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EFFECTIVE WRITING TEACHERS IN URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
STORIES OF LEARNERS ALONG THE WAY

DISSERTATION

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

by

Laura R. Lipsett, B.A., M.S.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1997

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge and constructed insights of three effective writing teachers from three secondary schools within the same urban school district. This study seeks to provide insights where very little information exists. Many scholars have attested that there's a great deal of value to be gained from studies of teacher knowledge; however, knowledge about what teachers know remains elusive. Essentially, there's been a lack of attention given to the beliefs, values, and images that guide teachers' work, combined with a lack of scholarship that recognizes teachers as important partners in the creation of knowledge about education. Additionally, there's a paucity of teachers' voices in the professional literature and a lack of exemplars of secondary English teachers in classrooms composed of diverse student populations. This study also is built on the perceived value of collaborative biographical inquiry between researchers and teachers in understanding how teachers have come to think and act in the ways they do.

This study's design consists of case studies, borrowing as well from narrative inquiries known as life story and life history. Primary data consisted of indepth interviews and observations over a six-month period with data analysis occurring simultaneously. Idiosyncrasies of each teacher and characteristics of the teachers as a group of writing teachers were determined as were their perceptions of their contexts and obstacles to teaching effectiveness. Data was analyzed initially by the researcher and was then shared with the participants who engaged in a form of collaborative analysis of their individual cases and in the findings of the cross-case analysis. Findings revealed that
these teachers work in similar ways and share many attitudes and principles although they differ in personalities and teaching styles. The results of a cross-case analysis made possible the identification of four themes as indicative of the progressive thinking of these teachers.

Results of this study concluded that these teachers' ways of knowing has implications for school districts and teacher education in terms of professional development and inservice training and in terms of preservice teacher education. Suggestions for further research include a call for continued biographical inquiry, studies of lore, exemplars of teachers that provide contrasting and multiple perspectives (such as effective versus less effective teachers), veteran and new teachers, teachers of diverse students, nonwhite teachers, and teachers who've taught at multiple levels and sites. Research that provides contextualized knowledge and practices and research that is the result of collaborative partnerships between university teacher-researchers and secondary teachers also is recommended. Research that scrutinizes more closely the notion of "effectiveness" in terms of "effective for whom?" also is encouraged.
This is shared with my mother who several years ago told her then reluctant daughter that she'd make a good secondary school teacher and who a few years after that encouraged her then hesitant daughter to make teacher education a part of her profession.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Each of us is moving, changing, with respect to others. As we discover, we remember; remembering, we discover, and most intensely do we experience this when our separate journeys converge" (p. 112).
-- Eudora Welty, from One Writer's Beginnings (1983)

I'm ever grateful to the teachers who participated in this study as well as to the "educational connoisseurs" who introduced me to them. I blame you all for the many times I suffered from "writer's constipation": I meant it when I said I became resistant to my role as researcher as I developed a growing admiration for all of you, both professionally and personally. Your voices have influenced my pedagogy for life: "I can no other answer make but thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks."

I'm thankful as well for the support of my "peer group": Diana and Marlene, your insights and humor were "golden arrows" in urging this gal to move forward. Even our former member, Jerome, gave me some "e-time" to lament about my waves of obstructions: Unregretably, he sent me more "newsgroup diversions" to read in lieu of any real coddling. I look forward to continued collective inquiry and collaborations -- on whatever and from wherever we all may be in the future.

I want to acknowledge as well the time and efforts of my dissertation committee: To my adviser Dr. Maia Pank Mertz (your patience for my "muse" to hit was more than appreciated -- it has been remarkable); to my original member Dr. Anna O. Soter (who left for a sabbatical in the "nick of time," avoiding December and leaving me in search of a replacement); to Dr. Robert J. Tierney (your interest and support as "second team" were valued); and to Dr. George E. Newell (for taking on "third base").
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CHAPTER 1

ONE RESEARCHER'S BEGINNINGS

"The frame only raises the question of the vision" (p. 97).
-- Eudora Welty, from *One Writer's Beginnings* (1983)

**Introduction: Eudora Welty and I**

I've never claimed a proclivity for cleverness, and I don't wish to imply otherwise here. As a matter of fact, more often than not, I've laid claim to a propensity for a lack of original thought. For as long as I can remember, I've been a "pack rat": At times I'm not sure where I end and where others begin. I have a tendency to grab bits and pieces from here and there which tend to return much later to haunt me: Such is the case here. In my collecting there is rarely an instantaneous and definitive focus, but in hindsight there always has been an evolving and eventual purpose. It's this continual process of collecting, an act of storing and revisiting, that has helped me make sense of my own life story, a story that remains emergent with added layers of experience and more significant details.

