strongly encouraged among administrators in the school, and the district. Perhaps the faculty workroom setup is further evidence that the teachers are encouraged and “expected to collaboration with each other.” This collaboration is a “healthy exchange of ideas for student learning,” as
Mrs. Albright explained. She further explained that the administration at Ritz High worked hard to recruit and retain teachers who are “team players.” To substantiate this point, in an interview, Mrs. Albright explained:

I like to talk to [Tanya, another experienced teacher of English at Ritz High] to get her opinions about my lessons. I like sharing, especially when I think that a lesson has gone well, so sometimes [Tanya] and I will talk about a lesson after I teach it. I am quite creative. I’m sure she steals all my good ideas [laughing].

In this way, she found collaboration key in her preactive and postactive phases of planning. She explained that “I am a part of my English Department. We are expected [by the administration] to be team players and work together on our class curricula. It’s really a sharing that most of us do for the sake of our students.” From these collaborative opportunities, Mrs. Albright was able to “picture myself in that environment, and engage in decision-making” through preactive and postactive planning.

The case changes now to address Mrs. Albright’s sources of confidence.

Mrs. Albright’s Sources of Confidence

The second strand of this research concerned Mrs. Albright’s sources of confidence. The term confidence as used in this dissertation concerns this teacher’s efficacy. Teacher efficacy concentrates on teachers’ thinking about their ability to perform a specific task. Because this research was concerned with this teacher’s ability to plan for student engagement, the case focused on Mrs. Albright’s beliefs about her ability to perform this task.

As outlined by Bandura, there are four sources of efficacy that inform teacher’s beliefs about their ability to perform a task. These four sources include: (a) mastery
experiences, (b) verbal persuasion, (c) vicarious experiences, and (d) emotional and physiological states.

**Confidence Through Experiences: Leaning on Success and Failure**

To briefly recap, the mastery experiences of teachers have been found to be the most significant influencers of teachers’ efficacy. The mastery experiences concern the outcomes that occur from the teacher actually completing the specific tasks (such as planning for student engagement). So, when this teacher plans for student engagement, the success or failure of the plan directly affects her confidence. In this case, it was during her actual teaching (interactive planning) that the greatest source of efficacy was developed. Mrs. Albright taught me, “…I think with me, I am not confident when I teach a class the first time. And, I am not really confident that whole time. If things are going well while I’m teaching, I start feeling more comfortable.” If the plan is unsuccessful, she explained that she would likely not be confident in planning a similar lesson in the future.

On the other hand, while she admitted that planning and teaching a new lesson with which she was unfamiliar brought into question her confidence, she also talked about how she searched her repertoire for similar lessons and topics during planning. This search was pursued to inform her level of confidence. As she put it, if “I had not been successful in planning for a similar lesson in the past, my confidence is not all that great.” If she had been successful in the planning, her confidence would likely be high. Consequently, each time she planned for a new or expanded lesson, she searched for past planning experiences that “related in some ways to the content and topic of this new lesson.”
Assessments and Evaluations: Not Only for Students

How, then, was her confidence most significantly influenced? Mrs. Albright explained that “the feedback from my students has been most helpful in how I feel about myself and the lesson.” The students’ feedback either boosted her confidence or caused it to decline, and she learned of it through their oral and written feedback. She was thus responsive to those matters as raised by the students. The discussion shifts now to address the verbal persuasion source as it was linked to the mastery experience. That is, while the mastery experience was the most significant informer of her confidence, it was the verbal persuasion source that the mastery level was best informed.

Students Talk About Teaching: Major Confidence Informants

In a number of ways, Mrs. Albright believed that “my students are even better [informants about my teaching] than her colleagues or the administration because they are actually a part of my sanctuary.” So the students were best cognizant of what actually happened in her room. This was because “the students are the most honest and reliable in informing me about my work. They were not likely to fib to her, mainly because she “developed a classroom conducive to honesty, and I also do the anonymous feedbacks and evaluations after most lessons.” This was important to her as she was not interested in feedback from people who might just “tell me what I want to hear like from my colleagues.” She elaborates on this point explaining, “We [teachers], you know, help each other, but we also don’t want to hurt each other either.” This point was substantiated as I observed the feedback she received from the students during her “survey” questioning. Most of them seemed honest, even when the truth was inconsistent with what might make Mrs. Albright look good.
There were times, however, when she was commended for her good teaching, occasions that “I think helps my confidence” to plan for student engagement. These commendations came from “notes from students and yes, even parents. Every now and then you’ll [a teacher] get a nice note or card that says you’re doing a good job. That means, you see, that I’m doing something right in my work and my planning because my work starts with that planning, you know.” In this sense, the verbal persuasion was not occurring during the interactive stage of planning and the mastery experiences. Rather, it was a form of verbal persuasion that transferred to her planning in general.

In addition, in some ways, Mrs. Albright explained and reminded me that “some teachers often get taken for granted, and even in my later years in the profession, confidence lifters are nice. We all need them even our students. We have to build each other up sometimes. But we also need to hear the bad, you know?...How else will we get better, and so both the good feedback and bad are helpful, and it’s nice to hear ‘Mrs. Albright, you did a good job on this’—it makes me confident. But, I mean, I also need to hear, ‘this wasn’t so great, too’ even if I feel less confident. You see? Both are very important to be a good teacher and planner.” This confidence, then, can be linked to this notion of responsiveness. Mrs. Albright used the negative feedback she received responsively and adapted the lessons to get better. During further conversations on this issue, Mrs. Albright said:

Sometimes, though, you know, some student writes you a little note or you get a parent--I love it (sic). I mean we don’t get that many, it’s very nice when someone says I’m very happy with your teaching. That gives you [the teacher] that confidence. You want to be effective. You want to be an effective teacher,
and you want people to say, “Wow, she’s going to teach you something.” And you know that they respect you.

Collegial Respect: To Tell the Truth or Not

While not as profound as student feedback, another factor in Mrs. Albright’s confidence concerned the verbal feedback she received from her colleagues. She explained the feedback from her colleagues as “a form of respect that I sense through speaking with them.” The connection with her confidence and her colleagues essentially concerned the notion of respect. In her words:

I feel like I’m respected. There’s no doubt, I think, I’m respected in my English Department, and that obviously gives me confidence. You know, it’s nice to know that my peers think I’m doing a good job.

The confidence that Mrs. Albright received from here colleagues through respect was important to the manners in which she saw her work in general, and she responded to that feedback in ways that caused her to expand her work, take greater risks, and so forth. In teaching me about this notion of respect from colleagues and efficacy, Mrs. Albright explained:

There is a teacher who has resigned and has taken a job with the State Department. It’s a wonderful job, but she’s leaving because she feels that our [English] department and administration does not respect her teaching. She’s been teaching 27 years—it’s horrible…and so, yes, I think she’s leaving because of that [the lack of respect from her colleagues and the administration]. So, I think you need to be respected within your department; that gives you confidence.
What is most interesting about this incident is the reality that “the students were the ones to talk negatively about the teacher’s work. Teaching at Ritz High was left open to the teacher himself or herself.” So, teachers were essentially allowed to negotiate the curriculum, considering state mandates, the graded course of study, and school level goals and objectives. The administration was not very strict “because there were excellent teachers in the school and the district.” However, although students typically performed well on standardized tests and the rate of college admission was remarkable, Mrs. Albright regretted that “the administration was beginning to become stricter considering proficiency test expectations.” As a result, as she explained, “no one other than students really understood how effective or ineffective teachers are.” In addition, Mrs. Albright admitted that the level of respect she had received kept me going. I will keep working hard if I felt that what I am doing is not only appreciated from my students but also my supervisors and colleagues. It’s so important.”

Mrs. Albright further explained this “word of mouth” phenomenon and the power of it in influencing her confidence. She stated:

…I’m even respected when we have joint meetings [referring to meetings with other departments]. I think a lot of it is that [respect]. I think it’s word of mouth. I mean, I just feel it, Rich, when I’m in a meeting. They’ll ask me, well what do you think, Mrs. Albright? They look at me, and so, that is nice. And obviously, you know, I have worked hard. I’m not a slacker; I do work hard, and I try.

Additionally, Mrs. Albright also discussed verbal persuasion during her novice years. At that time, “it was extremely important for me to receive praise and encouragement from my supervising teachers and university supervisors.” However, the
student feedback, at that time, was “not as significant as the feedback I received from those who taught me as a student and a budding professional.” Over the years, however, her emphases have been placed on “the feedback I received from her students themselves.” This was probably true because of the amount of autonomy she and the faculty in general had. Put simply, in order for her to profoundly feel more confident in her abilities to plan for student engagement, she had to believe that there was a sense of sincerity—one that was not fabricated in pursuit of positive collegial comrade.

The next section of this chapter addresses a third source of efficacy as identified by Bandura, vicarious experiences.

**Seeing is Believing or Is It?**

Mrs. Albright team-taught with a social studies teacher in one of her enriched courses. Most often, Mrs. Albright would teach the first part of the period followed by the social studies teacher. On some occasions, Mrs. Albright taught directly before her colleague. Mrs. Albright and her colleague were very different in their teaching method. Keeping in mind that the subject matter in the courses was different, there might have been teaching strategies that informed her levels of confidence in teaching considering the fact that the context was the same. In light of this vicarious experience, I inquired about its influence on her confidence. She explained:

Well, while I think [Lottie, her colleague who taught social studies in the team teaching] and I are alike in certain ways, we’re not alike in our presentation [pedagogy]. She is an orator and likes to speak in front of large groups; she does it very well…my strength is planning, interaction with kids, being creative. I’m
good at teaching writing, and I’m very confident with my subjects…[so], I can’t really mimic [Lottie] because it’s not my style.

So, Mrs. Albright rejected the notion that she received confidence boosters through her observations of her colleague teaching before her or directly after she taught. To be certain, Mrs. Albright taught me “…So, she doesn’t really give me confidence, but I think it comes, it almost has to come from yourself.”

Another logical opportunity for a vicarious experience that may not influenced Mrs. Albright’s confidence was her student/preservice teaching experience, wherein she watched mentor or experienced teachers plan and teach. Perhaps her confidence was somehow informed by her watching her supervising teacher during her novice years as a teacher. Upon my inquiry into this matter, Mrs. Albright did not believe her confidence was influenced by her watching of more experienced teachers when she was a student teacher. In fact, she did not believe that her experiences watching other people teach and plan for student engagement were ever a significant factor in her confidence in doing these tasks. Consequently, this source of efficacy appeared weak considering the specific task of planning for student engagement.

The discussion shifts at this point to address the final source of efficacy as identified by Bandura, emotional and physiological states.

Criticism and Stress: What’s the Price? Bleeding?

Mrs. Albright’s emotional states were connected quite overtly to verbal persuasion experiences. She explained these states that were linked stating:

I was criticized about five years ago. I was criticized by really bright students and their parents…they said, [Mrs. Albright], you’re not hard enough; you’re not
challenging enough. And I really wasn’t…I wanted to nurture. They were freshman, and this was a new school and a new experience for them.

In a sense, these criticisms related to her planning, as it was “when I plan that I developed the level of difficulty on assignments for the students.” That experience within itself influenced her confidence. Because Mrs. Albright “worked so hard,” this was a criticism that resulted in emotional turmoil for her. It was tough, and she leaned on her husband and family to “get me through it.” She taught me of that experience:

…I kind of, at one point said, my God what else can I do, bleed for you? I mean because I felt in my own mind that I was working so hard. It’s probably very good for me because I learned from that. Those are all perceptions and you [teachers] do look at it. Then, you feel more confident or less after it.

Accordingly, Mrs. Albright took this negative experience and the emotional turmoil that it created and turned it into a learning experience. As she reminded me, “you cannot have thin skin with this new wave of kids.” Mrs. Albright reflected on that negative experience and explained, “…And I had a few choices to make. I could be sore about it, or I could step up to the plate. I stepped up to the plate.” In “stepping up to the plate” Mrs. Albright began to plan assignments that were more challenging, and she now grades much harder than before that experience. In fact, students informed me through my investigation of this point that Mrs. Albright was one of the hardest graders they had ever had. So, a current source of efficacy might be that she “weathered” that emotional storm and improved.
Conclusions

In conclusion, this teacher’s planning consisted of both long and short-range planning. The most extensive planning, however, occurred short-range wherein Mrs. Albright learned of the students’ interests and developed lessons based on that knowledge. This planning was described as responsive in that her organization and development of lessons concerned this teacher purposely learning about her students and then (re)directing lessons from week to week or even day to day. Accordingly, even through her broad years of planning and teaching, this teacher still was creative in developing lesson. Her motivation for such creativity was a result the changing circumstances and interests of her students. In this way, she did not consult notebooks of plans that she had acquired over the years or follow extensively the plans developed from textbooks guides. Rather, her plans were spontaneously developed based on the situational nature of the courses, and the plans were done responsively in that Mrs. Albright took the information learned from her students and used that knowledge as a base for developing and redesigning new ones.

Because Mrs. Albright was a constructivist, her planning essentially consisted of her learning about what was important to her students and developing lessons that allowed the students to make meaning in groups and on independent assignments that highlighted the students’ creativity. The lessons were engaging in this case because Mrs. Albright reflected on her years of teaching and working with students, and she came to understand their interests as the students changed over the years—that is, she could not solely rely on her years of teaching to develop engaging lessons. Much of the teaching and learning in her classes occurred in what might be considered “non-traditional” ways,
and her thinking about these lessons and development of them were likely inconsistent with lessons that relied on direct instruction. Perhaps her classes were engaging to students because they forced students to take control, in some part, of the teaching and learning that occurred in the classroom. In this way, the students were teachers themselves, especially when they were working on readings and other assignments in groups. In fact, she frequently had her students work in groups, develop projects and reports creatively, and use inferences to draw conclusions during discussions. This was palpable by her organizing lessons during short-range proactive planning. This seemed logical in that she could not effectively allow students to make meaning without having met them, and coming to understand their perceptions, strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, and interests. While she benefited (particularly organizationally) from long-range proactive planning, it was during her shorter-range proactive planning that she was able to develop lessons for student engagement. Indeed, she could not meet her students’ needs without deeply understanding what those needs were as they occurred, and more importantly, how they came to be that way.

Indeed, it would have seemed difficult for her to develop shorter-range assignments through lesson planning with student engagement in mind during long-range planning—before even meeting her students. She was a constructivist and much was learned in this respect about her planning responsively and constructively. So, Mrs. Albright was able to capitalize on her strengths (teaching relying on constructivism) and address student interests for engagement (responsively).

It was clear from my observations that one of the strongest forms of knowledge that Mrs. Albright possessed was her classroom knowledge. She knew very well the
dynamics of the classroom, and the “tricks” and disguises that many of her students presented through her means of instruction. Perhaps tricks and disguises occurred often because she frequently had her students work in groups. She was effective in her ability to detect off-task students, particularly in groups, and from her detections, she cleverly drew them back into the lesson. At first, through my observations in her classrooms, I thought that this skill of getting students back on task during group work was a part of her tacit knowledge. However, in an interview, Mrs. Albright brought this issue into the discussion without much probing from me. She taught me, “You need to go around, even to groups, especially in the enriched English classes. That’s something I’m good at.” In view of that, she provided an example from a class session that I had attended stating:

You know at the end of the period after the movie, they were in those groups? I could kind of tell they didn’t really want to do that in the beginning because it’s a little bit of effort...then, I said put a star by the ones that you think are significant.

This helps to force the student to become engaged even when they don’t want to. Using this expertise and her classroom knowledge, she explained further how she often walked around near groups of students whom appeared off-task to reprimand them. The reprimands were not verbal; however, instead they were delivered through a silent dialogue—one that was not spoken but was understood by her presence. She explained further: “I think it helps the teacher just to walk around to see that [everyone is participating] because you can never completely watch in groups because there are some kids that will always be more doers than others.” Even in this respect, Mrs. Albright’s work highlighted responsiveness.
Combining her classroom knowledge with her practical knowledge, she further explained that depending on the intellectual level of the students, some of them were more likely to manipulate one or two individuals in the group to do the majority of the work. She was most convinced that enriched students were wittier in their abilities to make her, as teacher, believe that they were actively engaged when they actually were not. In her words:

I just felt that some of them might not do it [engage in the group activity]; they’re bright kids, [and] they try to get one kid to do it, and they may say they don’t want to write it down [themselves], but they really aren’t participating.

Mrs. Albright’s substantial classroom knowledge helped her be effective in developing plans and keeping her students engaged. Mrs. Albright relied on her classroom knowledge to be effective and to keep her students engaged in light of her responsive, constructivist planning and teaching.

In addition, Mrs. Albright freely admitted to her teaching deficiencies. Indeed, her admissions of those weaknesses signaled maturity in her teaching as she deeply understood her work. Mrs. Albright’s understanding of her own particular strengths and limitations in teaching was an integral part of her success in teaching. For example, because she was aware that she was not “a verbal person,” Mrs. Albright realized that her pedagogy had to include techniques reflecting her strengths—group work, projects, and so forth. Accordingly, Mrs. Albright capitalized on her creativity—her exemplary skills in teaching writing and her excellent content knowledge for instance. Mrs. Albright had broad pedagogical knowledge because she recognized her personal strengths, learned from and respond to the feedback of her students (responsively) through her classroom
and practical knowledge, and incorporated pedagogy that best satisfied the intersections of each. Mrs. Albright had a keen understanding, perhaps mainly from her years of teaching, about what was most effective for her. She adapted pedagogical strategies, then, that allowed her to do her best teaching based on her strong points and the knowledge she acquired from the students.

Mrs. Albright’s content knowledge, on the other hand, seemed to be far superior to any other form of knowledge that she possessed. Mrs. Albright knew her course content. This was evident in the way she responded to students’ questions and in the creative lessons she developed. Further, one customary criterion for selecting teachers to teach enriched courses was that teacher’s content knowledge. Mrs. Albright was rich in content. Indeed, due to the intellectual level of the students at Ritz High School in general, teachers teaching enriched courses had to be strong in course content to stimulate their students.

Reflecting on her content knowledge, Mrs. Albright attributed much of the knowledge she possessed to the amount of effort she personally employed in her teaching. When the students were reading, she was reading. When the students were doing homework, she was doing homework. And so, she was constantly learning and strengthening her knowledge of the content. Moreover, Mrs. Albright learned from her students that they, as students, were able to detect when teachers were not prepared and knowledgeable of the subject matter, and “the enriched kids’ll put you to the test.” Mrs. Albright further explained her thinking behind her rich content knowledge:

I’d say you need to go in ready ‘cause the kids want to learn and after the first month, the honeymoon is over. It is amazing. They want to learn… I don’t see
them playing games as much. So, you can’t get cynical. If there’s a trust, they are not cynical. I learned a long time ago that they detect our bullshit. They keep me honest…you [have to] know your material, or they’ll know it.

Mrs. Albright explained the connection between trust and her commitment to continuously remain abreast of her content, which made her sharper in her ability to plan responsively. Mrs. Albright was strong in her content knowledge because she did not want to jeopardize her rapport with her students—one that was built essentially on trust. This trust seemed to reflect her obligation to them. More specifically, Mrs. Albright went as far as to call teachers who are not deeply immersed in their content “sloppy teachers.”

There are many links between pedagogy and content in this case. Mrs. Albright’s was able to interactively plan in manners that exemplified effective teaching. This was especially the case when students altered the discussion or lessons invoking issues that were not preactively planned. Of course, Mrs. Albright welcomed the students’ responses because she could “take a trip with them on their interests.” In addition, it seemed that an important part of Mrs. Albright’s planning for student engagement concerned her ability to negotiate and rely on this knowledge that she had crystallized over the years. Mrs. Albright believed so significantly in maintaining student engagement that she was able to trigger and incorporate her various forms of knowledge in ways that helped her determine off-task students. Through her practical knowledge she was able to responsively develop lessons to satisfy the situational realities of her students—successful lessons that not only kept the students engaged but also helped them learn. Mrs. Albright was able to use her classroom knowledge to target off-task students and alter lessons (most often interactively) to keep them on or steer off-task students back.
on task. She was able to use her extensive content knowledge to meet students where they were, which often occurred during interactive planning.

Throughout several conversations between Mrs. Albright and myself, she explained, “they [students] can be doing everything that looks right to a teacher, but you [the teacher] have to lean on your intuition”—a key to being responsive. Perhaps what Mrs. Albright meant here was that she relied on her tacit knowledge or knowledge that existed, but she did not know was there. When the term “intuition” is used, the implication is that it is just a good guess or a “feeling” removed from knowledge or intelligence. At this point in the teacher thinking research, it is more likely that Mrs. Albright relied more on her intellect than simply intuition as was prevalent throughout this case.

While literature has not addressed the connections between teachers’ efficacy and planning for student engagement, it seemed logical considering Mrs. Albright’s enormous apprehensions about this endeavor in my pilot study. The four experienced teachers in the pilot study were not confident about their abilities not necessarily to plan but their abilities to plan to keep their students engaged. From that research, I became interested in the sources that were most significant in developing and sustaining this teacher’s confidence in planning for student engagement.

In this case, Mrs. Albright explained that “I use the feedback from my students to understand how a lesson went. Depending on what they tell me, I make changes in the planning. They are quite honest.” She further explained that “it depends on the class and the students’ effort in that class. This relates significantly to this notion of responsiveness that developed through this research. Consistent with other research, for
her, the manners in which she related to the persuader was important along with the respect she held for that particular group of students was also an important part in her confidence. Interestingly, these confidence enhancers did not necessarily have to come from a colleague with whom she identified and/or respected. Rather, she explained that she often received the most significant confidence from her students, especially when they were putting forth effort. In other words, Mrs. Albright explained that she felt better connected to students who were working hard and putting forth effort. This feedback was then more reliable to her because she appreciated the students' effort. If her students were conscientious and worked hard or "put forth effort," she took their criticism and feedback in general much more personally than from classes of students who "complained for no particular reason at all."

In addition, while the verbal persuasion from her students was discussed as the most significant persuading source for her, it was discussed in the context of the mastery experience. To be clear, it was during Mrs. Albright's interactive planning, that the verbal persuasion occurred. Certainly, it would be difficult for Mrs. Albright to receive a great deal of verbal feedback from her students as she preactively and postactively planned. This is the case mainly because most of her proactive and postactive planning occurred outside of the classroom. This point may be important to consider when we think about retaining teachers, even seasoned ones. If teachers do not feel respected, they may be more likely to leave.

Finally, the most significant persuader in the enhancement of Mrs. Albright's confidence in planning for student engagement concerned the feedback she received from students while teaching. There were times, however, when the verbal persuasion
informed her confidence that came in different forms such as a note from a student or parent, and respect from her colleagues. Essentially, what Mrs. Albright explained was that the notion of verbal persuasion was key in her confidence and it, although occurring often during the mastery experience, informed her confidence. That is, the verbal persuasion that was positive boosted this teacher’s self-efficacy while feedback that was less than praiseworthy, lowered it, and thus informed her emotional and physiological states. This experience as explained above influenced her confidence, and she took that experience and altered her work.
CHAPTER 5

Racial and Cultural Considerations in Planning, Thinking, and Teaching for Student Engagement: A Case Study of a High School English Teacher

You teach what you know; you teach what you’ve experienced; you teach who you are. And when we have White teachers who don’t deal with race and culture and difference, it’s really a handicap to the students because they are not teaching reality. My students know me. They know how I live, and there’s no misunderstanding, no misinterpretations about that. I am a Black woman, and they need to understand that there are some differences between myself and them—by virtue of my skin color. My experiences aren’t exactly like theirs and part of that has to do with the fact that I am Black. Racism does exist; it existed decades ago, and we’re still grappling with it in 2000.

Dr. Johnetta Wilson

This Teacher

To recap, Dr. Johnnetta Wilson is a female African American English teacher who lives in the Ritz county school district. She has been teaching in the district for eleven years but has been teaching for twenty-six years total. Until this school term, Dr. Wilson was the only African American teacher at Ritz High. Energetic and passionate, Dr.
Wilson keeps her students laughing and ‘entertained.’ She enjoys reading, traveling and, most of all, her own children.

Dr. Wilson taught in the same context as Mrs. Albright, and a detailed overview of it was outlined in chapters three and four.

Dr. Wilson’s Planning

Dr. Wilson’s planning consisted of both long-range and short-range. “Long-range planning,” is defined as the planning that occurred during the summer months before school started. “Short-range planning” is defined as the planning that focused on more immediate goals. Dr. Wilson’s long-range planning was not very extensive as she had been “getting ready for the classes in the summer for years.” Specifically, Dr. Wilson had been organizing her courses during the summer “for more than ten years now,” and she had taught the same courses many times in the past. She described this planning: “I spend my time deciding on the types of reading that the kids’ll do based on whether or not I can relate to the piece or not. Yes, I use myself as the first test in determining readings.” Dr. Wilson spent much of this time “skimming the index of the text to find new and interesting pieces.” She also read or reread selected pieces over the summer to get an idea of “how to present it to the kids.” This reading was a task that was exciting for her because she described herself as a “reader.”

Dr. Wilson also explained that her long-range planning consisted of her thinking about ways to “teach my students beyond these walls of Ritz High School.” To clarify, she explained that “these kids need to learn that life isn’t all roses. And so I try and decide on literature that will speak to them in ways that’ll make them better citizens.” In this way, she used her time during the summer to:
find pieces of literature that might speak to some of the social ills in our country.

I think we can teach our students about hate and racism through some of the literature we [teachers] choose. I spend a good amount of time trying to select meaningful pieces that’ll help my kids be sensitive to racism and better able to function in the world with people who don’t look like them, and people who may not have all of the privileges they have.

So, because “reading is likely our best way to teach about life beyond their opportunities, I spend a lot of time selecting meaningful pieces over the summer... As you know, I am a reader, so it’s really not like work to me because I enjoy it. I want them to learn about people who don’t look like them, you see?”

While much of her time during the summer months was spent selecting “meaningful literature,” she also decided on appropriate writing assignments for her courses. In her words, “I decide during those summer months whether the kids ought to do a comparison/contrast paper, a process paper, a clarification paper, a book review or whatever. I have to decide on the type of papers after I have chosen the literature because, you see, certain types of writing just fits better with certain stories and novels.” Essentially, to recap, what occurred during the summer months were two main tasks for Dr. Wilson: (a) literature selections that may teach the students about issues—as related to race, culture, and difference—beyond their realities, and (b) writing selections that the students would write as connected to the readings. Once she had these two main components clear, she then organized a “monthly calendar for at least the first two months. Many of us do that [develop calendars for students] here. These kids like
organization, and as you know, I am pretty organized.” The calendars were not very detailed; rather they:

outline due dates which work well for a number of reasons. For one, when the kids are absent, they don’t have to have their parents come in, and they don’t have to wait until they return to school because they already have the assignments on that calendar. It’s really helpful for us [the teachers] and them [the students]. I spend time a week or a two before assignments are due explaining the specific goals of the assignments. I guess that would be developed and best organized during my short range planning.

Indeed, students utilized the calendars to keep themselves organized as I observed them referring to them during class, writing on them to clarify assignments and points, and the like.

Because Dr. Wilson’s most extensive planning for student engagement was that of short range, the discussion now shifts to that type of planning.

**Short-Range Planning**

Dr. Wilson adapted her planning and teaching according to “what was happening in our school, in our country, or in the kids’ lives.” In other words, her long-range planning outlined timeframes that highlighted due dates of major assignments such as when term/research papers and assigned weekly stories. These major dates allowed Dr. Wilson:

to deal with what they were thinking after attending ‘the multicultural month’ assembly, or what was happening with those crazy elections. You see, most of the students in our building voted for George W. Bush, and we needed to talk
about that, you know, why? Do they believe in his platform, or are they simply following their parents’ lead? Our students are bright kids, Rich, they can think for themselves, and so, if there are occasions when the kids are all excited about something happening, we need to talk about it. This is how you reach their highest engagement.

Dr. Wilson was also quite flexible with the particulars of her assignments. She used her long range planning to “provide structure and organization to the courses,” and shorter range planning to attend to things occurring in the students’ lives. Through this shorter range planning, Dr. Wilson was quite overt with her expectations for assignments. Essentially, Dr. Wilson used the calendars and her plans as a guide for how she would develop specific expectations and goals for lessons. In her words:

you have to know the kids and if you’re talking about getting them engaged, then you’d better decide on that based on what’s happening with them. So, sometimes I don’t decide on how I’m going to handle an assignment or a reading until after I’ve gotten a sense from the students--You know, if they get all excited about a passage in a story or a poem or something, then I know the assignment ought to reflect that passage or poem or whatever in some way. I am open and flexible in that.

Once she decided on goals and expectations, she made those “straight forward to the students.” Dr. Wilson believed that students were more likely to “learn and make good grades if they know what is expected. I don’t like to have the kids guessing. I let them
know what is expected from me—that’s only fair I think.” The next section expands on this point.

Avoiding Guessing Games: Engagement Through Explicit Expectations

One of the main goals in Dr. Wilson’s short-range planning was to “find a way to make expectations to the kids plain. The kids deserve clear objectives and that means that the teacher has to be organized and have that objective and those expectations in mind.” As noted:

When planning, teachers should develop some objectives and something that they hope to accomplish during that particular day. The students should know what it is that the teacher wants. If the objective is to get papers completed in a particular class, like my senior composition class, then I need to let them know that my objective is this which means that their goal needs to be to get it done to get the papers in to me. That means that I have to help them find and clarify the best road to take to make this happen. So, it’s a two way street. Kids are engaged and successful when they know what the teacher expects, so from time to time, when they are having problems, I’ll give them examples of papers I have written or speeches/presentations I have given. I tell them that this is not the only way to complete this assignment, but it is one way. Sometimes we all just need a model to follow. So, yes, I work hard to make my objectives and expectations clear for my students. They deserve this because they are really good kids.

While Dr. Wilson did not write down specific behavioral objectives on the board and in her plan book for her courses, she did sketch general goals that she wanted to achieve during this short-range planning like: *collect senior comp. papers at the end of the period.*
In addition, as outlined in the above response, Dr. Wilson believed that students were likely to be most successful and thus more engaged when they were aware of her expectations. In this way, Dr. Wilson prided herself in “making sure my kids know what I expect. If they don’t succeed and learn, it is not because we haven’t talked about how to do it.”

**Self-Reflective Planning**

Her thinking was simple during this short-range planning—she was concerned about “how I can get the students engaged and teach them about hate, difference, and racism at the same time.” In many ways this thinking was linked to her experiences as “an African American, and a woman educator.” Indeed, her thinking and planning seemed consistent with how she identified herself and thought about her position and experiences in the world. In her words:

The kids Rich, I consider the kids in this planning. I work hard to make all my students feel like they are a part of the learning environment. This might be because I haven’t been made to feel like I am accepted in this school...I have been hurt here, and I don’t want my students to feel hurt for being different—you know, we need to celebrate our differences. So, when they ask me to teach the seniors who no one else wants to teach, I accept. That’s right, Rich, I gladly accept because I bring out the best in them. And they see that I am different, and I have come to love myself for being different because wherever we go in life, there will be people who have problems with us...what can I do to make them [students] feel accepted and to appreciate themselves for being who they are? It makes me feel better, too because they remind me that I am OK. This is
especially true when they ask me to present them with their diplomas at graduation.

As noted here, Dr. Wilson used her self-reflective lenses in her planning. As she put it: these students will be stronger if they find a sense of belonging. They know that Dr. Wilson cares about them, and I’m not willing to let them get away with mediocrity. Just because they are not all on the football team or the most popular kids, or the kids on the honor roll, does not mean that they are not good students. I know how they must feel. I plan assignments like the self-portrait that allows them to think about themselves in positive ways. I also do self-portraits with them so they can see that I too am different and yet I’m OK. Kids like this, and they do it because they can relate. This helps me every time I do it [write a self portrait], so it probably helps them as well.

In this sense, it is through her personal reflections that she developed lessons that may: allow them [the students] to see that they too are special. I plan in a way that I can help the kids find worth and see that we don’t need to hurt other people because we are different. You know?—it’s like what can I do to link these points subtly in the lessons. They need to know...when I plan, especially in my senior composition courses, I try and go beyond the Euro-centric literature. Most of the contributors to literature were made by White men. The main thing I consider, besides my kids then is, the importance of exposing the kids to writers who make up the world: the Hispanics, and the Hispanic-Americans, the Asians, and the Asian-Americans, the Africans, and the African Americans. You see? Women—women are also important because most of the writers were White men. I want
my girls to read about women too. I try to broaden their horizons. They are on
their way out into the real world, and everybody they meet in the world might not
look like the people here. To me, this is what’s important in the planning.

Here, Dr. Wilson asserts a need to connect her students’ experiences with new ones that
may enlighten them about race and culture. This was important to her because:

many of these kids don’t have any idea about how other people around the world
live. They are sheltered. They are good kids, but they just don’t see it, so
because for years I’ve been the only Black teacher they encountered, I try and
plan and develop a set of experiences for my students that will make them better
human beings when they leave. That’s why we all participate in self-reflections
to help find our niche per se. We have to discover what we’re good at, you see?
And part of it is helping them understand that we aren’t all the same, and it’s not
their fault that things are the way they are, but we certainly need to know about it.
Knowledge is power, and power is change.

Interestingly, she linked other self-reflective personal matters to her planning. As noted:

I keep my hair cut short because I want my kids to see a dark skinned Black
woman with short hair. For many of them, Rich, they have never seen this. And
yes, there are lessons in that. And, yes, I plan this. I am aware of what I’m doing.
I want them to see a Black woman with Black features and how yes, I am OK,
and I am smart, a reader, successful, you see?. I tell them about how I’ve traveled
the world, and they look at me in awe.
She continued teaching me explaining:

Their interactions with me and their acceptance of me will help them to take the time to be accepting of other people who may not look like them or have the same kinds of experiences. So, I think culture plays a role. Because if you think about it, why haven’t we in our educational process taught certain things in the classroom? I mean, if you look at White teachers, how many of them know about Toni Morrison, how many of them know about Terry McMillan? How many of them know about bell hooks? And they are not teaching that kind of stuff. bell hooks is a literary genius; she’s more intellectual than many other writers, but my White colleagues teach what they know. They teach Hawthorne, you know, and it’s a cultural thing. But with me, you know, we [Black teachers] have to know Hawthorne too, and that makes me more knowledgeable and flexible because we know both worlds. And I tell my students that people have stories that are not a part of the White story. So, I think culture is so important. And so, these students miss out because White teachers aren’t reading these stories.

In this way, Dr. Wilson engaged in a form of planning that was self-reflective and met her curriculum needs on a number of levels. She further explained that as a Black teacher, she had to be aware of:

Euro-centric literature. It’s expected. But for White teachers, they only have to know their own culture, and they don’t step outside of that. It’s like Black teachers have to know more—we have to know about what’s accepted and expected from a European perspective, and we are expected to be the expert on everything Black too. It’s hard work.
She further explained this point to me informing:

Whites read about things that interests them, and many of those Black writers are not of interest to them. You know, but when you’re minority, and I hate using that word—minority, it’s such a negative word, but I’m going to use it for the sake of this interview and your notes that you need to take. When you’re a minority, you have to read and know all about the White writers. I remember how I felt when I did my master’s. We were expected to intimately know about all the White writers. It’s like Mark Twain. I try and understand why he felt he could imitate the Black dialect. They believe that we are not complex. It’s simple to understand us, you see? But as a minority, we are expected to intently study White’s history because we are not always expected to succeed. This was the case when I did my doctorate. You know how it is.

This point is then linked to her colleagues and made clearer to her thinking about her role of planner in this context. As noted:

White teachers don’t truly understand Black culture or Hispanic culture because they don’t want to touch the kids in those ways. It’s not because they are bad teachers or bad people. Many of them are great teachers, they are just not concerned about culture. And with me, I think you can see; I touch all my kids. It’s the kids that keep me in this profession, and the kids certainly keep me in this building. It’s not my co-workers; it’s my students. I love those kids because I find that they have good hearts, and they’re still open to learning, and they want to learn, and they want honesty, especially the older kids. They come to understand that things are not always the rosy pictures that they were made to
believe when they were younger. And I have worked to plan in ways that paint different pictures so that they see perspectives that they haven't in the past.

Another component of Dr. Wilson’s planning highlighted racial and cultural enlightenment. The next section expands on this.

Planning For Racial and Cultural Enlightenment.

Indeed, Dr. Wilson’s goal of racial and cultural enlightenment became apart of her planning. She purposely developed experiences that she was convinced would likely be omitted in their education without her exposure. As noted:

…I love my kids, all of my kids. You know that. I give out the most diplomas at graduation, and the kids know that I love them, too. What I am saying, however, is that I want to teach my kids more than what’s in a book. I want to teach them about hate and how hate is relegated to all groups of people including the White race. I often discuss with my students how the Irish were mistreated. The Italians, you know, they were lynched and could only work in farming and agriculture. I want my kids to eradicate hate. I want them to love themselves because when we hate ourselves, we hate others. Knowledge is key…[so], when I plan I think about ways I can reach the kids and help them love the greatness of their people and themselves as individuals so we might promote love for others…and then in class I make it plain what’s happening. I don’t try and beat around the bush. They need to know that ‘hey I want you to respect other people and to understand that we are all different,’ and that is OK. You see?

In this passage, Dr. Wilson asserted her passion against hate that was linked to people culturally and racially. In her view, “many of the teachers here don’t deal with these
issues. It’s not because they are insensitive to it, but because they don’t live it. You know Rich we live it when we walk down the street or go into a grocery store, and I tell my own kids [her biological children] that we are still dealing with this hate. So if one or two of them leave and have a different view on this, I am happy.” She continued this point expressing:

If I were an Asian student, I would want my teacher to know something about Asian writers. It is important to make lessons relevant to students…these kids know so much nowadays, so you have to work and make the work fit into their scheme of thinking. So, that means that I got to learn about Asians by asking the right kinds of questions because you don’t want to get too personal, but you want them to know that you, [as the teacher], care about them enough to learn about their culture. Those things are important, and I think my colleagues could learn a lot from me if they would just ask me, so I try and keep that in mind as I’m preparing to teach my kids.

Dr. Wilson continued to link her personal experiences with what she perceived to be essential in her planning for her students. As noted, she allowed her students to teach her about matters of which she was not aware. In some cases, this meant that her students deviated from the lessons during class. She stated:

I love it when kids take me to their interests. I think that those are teachable moments. You know what I mean? I learn from my students too of course, and I love to learn, so those teachable moments might be a time for me to learn from the questioner or even the other students in the class who might be interested in the question. I love those moments. You adjust and roll with the flow.
While Dr. Wilson planned and implemented lessons that considered race and culture, she also informed me that such foci had caused her problems. Those problems had been most prevalent during her early years of teaching, but they still affected her presently.

Social and Political Implications Through Literature:

Consequences and Reprimands

Clearly, Dr. Wilson wanted her students not only to better understand differences and similarities among people, she wanted them to take that knowledge and become change agents “through their knowledge about the social and political” nature as exposed through the literature, class discussions, and their personal experiences. As noted:

I’ve become aware of how many of my colleagues look at various selections, and I’m not sure if they understand the whole message of what writers are attempting to do. What I want to talk about is basically how we teach a book called To Kill a Mockingbird—how we don’t intently focus on the political, social, and racial aspect of that book. There are two parts to that book. There is Lou Bradley, and then there is that Tom Robinson situation. When I first started teaching here, and I taught that book, my students would run down to the principal’s office and tell the principal that I was prejudiced—they thought I was a racist. Maybe I did spend too much time on the Tom Robinson aspect, but that’s how they handled our discussions. They thought I was racist for exposing areas that made them uncomfortable. I was trying to get them to see how the female character falsely accused Tom Robinson, [a Black male character], of raping that woman (a White character). And on the other side, I was telling them that there are two parts of that book, because the other part is how we make assumptions about people like
Boo Rally. You know, Boo never came out of that house—the house was all spooky and so on and so forth. And we make assumptions about people...my students didn’t see all that. And as you know, I’m sort of animated in my classes, and they misinterpreted what was going on in there. I didn’t have any Black students in that class my first year, and I’ve found that when I do have Black students or Asian students or Hispanic students, they see what I’m trying to do and say because we live those experiences. It is my White students who don’t understand, and I say that to say that there are cultural differences that exist when you teach in a predominantly White situation. They [cultural differences] ought to be explored if we are doing what we need to do—preparing our kids for the real world.

In this quote, a few issues are expressed. For one, Dr. Wilson planned and implemented lessons that focused on social and political matters in her classes and had been doing so for many years. This was done, however, at the risk of being accused of being racist as: many of the students took my teaching in this way as an attach on them. And of course there is a price we pay when you go outside of people’s comfort areas. I was called into the office and questioned about it. And you guessed it, eventually my principal took those freshmen away from me. So there is a price you pay for planning and teaching in this way.

She elaborated on these issues noting: “I think that it’s due to the privileges of the White population here, whether they be children or adults, teachers, my co-workers, there are privileges that they have been receiving that many of these kids don’t understand.” Accordingly, her thinking, planning, and teaching were disputed by many of the students
in that class, and as a result, “that class was taken from me. These were ninth graders, and I don’t teach ninth graders anymore, haven’t for years now because they felt like many of the students were right—that I was a racist. And that hurt me, Rich, when I first came to this building because I wasn’t a racist. I am not racist. I just wanted to open eyes. I was anxious for the students to see it.” This has not, however, stopped her from working to eradicate “ignorance where culture and race is concerned,” as she expressed these same issues to her seniors. As she explained, “the older kids see it much clearer than the younger ones.” In these senior courses, again, she explicitly stressed issues that were important to her through her experiences as a person of color. In her words:

So, they get a taste of it, and I can openly tell them that I want them to not go away to college not having experienced other people’s cultures. But I found that a lot of my ninth grade students, it was like they were in denial, and I think that it had to do with maturation (sic). But what surprised me was like not so much the kids, it was my administration that didn’t understand because I was constantly being called down to the office and told that the students said that I was a racist for teaching certain books in certain ways…and now it is more acceptable to teach certain books like To Kill a Mockingbird because White teachers are now teaching that book. You see, they see the worth so it’s accepted and even expected now. BUT they [White teachers] are not teaching the social, political, and historical aspects of that book, and how it relates to 2000. Students can really learn from that book because it has implications for their lives today. It’s like a classic, and classics have themes that relate to our lives…and racism is a major theme that has been blatantly overlooked by most teachers here—how we treat
people, how we perceive others and make assumptions about them. They are exposed to those parts of the book when I taught it, you know?

As noted here, there were consequences to what (the curriculum) Dr. Wilson decided to teach and how (the instruction) she taught it when she first entered the district and school. Those experiences although hurtful, did not stop her, however, from working toward eye opening experiences when considering the cultural and racial differences that developed and linked to difference, assumptions, and ultimately social, and political awareness.

Dr. Wilson’s Thinking and Planning Enacted

Dr. Wilson’s enactment of her thinking and planning was done in some non-traditional ways. For instance, she invited her students to her home and talked to them on the telephone before and after school. As Dr. Wilson put it:

I want the students to know me outside of school, and I want them to know who I am culturally, you know, how I live from day to day, who my children are, what I have in my home. You know I have African art throughout my home. I lived in South Africa for years with my Nigerian ex-husband, and the kid’ll ask, “Dr. Wilson where did you get this?” What does it symbolize, and those are a part of the teachable moments I keep talking about. For most of them, they have never been inside of a Black person’s house, you know?

These teachable moments, were frowned upon by many of Dr. Wilson’s colleagues: “why would I want them to come to my home? Why would I want them to call me.” As Dr. Wilson explained, “I don’t take this attitude. I do this because years ago when I was a student, my teacher went to my church and would come to my home, you know? Sunday dinners—my teachers would tell my mom things that Johnetta was doing or not doing. It
was that kind of relationship that has brought me to the point where I am. It's probably a cultural thing. I believe that these are teachable opportunities, and I take advantage of them."

She expanded on her thinking and planning that transferred into her teaching, stating:

i think teaching kids about me and who I am is important because, when we think about all the changes in education today—I mean, education is not like it was when I was in high school. It's totally different; the things we did, the things we couldn't; the things kids say; the things kids can't say. Kids are into drugs; kids are, you know, smoking marijuana; they're not always being quiet when you tell them to be quiet. Homes are different. We have what they call a 'blended family.' We have divorced families. So all of those things are important in kids' lives. My kids know that I was married, and now, I'm divorced, and my life goes on, and it's OK, you see? So, I guess part of it is showing the differences. but part of it is showing the similarities. We all hurt. We all cry. We all have bad days. I want them to see me as a person who is different and regardless of how we try and portray this 'we are the world' attitude, I am still different and treated differently because of the color of my skin and because of my cultural heritage. And then, when I show them the differences, I show them just how similar we are too. So being different is not bad 'cause we are actually a lot alike. Does that make sense?
She further explained the differences that kids deal with on a daily basis as compared to the past stating:

And I tell them that things are different for them. I don’t beat around the bush with them. This goes back to guessing. I want them to know where I’m coming from. It’s harder being a teenager today than it was when I was their age. And I give them those reasons. My parents were together until they died, but my kids’ parents are not together anymore. These kids have stepparents, and they have two step-parents. You know, the mother is remarried and the father is remarried all in one lifetime… I talk to my students during discussions about the whole person because there are connections to the whole. I think it helps students learn, understand and remain engaged because they’re interested, you know, it relates to their own lives.

Dr. Wilson’s teaching emphasized her philosophies and theories of action. It was also consistent with her thinking and planning. This was apparent when she invited students into her home.

A Class Session in Dr. Wilson’s Senior Composition Class

Dr. Wilson comes a tallish European American, male student attempting to give him “diva” just before the bell sounds. Other students laugh and shout, “Run, Jason, run,” mimicking Tom Hanks’ character in the movie, *Forest Gump*. Jason, the student who is being kissed by Dr. Wilson wearing her dark “diva” lipstick turns red, blushing, pleading, “Dr. Wilson, I’ll have my homework on Wednesday, please.” The bell sounds, and the entire class is laughing hysterically. Dr. Wilson lets up, “Jason, I told you the next time you didn’t have your homework you’d get diva.” “Getting diva” refers to Dr.
Wilson’s lipstick that she used to “whip my kids into shape. The last thing the kids want is to get some sugar [a kiss] from their teacher. So it’s a fun thing that I started years ago. I put on lots of this dark lipstick called diva, and I kiss the student on the cheek when they misbehave or act out. It’s all in fun, but they get the idea. I am serious about them acting right.”

After the class settles themselves, Dr. Wilson cannot help but laugh herself: “see what happens when you don’t do what you’re supposed to?” The students laugh, and poor Jason is still blushing from the shock of diva. After a few minutes, Dr. Wilson prepares the class for the day’s reading—Alice Walker’s Everyday Use, which is a short story that focuses on the cultural and historical legacy embedded in patch quilts and the art of quilting. She provides some brief information about Alice Walker and the story. She calls this “setting the stage.” “You see,” she informs, “Alice Walker is a brilliant African American woman who wrote the novel The Color Purple, which was made into a movie. Has anyone in this class read that novel or seen the movie?” Not more than two students raise their hands (the entire class was European American). “I see,” Dr. Wilson responds. “Well, let me tell you a bit about that novel before we move on.” She spends about ten minutes discussing the time period of the novel and points out some of the major themes. After which, she returns to the story at hand—Everyday Use.

The students read the story with Dr. Wilson orchestrating the reading: she calls on students one by one to read—there are no choices in the matter—“you either read or you are not participating, which means points are deducted.” After a few paragraphs, Dr. Wilson interjects, “do you see it?” The students look confused. “Do you see it” she repeats. “See what,” a brave male student in the corner inquires. Dr. Wilson repeats the
question, “don’t you guys see what’s happening?” Most of the students laugh, “yeah, Dr. Wilson we see it, we see it.” They mumble to themselves, and each other and finally, Dr. Wilson makes it plain: “remember how there were quilts hanged in honor of AIDS victims in our school during world AIDS month?” A few students nod their heads in agreement. “The same thing is happening in this story, and this a tradition that is heavy in the African American community” Dr. Wilson taught. “I remember when I was a girl. My grandmother made me a quilt when I went off to college. I still have it today. That quilt is old and dingy now, but it’ll be in my family forever because it means something to me—culturally. I see that quilt as more than pieces of cloth sown together. When we hanged those quilts for the AIDS victims, we were doing more than hanging cloth. We were hanging a piece of ourselves with them and they with us. We were saying to those who have fallen victim to that disease that ‘we are with you in spirit.’” Dr. Wilson’s eyes water. “And I miss my grandmother—the food she cooked, and her smell, you know, all the things that remind us of the good times when my sisters and I would play in her yard, and the clothes on the line outside flew in the wind. Those were some great times. And so when I run across that quilt in my basement, I think back to those times and I get full [emotional].” Those are times for me to share about my sisters, my parents, and my grandmother with my kids.

Not a person moves during Dr. Wilson’s soliloquy. Engagement—words cannot describe the solace in the room. Dr. Wilson continues, “and if my grandmother or even my parents could see me now as DOCTOR WILSON, their hearts would be glad. I was a little Black girl who grew up right outside of Bowling Green, Ohio, and so yes, it is deeper than just the cloth, and the quilt, and the fabric. It’s about artifacts that we
treasure and allow to become meaning makers to remind us— to remind us to tell stories to
our children who I hope will tell stories to theirs— starting from a patch quilt. I cannot
help but think about this as we read this story.” The bell sounds to dismiss class, and no
one moves. It is obvious that this is a special moment for not only Dr. Wilson but for her
students too. In this sense, the students’ engagement consisted of their listening to Dr.
Wilson. They were not actually doing anything other than listening. However, they were
engaged.

Later during an interview I asked her about this class session. In her words, “you
know Rich, I don’t mind sharing my experiences with them. Some of them [her
experiences] are hurtful, and others are times to celebrate. They see me for a real person
because I cannot present myself in any other way. They know this about me, and I am
proud of that.” She went on to describe a student in that class who appeared, through my
observations, captivated by the lesson during this session. As noted:

During another class session, Dan talked about being upset about the people who
are coming into our district. I think he was referring to the Spanish or the
Mexicans; I’m not sure what nationality. And Dan was saying that he was upset
that this guy couldn’t understand him in a convenience store. He said, ‘why are
these people moving here, and they can’t even speak English?’ And that gave me
a chance to teach—to really get down and teach. I love it—because this kid was
very passionate ‘why are these people here?” And I told him that these people are
doing things that we don’t want to do. He was saying that he didn’t like these
people coming here, and I was saying, that his family, his grandparents, great-
grandparents came from different countries. And they don’t see that; that’s all
important to me because I think that sensitivity, Rich, I have a sensitivity to people who are not like my kids at Ritz High School—that are not, you know, mainstreamed right away.

Cleverly, she then links her comments to the power structure informing: “Anytime you’re part of the ruling class with power, it’s likely that you don’t see it. You’re not as sensitive to minority groups, and that’s OK. We have to learn these things from people who live them. And Rich, it’s not just Black and White. I’ve had many of my Asian students talk about things that they’ve heard or gone through, too. We all learned from the discussion that day, even Dan.”

A second major theme that developed from this research concerned Dr. Wilson’s confidence. As Dr. Wilson reminded me, “students today are so different than they were twenty seven years ago,” and this point seemed to continuously emerge throughout this research. That is, Dr. Wilson seemed concerned about her ability to do her work with this “new group of students.” In addition, she discussed some of her negative experiences with the administration and other teachers and how it affected her level of confidence over the years. With this in mind, the second strand of this research concerns this notion of confidence or efficacy as outlined in chapter two.

Collegial Avoidance and Isolation

From the very beginning of Dr. Wilson’s teaching experience at Ritz High, she had not felt accepted by her colleagues. This has, almost ten years later, still affected her level of confidence there. In her words:

My colleagues have avoided me since the time that I was hired in this school.

And that avoidance has sent out a negative message to me. Today, there are some
people in my department that I am close to, but there are others who still haven’t spoken to me or had a conversation with me for more than a minute or so. So, yes, that has affected my confidence because those teachers have not given me a chance.

This avoidance was so profound because “I was the first Black woman in the school, and I had all this experience [she came into the district with 19 years of experience] and was being paid all this money. I think they resented that, and some of them have never gotten over it, so they just avoided me.” Dr. Wilson described this avoidance and “isolation” as hurtful because “they really never gave me a chance. They had all these preconceived feelings about me—things they had heard.” This avoidance was likely intensified by local newspaper articles that “focused on my high salary and extensive years of experience.” Indeed, Dr. Wilson came into the district with a Ph.D. and many years of experience, which made her salary quite attractive. She believed that this was a major problem for many of her colleagues. At any rate, this notion of avoidance had been a negative informer of her confidence in the past, and it had continued to inform her confidence years later.

Credentialism

Dr. Wilson believed that she had still not been accepted by her colleagues, and most of their problems with her concerned to “the fact that I have my terminal degree and so many insightful experiences.” In this way, Dr. Wilson started using their problems with her credentials to enhance her levels of confidence. Simply put, Dr. Wilson asserted that her credentials served as a boost to her confidence. As noted:
I know what it’s like to go through a Ph.D. program and being a minority at that in a predominantly White program. That has impacted my confidence, and I have taken what they [teachers who avoid and isolate her] envy and used it as confidence. You see, going through that Ph.D. program in that kind of environment tells me that there’s not much that I can’t do. Even if it’s difficult to do, I can do it, and I tell myself that, which is what I pass on to my students, if that makes sense.

To be clear, Dr. Wilson was more confident as a result of her earning a Ph.D., an achievement that she believed impacted the avoidance and isolation she had received from many of her colleagues.

In this sense, when she started to think that she could not achieve things inside and outside of her work, “I think back to my doctoral work at Iowa State University, and I know that I can do anything. Keep in mind that I finished my Ph.D. at Iowa in two years, and I was married to a Nigerian man who expected me to be a wife to him in addition to being a student.” So, her credentials had impacted her thinking about her abilities to achieve difficult tasks. She reiterated this point in an example about how she had relied on her personal educational credentials to change her thinking about herself and her abilities to do her work. She taught me:

You know the enriched courses here are given to teachers who they believe to be the most competent. That used to bother me, you know, because they never assigned those classes to me. That would make anybody doubt themselves, you know, but I just think, you know what, I have my doctorate, and that’s just not easy to do. I know I’m competent and smart when I think back to those
experiences. So, yes, I think my credentials have been helpful in making me feel better about myself. Lord knows I’ve had enough here to make me feel not so good.

In this way, Dr. Wilson thought about both the process and success in obtaining her Ph.D. Specifically, she leaned on her credentials, and the tenacity and intellect needed to achieve such a goal to change her thinking about instances that she believed to be negative views of her abilities—to teach enriched students.

Student and Parental Perceptions and Respect

Dr. Wilson had been “relegated” to teach the students who “the other teachers cannot handle. They can’t handle many of those kids because those kids’ll say what they want; they are real, and they are not superficial, and they will call teachers out.” Accordingly, her teaching these students had not negatively affected her at all as:

those are my kids, and I enjoy them. They respect me and their parents also respect me. To me, this is what it’s all about. When I think about it, this is what matters most to me, you know, that my kids respect me and that their parents know me now and that they know that hey I’m not a bad person or a racist. I care about those kids, and so my students’ respect and their parents’ respect and acceptance means more to me than anything else. When I see my kids and their parents in the store or at a game or something because we all live in the same neighborhood, and those kids come up to me and hug me, and their parent says ‘my child talks about you all the time,’ this makes me happy. So, when I talk about confidence, I’d say that this is most important. I know that I am doing something right regardless of what my colleagues or the administration might
think. This happens to me every year at graduation. There is typically a line of parents waiting to meet me, and they tell me how much I’ve meant to their child. And I think this is important because some of those kids are left out because they are not the most popular or the smartest or whatever. So, that’s what matters to me, that I can give out all those diplomas to kids who respect me and their parents appreciate me, accept me, and respect me. This is what makes me most confident. I do good work.

When she did begin to lose confidence, she thought about specific examples that “affirms my presence here. We all want to feel like our teaching makes a difference, well at least I do, so I have to constantly remind myself why I teach here—for my kids.” She provided an example of one of these instances that she often thinks about when she doubts herself.

As noted:

One of my students was involved in a fight over the weekend, and I was in New York City. And this student was in my seventh/eight period senior composition class, and you know him. And there were some kids who broke his hip. Yes, they broke my student’s hip, and he had to get six pins in his hip. His father called me because this student wanted him to call Dr. Wilson. And his father called me, told me he was at Saint Ann’s Hospital, and that this student would be tickled if he received a call from me. So, you know, I did better than call him. I went to the hospital to visit him. Rich, my students, I’m only here because my students accept me, and respect me. This makes me confident because I feel like I’m doing something that is making a difference in my kid’s lives.
Accordingly, Dr. Wilson received confidence from the perceptions and respect her students and their parents had of her. That was important to her, and she often reflected on those experiences whenever she began to doubt herself and her reasons for teaching at Ritz High School. Indeed, her students and their parents’ levels of respect, and admiration for her was an important part of her thinking and confidence in continuing to persevere at Ritz High.

**Self-Reflective Confidence**

Ultimately, Dr. Wilson taught me that the most important factor in her confidence concerned her personal reflections about who she was, and why she was teaching at Ritz High School. In this way, she explained:

> I have gone through so much at Ritz High that it would have been easy for me to leave or crawl in a hole or something if I had not started delve to into me (sic). I wasn’t going to take the easy way out, and I know many teachers would have just given up and said that it’s too much of a headache, a hassle, you know to stay here, but I was not about to let them get me down and defeat me. Sure, I felt and still sometimes feel down and low in confidence and morale, but I turn back to myself, confidence has to come from inside.

This notion of self-reflection and ‘looking within’ was interesting because people commonly respond to questions of confidence by pointing to inner reflective searches.

What was interesting about Dr. Wilson was that she had thought clearly about this notion, and it clearly linked to her experiences at Ritz High. As noted:

> I had to find that confidence in me because when I came here, I didn’t come under good circumstances. I came with an open heart and an open attitude. But I
wasn’t received very well. I decided that I would make a conscious effort to search who I am, and in that search of who I am I was split. I said either I could go this way, be White, or go this way and be who I am—Black. And so I decided to go this way. I came into this district to be Black and to let the kids see a Black woman with no pretentiousness, to see a Black woman and to embrace that. Now I cannot pass for White, and I wanted them to see a Black woman because the reason I do it is because these kids are going to get out there and go to college, just like Bowling Green and Ohio U, and they’re going to interact with roommates who might look like me, a true Black woman, not a woman who is fair-complexioned...And I tell them this, to not be afraid, to be themselves because I sure am, and to have a purpose, you know, and people respect that...So, I that’s where my confidence has come from—my own reflections of who I am. That’s the reason I can continue teaching the way I do. I know who I am and what my responsibilities are. I’m quite proud of that you know ‘cause everybody can’t say that.

Here, Dr. Wilson expressed that once she reflected on her personal responsibilities and philosophies, she became more confident as it was through those reflections that she was able to know that her work and goals were acceptable. In this sense, her thinking, planning, and teaching were all consistent with her reflective goals and thus made her more confident in her work. In fact, it was her reflections on self that “I rely on when start to doubt myself even today. I have to remember the self because it is what keeps me going. My colleagues and the administration may let me down, but I have to be able to find that strength in myself, and what I believe in to get me through, you see?”
Conclusions

In conclusion, Dr. Wilson was quite reflective and cognizant of her work, and she was able to discuss it in ways that many teachers were not. This is likely because she had been constantly questioned about her work and her rationales about the nature of it as much of her thinking, planning, and teaching related to culture, race and racism. Indeed, she was questioned about her work, and she had justified the nature of her teaching frequently in the past to administrators, teachers, and so forth. In this way, she deeply understood her work and the intricacies inherent in why she planned and taught as she did. So, her theories of action and philosophies impacted her interest in themes relating to culture and race, and she was able to rationalize about them in some interesting ways. Her understanding of these theories and philosophies were important, and she was quite clear of her goals when planning for student engagement. Dr. Wilson wanted to enlighten her students about culture and race, and thus her thinking and planning directly reflected this as she developed ways to incorporate these goals throughout her work (by inviting students to her house, telling personal, cultural stories and so on). In this way, Dr. Wilson’s theories of action about her work were consistent with her planning, thinking, and teaching.

In addition, Dr. Wilson’s teaching resembled a top-down approach—one that adopted theory relating to direct instruction. Indeed, Dr. Wilson considered herself the main authority on most issues as related to her major goals and objectives in her courses. The difference, however, was that she allowed the students to teach her on some issues, but even those were mainly facilitated by her questions and ultimately what she believed to be germane to her goals and objectives. Because she was the cultural minority and the
teacher, the students most often listened and learned from her expertise and experience as she offered personal stories about her experiences and related them to the students. This was made clear in her preparation of lessons and their enactment. For instance, as Dr. Wilson planned long term, she considered and developed ways to get her students engaged through more traditional pedagogy. This thinking was then made obvious in her teaching approach as she orchestrated lessons later: She stood in the front of the class, and dictated who would read, when assignments were due, how they out to be done, what those assignments would be and so forth.

Dr. Wilson was able to keep her students engaged because she was “animated,” and even though her teaching approach would likely be chiefly criticized for its top-down-teacher centered approach, she was still successful in gaining her students’ interests as they were engaged. Clearly, she was successful in achieving this engagement because of her reflective lenses that highlighted her various array of knowledge in doing her work. As mentioned, she deeply understood why she made her planning decisions and her teaching directly reflected those rationalizations. In this sense, she relied on her twenty seven years of teaching to plan and teach in manners that honored her goals to help her students “see it”—racial and cultural issues that related to their lives and our world in general.

In light of these years of teaching, the discussion shifts now to emphases on her expertise that connects to her thinking, planning, and teaching for student engagement. The most significant form of knowledge of Dr. Wilson was her practical knowledge—her expertise about the context, the students, the community, and herself. Dr. Wilson believed that she had a deep understanding of the practical nature of her environment.
She believed that she understood her students and the context in general, and she implemented this understanding and expertise into her planning and teaching. For instance, Dr. Wilson thought that the students needed to understand other cultures and races because of the context in which they lived. Indeed, most of the other students in their classes, at their school, and in their community were European American, and she believed that on some levels it was her responsibility to teach them about people who looked like her (African Americans) with cultural characteristics that were not necessarily consistent with what they had been taught or experienced in the past. Dr. Wilson came to understand early in her teaching career that her students needed exposure to “difference,” and in spite of being called into the office for her teaching about it, she continued doing her work in ways that she believed to be most helpful considering the practical nature of the environment.

Part of her practical expertise also concerned her personal history and the actions that had occurred throughout her life. In this sense, she had reflected on issues that happened to her both inside and outside of this context in making decisions about her work. Because of the harshness of her colleagues and students who had not understood her role and position as an African American, woman, and teacher, her knowledge about the practical was informed greatly: “they needed to understand why I think as I do.” As a result, Dr. Wilson deeply understood the practical context of her environment. In a number of ways, she seemed to understand it better than those considered insiders as she was able to observe and understand through an etic’s perspective one that was based on being an outsider and thus more critical of the goings on in the context. Indeed, one of the strongest forms of knowledge Dr. Wilson had was the practical because she had
worked so hard to understand it, justify her own positions, experiences, and teaching, and thus make her work reflect usefulness for her students.

Dr. Wilson also possessed extensive content and pedagogical knowledge. Coupled with her educational training, she knew her content well because she “stayed up on the readings and assignments.” In essence, Dr. Wilson (re)read books, short stories, and so forth each time she taught them. She was (re)familiarizing herself with the content, which only made her knowledge of it richer. Her thinking about this was clear—each time she reacquainted herself with the material, she learned something new. In this sense, her content knowledge improved, and she had been planning and teaching in this way for years, rereading and refamiliarizing herself with the content each time she taught a subject.

Interestingly, Dr. Wilson’s pedagogy usually allowed her to portray her own knowledge. It was clear that she was quite knowledgeable of the content, and this became overt during her teaching. She asked interesting questions, but essentially she portrayed herself as the main arbiter of knowledge, but this teaching was done in an animated manner. Everything seemed urgent and important. In this way, the students were engaged because she would yell or even scream to get their attention. Indeed, her content knowledge was strong, but her conveying of that content was stronger. In short, what was exceptional for Dr. Wilson was her ability to convey the content to the students because her teaching was excellent. She was a story-teller, and had thespian genius, so her students were waiting for “a show” and for her to “bring the lessons alive through my emotions or my voice or whatever.” They knew Dr. Wilson usually had something up
her sleeves, from giving “diva” to providing a story that focused on her personal experiences. She summed up this teaching noting:

When I teach, I’m on stage, and I feel like that. I feel like I’m an actress, and I’m on stage, you know because I’m sort of gregarious, you know, and animated. I’m acting when I’m trying to motivate them. It’s like I don’t know where the energy comes from, but I can move around until it’s time for me to get off stage and that’s at 3:00, and I go home and get ready for another performance the following day. It’s all done to try and keep them engaged.

One might think that Dr. Wilson would have changed her teaching after being called into the office. Indeed, her confidence may have been affected by the negative feedback she received from the administration—that is they questioned her about being racist. The discussion shifts now to the factors that informed her efficacy in continuing to do her work. Several factors informed Dr. Wilson’s confidence in doing her work: collegial avoidance and isolation, her credentials, her students and their parents’ perceptions and respect for her, and her self-reflective practices. Overall, there seemed to be consistency among the notion of “others’ perceptions” in Dr. Wilson’s thinking about herself. She often thought about the avoidance and isolation from her colleagues that related to their perceptions of herself and her work. If these other teachers perceived her in warm and positive ways, then they would have accepted her and not isolated her. So, Dr. Wilson allowed her colleagues’ lack of conversation with her inform her confidence in doing her work. She reported that this hurt her and thus her confidence. Clearly, she was concerned about how others perceived her, and this became apparent in her conversations about such matters.
This same notion, others’ perceptions, was also apparent in her thinking about the students and parents’ feelings about her. She became more confident when the students and their parents greeted her in the grocery store; thus, she was very much interested in how the students and their parents perceived her. This may have been the case because she believed that some students and the administration had negatively perceived her in the past; that is, they thought she was a racist; and consequently, she became very concerned about the image she portrayed to others. In this way, Dr. Wilson’s confidence seemed to be significantly impacted by other people’s perceptions of her and her work. Again, these points were made clear in her thinking about collegial avoidance and isolation, and student and parental perceptions of and respect for her.

The final two factors as emerged through this research highlighted Dr. Wilson’s self-reflections and accomplishments. Interestingly, Dr. Wilson relied on her experiences in her Ph.D. program and the process of working in a predominately White environment to boost her confidence. This point relates, on some levels, to Bandura’s mastery source but only as it concerns the process not the actual achievement. That is, Dr. Wilson’s reliance on the process of being successful in a situation similar to Ritz High while completing her Ph.D. relates to the mastery level. The actual mastery or obtaining the Ph.D., however, does not work. Clearly, there are differences in this teacher achieving her Ph.D. and her teaching.
CHAPTER 6
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS
FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Chapter one provided the introduction to this study; chapter two reviewed the related literature, and chapter three highlighted the methods used to conduct this research. Chapters four and five presented the two in depth case studies, and this chapter compares, and contrasts those cases. In addition, this chapter discusses the most significant components of the findings, along with outlining specific theoretical assumptions, practical contributions, and limitations as the findings from the two individual cases differed, warranting cross case analyses. This chapter is chiefly important as there are matters that emerged through this research that have implications for theory, practice, and research.

To recap, the purpose of these case studies was to understand the planning and sources of confidence of two experienced, high school English teachers as they design lessons that will engage students. Indeed, the focus of this research was twofold. It was concerned with the following: (a) the planning, thinking, and teaching of these teachers about student engagement, and (b) these teachers’ sources of confidence in performing these tasks. Qualitative methods were employed to generate, analyze, and report data. Specifically, four extensive interviews were conducted separately with each participant;
consequently, a total of eight interviews were conducted. In addition, participant observations were also employed over a five-month period.

Significance of the Research

It seems that good lessons begin with some plan. This study richly described as experienced teachers planned, reflected, and enacted lessons specifically considering student engagement. Studies concerning teacher planning have decreased significantly, and this seems problematic as there is much to be learned about teachers’ planning, especially as they plan with specific tasks in mind. In this case, these teachers specifically considered student engagement, and their thinking, planning, and enactment of lessons have implications for preservice, novice, and experienced teachers.

For novice and preservice teachers in teacher education programs, dimensions of these cases might be used as vignettes (considering the context, students, community) and transferred into lessons for student engagement. The question for these inexperienced and preservice teachers may be: how would you, as the teacher in this context, develop lessons for student engagement? Teacher education programs across the country still spend extensive amounts of time working with individuals interested in teaching and organizing effective lessons. These cases have the potential to assist professors and students alike in the tasks of developing effective lesson, and the vignettes provide realistic experiences that may be beneficial as they think about developing lessons contextually.

In addition, this study was significant in that it highlighted these teachers’ sources of confidence, which has implications for teacher development. That is, the way a teacher develops confidence or the lack of it over the years likely varies. For instance, as
in this research, the social/professional environments of the teachers played important roles in these teachers’ confidence. The manners in which these teachers interpreted their interactions with their colleagues were idiosyncratic and thus affected their confidence differently. Further, in this research, it became clear that both teachers had hurtful experiences that had affected their confidence. For instance, Dr. Wilson had not been welcomed by her colleagues and was accused of being racist. Indeed, this negatively affected her confidence, but seeming heightened her resolve. Similarly, Mrs. Albright had been questioned about her toughness and the intensity of the work she gave her students. These experiences informed these teachers’ efficacy. What was interesting here, however, was that these teachers persevered, and their tenacity allowed them to continue doing effective work. This is important as we think about the retention of teachers across the country. Are we at a point in teacher education where teachers are only going to be able to sustain the pressures of the classroom for five or six years? If we believe that a teacher’s confidence and sense of efficacy significantly impacts his or her desire to remain in the classroom, then much can be learned from this research.

In light of the fact that Mrs. Albright had been criticized she still remained in the classroom for 19 years. This experience could have resulted in her leaving the classroom. She explained that this criticism negatively affected her, but she was able, through the support of her husband, colleagues, and eventually her students, to bounce back from that experience and make her work better, and thus she became more efficacious. She had matured to this point in her confidence because she had discovered what it took to continue in spite of the negative experiences that had occurred throughout her work. The notion of collegial respect and support, then, was important to Mrs. Albright, and she
learned to lean on the verbal persuasion of her colleagues to help her do good work—that is, she believed that her colleagues respected her work, and as a result, she became more confident. Indeed, if we are concerned about retaining effective teachers who feel confident about themselves and their abilities to do their work, then we can learn significantly from Mrs. Albright’s perseverance after 19 years of teaching. This study highlighted more mature teachers with a range of expertise, and other teachers may find parts of this research helpful in better understanding the nature of their own work.

In sum, this research is significant because it has transferable dimensions that teachers may find useful in their teaching environments. Much can be learned about these teachers’ sources of confidence as they persevered through the years in spite of the experiences that had negatively impacted their efficacy. Indeed, it was through these teachers’ drawing on other sources, such as collegial respect and support in Mrs. Albright’s case, and credentialism, student and parental respect and support for Dr. Wilson that they maintained a sense of efficacy. These findings may help us retain novice and experienced teachers as they encounter similar experiences.

In addition, clearly, this research has implications for teacher education. Because most teacher education programs across the country emphasize teacher planning on some level, this research relates to those programs because it addresses teacher planning for student engagement. Other research has focused on teacher planning in general, investigating the process, mental imaging and the like, but studies have not intently focused on teachers’ planning, thinking, and teaching in pursuit of student engagement. In these cases, teachers reflected on, and enacted plans with a specific goal in mind—
student engagement. This research discussed these teachers’ planning as they developed and implemented engaging lessons.

With a discussion of the overall benefits of this study now established the chapter shifts to implications for theory.

Implications for Theory

Two central concepts emerged from this research—responsive planning, and teacher self-reflective planning.

Responsive Planning

*Responsive planning* concerned the planning that a teacher (Mrs. Albright, as outlined in chapter four) used in developing lessons based primarily on the situational nature of the class. This concept highlighted the importance of a teacher consciously learning about student needs and interests and organizing lessons that addressed them. In this way, lessons were created to learn about students’ interests, and subsequent lessons were developed to incorporate those ideas, a point that suggested that Mrs. Albright’s planning was responsive and recursive. Mrs. Albright was the learner on some levels in her work, and she did not overestimate the amount knowledge she possessed. While the amount of content knowledge she possessed was likely far superior to many of her colleagues (this point is elaborated upon in chapter four), she still allowed the students to be the expert on many issues. In fact, she was concerned about the levels of interests of her students, and this was important if she was to develop lessons for student engagement. Much of Mrs. Albright’s planning in this way was due to her concern about connecting with her students as they changed over the years. What worked for her 19 years ago may not work for her today, and as a result, her planning had to be one that
relied on the situational expertise of her students. Indeed, Mrs. Albright was able to achieve student engagement because she was a learner in her environment, and the students’ wants were being met as they achieved her goals and objectives. Accordingly, Mrs. Albright’s planning was recursive, and it constantly revolved and evolved into more refined and more extensive planning that met students’ interests.

The question, then, becomes: how does Mrs. Albright acquire knowledge about students’ interests? Each day in Mrs. Albright’s class, she asked, what she later explained to be survey questions. The questions began generally: how is it going? From that question, inevitably, the students shared with her their troubles, their triumphs and the like. This allowed Mrs. Albright to satisfy one of her main goals—to plan lessons that attended to the issues developed in class—responsively. In this way, she was responding to matters that were germane to the students. The students also believed that Mrs. Albright cared about them, it seemed, merely because she asked routinely how they were doing. So, implicitly, Mrs. Albright was satisfying two goals: (a) to learn about student interests to better develop planning, and (b) to let the student know that she really was concerned about them. The students seemed to appreciate this, and Mrs. Albright was attending to what she believed was important—to meet her students’ interests in order to get them and keep them engaged.

From the more general questions, Mrs. Albright moved to more specific ones: how was that worksheet on comma usage? Again, the students gave her feedback: *it seemed elementary to me, or I found it quite useful.* In this way, the students are given the opportunity to provide oral feedback to her. And, the students were honest with Mrs. Albright as many of them made comments that were likely inconsistent with what she
wanted to hear. For instance, students were quite candid with their responses to activities and tasks that were inconsistent with their interests. They would share their dislike and disinterest with Mrs. Albright.

In addition, Mrs. Albright explained that she took the oral feedback that she received from her students and kept that feedback in mind as she responsively developed new, more extensive lessons in the future. She also explained, however, that she took the feedback from students who were conscientious and hardworking more seriously than the feedback from students who were just complaining for the sake of complaining. In this way, she was more responsive to the interests and feedback of those students who were consistent in doing their work. The feedback she received from hardworking students was responded to in greater depth than the feedback from students who did not work diligently. In addition, Mrs. Albright implemented written evaluations of lessons as they were designed to provide feedback from students who did not express themselves very much orally. The written feedback opportunities were usually provided after each lesson or activity, and students were able to anonymously offer feedback to Mrs. Albright about the lessons. Indeed, she was committed to responding to her students in subsequent lessons and teaching. This responsiveness resembled a democratic process that was taken into consideration in the learning environment. Thus, students were likely more engaged as a result of having more input (Demerath, Lynch, & Milner, 2000).

In addition to oral and written feedback and evaluations that Mrs. Albright was able to gather and implement responsively in planning for student engagement, she also developed other sources from which to learn about her students' interests. For instance, Mrs. Albright learned that she was able to satisfy several of her goals in her courses (like
writing skills, critical and analytical thinking) through journal writing. She learned about the students—their reservations about the future, their fears, their strengths, and their interests, and she engaged in responsive planning based on the knowledge she acquired from the students. Perhaps the strongest feedback she received from her students was obtained from the students’ journal writing. The oral feedback that she received may not have been the best means of learning about her students’ interests because students could have made comments based on their personal goals that were inconsistent with the goals of Mrs. Albright. For example, during the oral feedback opportunities, students may have expressed their disinterest in an assignment based on the breadth of the assignment or the amount of intellectual rigor. This may have also been the case on the written evaluations of the students. The journal writing, however, provided the students the opportunities to express themselves from a broader perspective, and Mrs. Albright was able to utilize the knowledge she gained from their responses on journal prompts to develop lessons. Simply, this teacher was able to plan responsively because she was able to investigate what the students’ interests were and incorporate them into future lessons. Accordingly, being able to obtain this information was a skillful endeavor within itself—that is, to be able to separate and filter through what was useful, solid feedback required a significant amount of teaching experience. It is likely not an easy task to deeply understand students’ interests and use that knowledge constructively and effectively for teaching.

To illustrate this notion of responsive planning, Mrs. Albright learned, for example, that many of her students were interest in writing about personal issues like family deaths. From that knowledge, Mrs. Albright provided future writing prompts with
themes incorporating family loss and personal matters in general. She did this in part by selecting readings and journal prompts that spoke to these issues. While her goal at that point was beyond their content (she was more interested in their critical analysis of a piece of literature that focused on family loss for instance), the students were engaged because they were interested and connected to the topic and theme of the lesson. Therefore, responsive planning implies that developing, thinking about, and enacting lessons for student engagement concern more than content, and that teachers must pursue student engagement as an additional goal in their planning; it ought to be a deliberate, and a conscious goal on the part of the teacher, and in order for a teacher to plan responsively, he or she may have to move beyond the content of the courses and find creative ways to attend to the knowledge they acquire from the students relative to their interests. Indeed there are negotiations and linkages among content and student interests. Of course, content was important for Mrs. Albright as she was quite strong in content, but it was evident that through her years of experience, she was able to incorporate both content and engaging lessons. In this way, she learned of the students’ interests and incorporated those interests when conveying the content. So, student engagement is best facilitated when teachers purposely and consciously pursue students’ interests as content and in addition to content.

**Responsive and long/short-range planning.** Responsive planning was done during Mrs. Albright’s shorter-range planning. This was because she had to learn from the students’ needs in her quest to develop engaging lessons. Long-range planning would not have worked. Planning was tentative, then, and unfolded in a responsive way. On the one hand, it may have seemed feasible to construct lessons during her long-range
planning. Mrs. Albright did engage in planning during the summer months, and this planning was done with students in mind. The majority of that planning, however, was done to organize materials chronologically. That is, Mrs. Albright was more concerned about when novels would be read, how to structure the exam, and the amount of time it would take to enact these activities. Mrs. Albright’s long-range planning, then, likely adopted some of her thinking about student engagement from previous years of teaching, but the majority of that time was spent focusing on and developing timeframes to complete academic tasks. This was apparent in her purchase of the aisle board. Accordingly, it is unlikely that Mrs. Albright spent a great deal of time concerned about this notion of student engagement. Rather, it was during her shorter-range planning that the majority of effort was spent on student engagement.

Mrs. Albright taught me that it was virtually impossible for her to plan for student engagement during her long-range planning. She believed that her most effective planning with student engagement in mind occurred during the short-range planning because she had to meet the students and begin learning about them. In this way, Mrs. Albright’s relying on previous knowledge such as her practical knowledge was insufficient for student engagement. She could not rely solely on her expertise about students in the past. That knowledge had to be obtained from her students after meeting them, and thus responsive planning became more feasible as students changed over the years. This does not mean, however, that Mrs. Albright suppressed her knowledge about her students in the past. It does suggest that she was not able to rely solely on that past knowledge to construct engaging lessons. This point allowed her to respond to what she learned from her students and develop lessons that attended to those matters.
A second construct that emerged through this research is the notion of self-reflective planning. The discussion shifts now to discuss the theoretical assumptions of this planning as apparent in Dr. Wilson's.

**Self-Reflective Planning**

*Self-reflective planning* highlighted a teacher’s personal reflective thinking as she planned for student engagement. Dr. Wilson deeply understood her rationales and her philosophies related to why she taught what she did, and her teaching was greatly impacted by this as she was “animated” during lessons because she was committed to the themes and issues in some important ways. In this way, the first step in developing lessons for student engagement began with the teacher’s level of commitment to create engaging lessons that she believed was important to teach.

So, this teacher did not simply teach lessons that were only important to district and state expectations, but her lessons were thematic in that they consisted of issues as were a part of her philosophies and theories of action, which ultimately resulting in lively, interestingly constructed and implemented lessons. The lessons all reflected some form of culture and race, and they seemed interesting and engaging to students because Dr. Wilson offered personal experiences and stories that seemed to capture the students’ attention and engagement. In this way, the students saw her as a human being with feelings, which seemed important to me, and they were thus engaged. This concept was important for this teacher when we consider the process of planning. Indeed, self-reflection was the first step in Dr. Wilson’s planning, and as a result, her teaching was exceptional because her lessons were important to her. She likely put more effort in the task of attaining her students’ engagement because of this. This concept supports a
position that asserts that when teachers believe in what they are teaching, and they personally find value in it—the teaching is better and students are more engaged because the teachers put more effort into conveying that information.

More specifically, Mrs. Albright found value and a moral license to enlighten or en(dark)en the lives of her students to develop a critical pedagogy. This may have related to her teaching style. She usually incorporated direct instruction in her classroom, and it was likely that she believed she was the authority and expert on issues relative to culture and race because she lived experiences that would not allow her to move beyond those realities. This notion of self-reflection highlighted the reality that Mrs. Albright chose to use her experiences to shed light on the perceptions of her students. It was as if it was her responsibility to reflect on her personal past experiences and get the students to see the negative circumstances that surrounded her work and her thinking about it. Much of her motivation to teach in this way was likely impacted by the way she was treated by her colleagues at Ritz High. She consciously opted to use those harsh experiences as fuel to help her students treat people with respect and to understand that race and culture continues to matter in the 21st century. As evident in this research, self-reflective planning may be a prerequisite for truly engaging pedagogy. In addition, her planning, thinking, and teaching relied on critical pedagogy—levels of critical consciousness that invited students to think clearly about their positions of privilege and to understand the notions of power relative to race and culture inherent in the world.
Comparing Theoretical Assumptions in These Cases

This section compares the theoretical positions of this research beginning with these teachers’ planning followed by their sources of confidence.

These Teachers’ Planning

Interestingly, both cases revealed that their shorter-range planning was most extensive when planning for student engagement. In this way, the most effective way to plan in pursuit of student engagement involved their learning about the students, their circumstances, their needs, and of course their interests. They spent more time developing lessons from day-to-day and/or from week-to-week as opposed to planning long-range where they would organize lessons from month-to-month or term-to-term. So, the most effective means of planning for student engagement may be shorter range, keeping in mind that this planning should include teachers’ learning from student interests and then consciously and aggressively working to develop lessons with this new knowledge in mind.

This was not to say that the teachers did not engage in long-range planning however. Both teachers participated in long-range planning but not on the level of their short-range planning. They started organizing their courses in the summer, which is likely the case for other English teachers considering the breadth of their content—that is, English teachers have to reacquaint themselves with two-three hundred page novels, extensive, and intricate short stories, and so forth. Clearly, these planning tasks involve more time than shorter-range planning would allow.

In addition, while both teachers significantly considered the students in their planning, Dr. Wilson was more intently committed to personal goals that were linked to
the contextual nature of her classes. She deeply understood her work, and her thinking behind her planning decisions was exceptional as she developed lessons with her students in mind, but the lessons directly reflected her philosophies about what was important. Her effort, then, was likely increased in the delivery of her plans because she typically included issues of culture and race, so that the work was intriguing to her and thus interesting to the students because she used her personal experiences as ways to teach them about issues that they might not have been previously been exposed. Mrs. Albright, on the other hand, spent more time learning about and responding to her students, and it was obvious that she took those needs into major consideration as she decided on future lessons. In short, Mrs. Albright was less directive in her planning, whereas, Dr. Wilson purposely found ways to incorporate cultural and racial lessons. This was done in light of her understanding of the students: she believed they needed to know about these issues considering the context.

Another important matter concerned these teachers’ enactment of the lessons they planned. Mrs. Albright was a constructivist, while Dr. Wilson’s teaching was more closely related to direct instruction adopting some non-traditional approaches. Indeed, Dr. Wilson likely thought her knowledge about culture and race was beyond and superior to her students. This might be a reason she taught as she did. For instance, while Dr. Wilson was quite attentive to her students and their needs, she was the authority in the lessons, allowing for “teachable moments” but only when she visualized relevance to some of her own goals and philosophies. Mrs. Albright, on the other hand, developed projects, and group work. This is because Mrs. Albright was mature and had deeply
developed an understanding of her strengths and weaknesses. She was aware of her strengths and used them.

These Teachers’ Confidence

Both teachers relied on some sources of confidence, and those sources became important to the level of risk taking they engaged in over time. In addition, both teachers were concerned about their colleagues’ perspectives of them. They both referred to the notion of respect, which related to how other teachers perceived them and their work. This was not only the case with these teachers’ colleagues. This was also the case for the students and their parents. Apparently, the students in the school talked about teachers and their teaching; as a result, teachers developed reputations—based essentially on student perspectives.

This informed both teachers’ confidence as Mrs. Albright expressed her elevation in confidence when she received an encouraging note from a student, and Dr. Wilson felt more confident when students asked her to present them with their diplomas at graduation. Indeed, these teachers were concerned about how the students perceived them, and students were not shy in expressing their positions about teachers. In addition, parents’ perspectives became important to these teachers’ confidence. For Dr. Wilson, she became more confident when she saw her students in the grocery store, and they greeted her warmly, and respectfully. Mrs. Albright’s confidence was lowered when some of her students’ parents challenged her to get tougher in her courses. Both teachers highlighted others’ perspectives as important to them, even in the later years of their teaching.
Implications for Practice

Several useful strategies emerged from this research. These strategies were specified as ways these teachers had come to plan and implement lessons for student engagement. In Mrs. Albright’s case, she developed strategies to learn about the contextual nature of her courses, and to think, plan, and teach responsively. Therefore, a teacher might find the following strategies useful in their practice if he or she is interested in this notion of responsiveness.

- **Watch what your students watch.** There is much to learn from the messages that students get from the media and other television programming. For Mrs. Albright, these programs included the latest Survivor series, ESPN and the current professional sports championship events, and movies like “Finding Forester.”

- **Listen to what students listen to.** With the influx of pop culture, students are very impressionable to music and radio stations. This strategy might force teachers to tune into radio stations that are more attractive to their students.

- **Give students choices.** More than anything, Mrs. Albright found that students want to have choices and lots of them. These choices might include which books to read and topics on papers and presentations.

- **Consult students on issues important to them.** Schedule opportunities to consort with your students outside of the regular classroom setting. This may be most convenient during their lunch period.
• **READ, READ, READ.** Stay tuned to what is being written about your students. This reading needs to occur in popular, mainstream magazines, as well as professional educational journals.

• **Collaborate with other educators inside and outside of the classroom and school.** Establish a network of colleagues around your district, city, and even state. Through this networks, get ideas of effective planning.

• **Don’t be afraid to laugh and construct humorous lessons.** Find ways to make students laugh. Mrs. Albright often laughed at herself when she made a mistake, and she allowed her students to feel comfortable laughing as well.

• **Develop lessons for which students get personal meaning.** Think about ways to connect lessons to your students. Make sure that the lessons some how link to your students’ experiences and ways of knowing.

• **Decide what you are and are not willing to negotiate.** Some of the above strategies may be non-negotiable for teachers. Decide what you are willing to alter, and incorporate those into your planning. Allow that to be a starting point.

• **Ask survey questions in class and develop anonymous written evaluations.** As Mrs. Albright found, students will be honest with you. Begin these questions generally and move to more specific matters that may enlighten your knowledge of the students and their comprehension of the material. Mrs. Albright further explained that it is important to give students the opportunity to write down their views anonymously.
• **Listen to your students.** A great deal can be learned from your students’ feedback. So, it is not only important to ask them questions, but it’s also important to actually listen to their responses and act accordingly.

• **Participate in the tasks you require of your students.** As evident in this research, students respected Mrs. Albright from her participatory teaching method—one that portrayed a communal quest for knowledge, answers, and meaning making.

• **Relinquish some of the control.** Decide that students are also knowledgeable and thus capable of contributing to the lessons. Allow the learning environment to be a negotiation of between the teacher and the students. In this way, the teacher is not the only arbiter of knowledge.

• **Respect all students as independent thinkers.** Realize that students have a right to think as individual scholars in the world, even when their points of view are unpopular and inconsistent with dominant views. Allow students the opportunity to theorize and substantiate their expertise from their experiences in the world.

• **Make learning opportunities and student success better accessible.** Mrs. Albright was a master at this. At times, she would take her students to the computer lab when typed papers were due. She would also take them to the library when research assignments were due. In this sense, students will be more likely to successfully complete the task because they are actually able to type during class and research during class time.
• **Reflect and learn from these previous phases of planning.** Reflection is key in becoming more efficient planners for student engagement. In other words, document, in some form whether mentally or on paper, the challenges and solutions that you discover through the incorporation of the above strategies.

• **Articulate the strengths and weaknesses of these phases.** Collaboration is key after teaching. Discover a comfortable way to talk about your planning with other people. When this is done, you may become more efficient because articulation brings about reflection that is often transferred later like during the interactive phase of planning.

• **Build on previous lessons—don’t start from scratch.** This point reminds me of an old African proverb that states: *Start where you are, but don’t stay there.* In this regard, Mrs. Albright admitted that there were areas that she has constantly worked to improve in pursuit of engagement for students during her planning. She has been successful in this regard because she has continuously worked to make her work better.

• **Start the cycle again.** Mrs. Albright found that planning for student engagement was not a task that ever really reached a final destination. Her point here was that students today were a lot different than they were 10 or even 20 years ago. For her, planning for student engagement was a constant pursuit.
Self-reflective planning. In addition to the above strategies that highlight Mrs. Albright’s responsive planning, several concepts were developed in Dr. Wilson’s case. The following list highlight’s strategies that Dr. Wilson used in her self-reflective planning.

- *Thineself be True—Search yourself.* Clearly, Dr. Wilson engaged in personal reflections as she developed her philosophies that transferred into her planning and teaching. She developed and organized lessons that reflected her own thinking about what was important, which ultimately made her lessons interesting, successful, and engaging for her students. In this way, because she was planning in ways that did not contradict her own views, she was able to do an exceptional job relaying that information because, in a sense, she was teaching what she believed to be most important.

- *Allow your students to know you beyond the classroom.* Dr. Wilson invited her students to her home. This was done to educate her students about her own culture and race in ways that were different from the classroom. As a result, Dr. Wilson was able to understand the areas about herself that the students were most inquisitive about as they asked questions about artifacts in her home and the symbolism of them. This relates to engagement as she was able to “get their interests” and if the students are interested, they are likely going to be engaged.

- *Have phone conversations with your students.* In Dr. Wilson’s pursuit of developing engaging lessons, she had phone conversations with her
students that allowed her to delve into their interests. As she explained, students were more willing to discuss issues as they were dealing with them in a more informal setting—in this case, the telephone.

- **Attend a game, play, concert or some after school program for students’ interests.** Dr. Wilson believed that students would respect you [as teacher] if you showed interests in them outside of school. This also related to attending their extracurricular activities that focused on their interests.

- **Be animated.** Dr. Wilson believed that engagement came when the teachers put on a “show” for the students. She loved to be on stage, and she was willing to get emotional, and raise her voice to keep the students “with her.”

- **Tell personal stories.** Be willing to share a part of yourself. Dr. Wilson believed that students would be more willing to share their personal experiences when the teacher did also.

Indeed, this research presented practical advantages. These strategies may be helpful to teachers interested in responsive planning, and self-reflective planning.

The final section of this research discusses implications for research.

**Implications for Research**

As we move into the 21st century, different planning approaches need further investigation. Teaching that follows these alternative approaches have been developed and the results of that teaching have improved to student learning, as chapter two revealed. Teaching that follows alternative perspectives begins, on some level, with a
plan. Our understanding of teachers’ planning that relies on alternative approaches has potential to expand our knowledge about teaching, which would benefit teacher education programs across the country and in the world. A first step in better understanding alternative planning perspectives might be the identification of effective teachers who address and implement diverse, less traditional, teaching practices in their classes. Much can be learned from educators who go beyond direct instruction.

Critics of alternative perspectives on planning and teaching suggest that there is little evidence that student proficiency is increased by using these methods. The question then becomes: are students benefiting from these different approaches intellectually? Future studies might investigate this issue as findings that support student academic achievement would likely accelerate the progress of these approaches among teachers and teacher education programs. This study highlighted the benefits for student engagement of alternative approaches to planning and teaching, but more studies should investigate students’ academic performance resulting from these lessons. I believe that these alternative planning and teaching approaches benefit students’ academically because they address students’ learning interests, and as evident in this research, more effort might mean that students are also learning more and thus performing better academically.

This study and our understanding of it would be greatly informed and sharpened by future, replicate studies on these and similar matters. Future research should focus on the specific nature of teacher planning—like, for example, teachers’ planning for student engagement. Other research might continue studying cases of teachers (experienced and novice) who engage in responsive planning and/or self-reflective planning. It would be
interesting to discover how novice teachers negotiate their many demands in pursuit of student engagement. Particularly, studies should investigate novice teachers who are successful at negotiating these demands for student engagement. This would be helpful for preservice teachers and other novices alike. Inexperienced teachers may become frustrated and disconnected with this research because it showcases the experiences of more mature teachers. These inexperienced teachers may even be more connected to teachers who have been teaching 5 to 10 years, but it is likely that their connections with teachers who have been teaching for more than 15 years as highlighted in this study, would decrease their identification with teachers. Indeed, this may adversely affect their levels of efficacy. They may believe that it is impossible for them to perform in the exemplary fashions of these teachers because of the disconnection among the years of experience.

The thinking that these inexperienced teachers engage in would be interesting in comparison to experienced ones. In addition, it would be interesting and helpful to understand novice and preservice teachers’ efficacy through case studies and qualitative methods. There are likely some differences in these teachers’ confidence from the early years to later ones, and in depth investigations of these issues would be helpful to theory and teacher education in general. Very few studies have investigated the nature of efficacy qualitatively. Much can be learned from subsequent studies that focus on teachers’ confidence from a qualitative paradigm.

Certainly, theory might also be informed by replicate cases that address the manners in which teachers learn about their students’ interests and respond to them in future lessons for student engagement. Indeed, teachers are faced with demands
regarding state mandates, standardized tests, administrative expectations and so forth, and studies should focus on how teachers negotiate these matters in developing lessons for student engagement. Readers may criticize this work as they reflect on the rigorous demands of state and district standards and accountability in classrooms. Feasibly, readers may question their connection with these teachers because their teaching environments are quite different from that of Ritz High School. Teachers at Ritz High were given an enormous amount of autonomy in developing and implementing their lessons, which may not be the case in other environments. The contextual nature of these studies then should vary from rural to urban. What is learned about teachers’ negotiations in one context will be importantly different than that in another, and teacher education programs stand to gain tremendously from these contextual differences.

Finally, this research investigated the practice of two females. It would be interesting and insightful to understand male teachers focusing on these issues. It is possible that males’ approaches to planning lessons for student engagement are significantly different than females. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate male teachers’ sources of confidence in planning. Males may handle social/professional acceptance or isolation differently than the female teachers handled these factors in this study. Male teachers may be less sensitive to these issues, and thus their levels of confidence would be unaffected by their level of acceptance in the school. Indeed, males may find stronger connections with other males in the classroom when developing lessons as their interests may be more closely related to male students in the class. For instance, male students and male teachers may find sports intriguing and thus lessons would focus more on these interests as was the case with Dr. Wilson. She self-reflected
and implemented her own views throughout her work. Accordingly, it may be interesting to delve into students’ views of their engagement with gender issues in mind.

Conclusions

To recap, replicate studies would be useful for theory, research, and practice. Qualitative methods would likely benefit our understanding of teacher efficacy as few studies have focused on efficacy using qualitative methods, and further study should focus on teacher planning as the frequency of studies have declined significantly over the last two decades. This research provided evidence that there are dimensions of teacher efficacy that have been missed, and these omitted areas may be essential to our more extensive understanding of this area. Qualitative methods may provide deeper understandings of the nature of teachers’ confidence in performing specific tasks. In addition, the decline of studies focusing on teacher planning may be detrimental to our understanding of it as teachers develop lessons using more contemporary, sophisticated teaching styles and approaches. Teacher training programs around the country still emphasize the importance of teacher planning, yet the frequency of studies has declined in this area. Further studies should investigate teachers planning highlighting various teaching approaches if researchers and theorists have come to a point where they believe there is nothing else to be learned about it. Indeed, there are numerous areas that would be significant in our understanding teachers’ work.

This research was revealing, but an investigation of the limitations of this research would only sharpen our knowledge in these areas and ultimately the education of preservice, novice, and experienced teachers. These investigations are important for the sake of students who benefit from planning that results in engaging lessons and
efficacious teachers. Finally, this research described the “behind the scene” work that effective teachers utilize as they develop lessons to get students engaged in lessons. Indeed, this study was important and beneficial to the field of teacher education, and theory, research, and practice may be better informed as a result of it.
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Teacher Interview Protocol

General

- Background/identifying information: Name, college degrees, hobbies, metto, pet peeves, etc.
- What is it like to teach here?
- How would you describe this school, this community, this district, and these students? [Academically, economically, socially, etc.]
- If you could change or improve one thing about this school, what would it be? Community? District? Students?
- What are the strongest points about this school, community, district, students, and teachers?
- What is your teaching philosophy?
- What is your favorite class/subject to teach?
- How did that come to be?

Student Engagement

- Talk to me about what student engagement means to you?
- How important is student engagement in your work?
- How have you come to know and understand whether students are engaged or not?
- How have your beliefs about student engagement informed your planning?
- How do you deal with students who “take you into left field” in your teaching?
• How has these “left field” experiences changed over the years (refer to your experiences as a teacher/when you were a student)?

• How has student engagement changed since you have been teaching?

Planning

• How did you learn to plan? Describe that experience(s).

• How has your planning changed, improved, or declined over the years?

• How do you plan for student engagement?

• How have student needs (i.e. practical needs, contextual needs, etc.) informed your planning for them?

• In what ways does your knowledge of content inform your planning for student engagement?

• How did that come to be?

• How do your personal goals influence your planning?

• Do you change your teaching and planning on the same subject/topic from class to class, semester to semester, year to year? Can you talk more about that? What role do student needs play in this?

• How do you negotiate your content knowledge (what you know about your subject matter), your practical knowledge (what you know about your work in general), your classroom knowledge (what you know about the classroom), and your pedagogical knowledge (what you know about teaching—the delivery of lessons) in meeting student engagement demands?

• What advice would you give a beginning or student teacher about planning to meet student engagement? Can you talk more that?

Time

• What is a typical day like for you at school? Outside of school?

• Talk about how you negotiate your time in planning, other school related tasks, and so forth.

• When do you usually plan for a lesson?
The Explicit Curriculum

- What role do the district/school curriculum guidelines play in your planning for student engagement?

- How have you dealt with these guides in your planning to meet students’ engagement?

- What role do the proficiency tests play in your planning for student engagement?

- How did this come to be?

- What philosophies have you adopted in dealing with guides to meet student engagement?

Pedagogy

- How important is student engagement during your instruction? How do you negotiate their engagement with other classroom distractions?

- As an experienced teacher, how have you dealt with your pedagogy to meet student engagement?

- How do you decide what to teach?

- How much of what you believe about students informs what you actually teach?

- Provide some of these examples student factors that most inform your selections for student engagement.

- How have you come to balance your agendas about what is important to teach and the needs of student engagement?

- How do you assess or evaluate a good or bad lesson? Please talk about that process of evaluation.

- In what ways does your planning influence your teaching?

- What advice would you give a beginning or student teacher about teaching (enacting lessons) to engage students?
- How have you come to balance and negotiate what is expected through graded course of study, proficiency tests, etc., your personal beliefs about what is important, and what you discover are important for student engagement?

- How would you define culturally relevant pedagogy in your planning and pedagogy? How do you construct and enact lessons that are culturally relevant for students? How did this come to be?

- How have you incorporated multicultural dimensions into your teaching? Talk about how you incorporate issues of diversity into your work? How has this evolved over the years?

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**Teacher Efficacy**

- How confident are you in developing lessons for student engagement?

- What do you believe about your ability to construct lessons for student needs in your planning?

- How confident are you about planning for and teaching multicultural lessons?

- How did this come to be?

- How have student engagement demands facilitated this belief?

- Has student engagement altered your thinking about your ability to plan and enact lessons?

- Do you believe that you have been trained properly to deal with issues of diversity in your work?

- What factors have contributed to this assessment of your ability to do this type of planning?

- Do you believe that your teacher education program prepared you to plan effectively?

- Do you believe your teacher education program prepared you to plan and execute lessons for student engagement?

- Have you observed an increased need for multicultural lessons over the years? Talk more about this.
• How has your confidence about planning changed over the years? How did this come to be?

• How do you feel about your effectiveness to planner as a planner?

• What factors have contributed to this assessment of your ability to plan?

• How do you feel about your effectiveness in making curricular decisions?

• What role have your past experiences played in your belief about your ability to plan effectively?

• Do you believe that your teacher education program prepared you to plan effectively? Explain.

• How have your beliefs about planning changed over the years? How did this come to be?

Mastery

• When do you feel most confident in your ability to plan for student engagement (before teaching, while teaching, or after teaching)?

• How has your confidence changed over the years in your ability to engage students during teaching?

• While teaching how confident are you in engaging students?

• At what points during a lesson are you most confident in student engagement?

• How significance is planning while teaching in your level of confidence in planning?

Vicarious

• What role did your student teaching and other observational opportunities your confidence to plan for student engagement?

• How has your observations of others teachers informed your confidence in engaging students?

• How significant is your watching or seeing other people planning in your level of confidence in your planning?
Verbal Persuasion

- How has feedback from your cooperating teacher plan during your student teaching and other colleagues informed your confidence in planning?

- Provide examples of the types of feedback you have received from these people related to planning?

- How significant is this verbal feedback to your confidence in planning?

Physiological State

- Are you ever stressed in your efforts for planning for student engagement?

- How have you handled your stress and anxiety in your efforts to plan for student engagement?

- How significant is your stress and anxiety levels in your planning for student engagement?