Several years ago, when I was learning how better to teach writing from an instructor with the Iowa Writing Project, I was asked if I had ever read Eudora Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings*. His question came from his reading of my weekly journal entries (a requirement of the course) -- entries that I still have "rat-packed" away in a file cabinet (more than 10 years later), stored somewhere in the recesses of my mother's garage in Iowa. I raced to add this book to my collection for whatever reason then I
wasn't sure. It went with me unopened from Iowa to Texas to Nebraska and then to Missouri, where several years later I finally read this book, motivated by the fact that I was teaching creative writing as an isolated discipline to high schoolers in Kansas City. I figured this book might contain some potential writing prompts for my students. But what seemed to have minor impact on them, left their teacher, ever the student, beguiled as my yellow highlighter, black ink stains, and paperclips will attest.

Even though at that moment it wasn't my own "writer's beginning," it was the start of Eudora Welty's testament as a metaphor for what has moved me in my own learner's life. In retrospect I hadn't the slightest inclination to think of Welty's book as a parallel or as a model, let alone as a metaphor, for my personal or professional development. The concept of "life metaphor" really became revelatory when I started doctoral studies and became frustrated and then irritated by the convoluted, sometimes contradictory and even constipating, rhetoric of qualitative diorama. In the beginning I believed that I had to master all "the talk" -- well, at least somebody's talk. Eventually, I declared to go "simple" [which Lather (1996) cautions as being every bit as contemptuous as the complex] and decided that sparcity of terminology might better fit my style.

I eventually stumbled across the researcher's concept of "metaphor" while reading Richardson (1990) who refers to metaphor as "the backbone of social science writing" (p. 18). "Social science writing, like all writing, depends upon literary and rhetorical devices to articulate its ideas and make its point, convincingly, credibly, and cognitively" (Richardson, 1990, p. 17). Both a literary and a rhetorical device, the metaphor can structure the actions we take as researchers in theorizing and what we believe constitutes theory. "We try to build a theoretical structure, which we then experience as a structure, which has a form and foundation which we then experience as an edifice, sometimes in need of dismantling or, more recently, deconstructing" (Richardson, 1990, p. 18). Finally, here was a term that I was acquainted with as a reader of fiction and as an
English teacher, a familiar concept that I could understand on a new level as a beginning writer of social science and yet a term for which I still could learn a modicum of suspicion for both its simplicity and its duplicity — at least enough to give it some "trouble" as any reflexive researcher should do (Lather, 1986, 1996).

Metaphors, like all literary and rhetorical devices, are a sense-making mechanism. "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, cited in Richardson, 1990, p. 18). Metaphors exist not only at the conceptual level but exist as prefigures to judgment about the nature of the social science text. They "organize social scientific work and affect the interpretations of the facts; indeed, facts are interpretable (make sense) only in terms of their place within a metaphoric structure. The sense making is always value constituting -- making sense in a particular way, privileging one ordering of the facts over others" (Richardson, 1990, p. 20). In her own particular way, even Welty (1983) surreptitiously connotes play in the metaphor game as she imparts, "The frame only raises the question of the vision" (p. 97).

Essentially, Welty's book provides "snapshots" -- autobiographical episodes -- of her life and of its significant players. Viewing life as an art form, not as a chronicle but as a drama, her story unfolds in three movements, "I. Listening," "II. Learning to See," and "III. Finding a Voice": Beginning with birth and girlhood in Jackson, Mississippi, progressing to traveling by car to visit her parents' respective families in Ohio and West Virginia, and finally to attending college at the Mississippi State College for Women and to experiencing life as a journalist and eventually as a novelist. I have long been a fan of regional literature, especially of the writers who are sparse with words and can create impact with simple images. Regional literature -- voices -- often helps me to imagine I'm "hearing" rather than simply reading the page, with the former's emphasis counting on a more active engagement with the substantive idiosyncracies of indigenous people and
their geographical locales. And whereas I long had been a fan of Welty's fiction and of other writers' autobiographies and biographies in general, for some reason it took me a long time to get to One Writer's Beginnings. And still, I have continued to discover newer levels of meaning within its pages.

Most recently, I've been adding to my collection of writers' autobiographies and biographies and was adding one more book to this section of my bookshelves, a book which I happened to purchase (and still haven't read) on my "obvious suspicion" of the author's surname [Surviving a Writer's Life (1994) by Suzanne Lipsett]. Spotting "Eudora Welty" once more, I grabbed One Writer's Beginnings, now here with me in Ohio. I was hoping to find inspiration as I began to write the results of my dissertation research. I inadvertently flipped open my book to this highlighted passage: "The frame through which I viewed the world changed too, with time. Greater than scene, I came to see, is situation. Greater than situation is implication. Greater than all of these is a single, entire human being, who will never be confined in any frame" (Welty, 1983, p. 98). So here suggest Eudora Welty and I: Listening, learning to see, and finding a voice, we both caution our readers to be conscious of the writer's frame.

My Study's Design: Frames of Mine

Case Studies and More

Confessions. This study consists of cases of three secondary English teachers from three high schools all located in the same urban school district. It is a study that presents teachers' voices. It includes not only the voices of the subjects of these case studies, but it recognizes my voice in here as well in my admittance of my search for meaning in my own effectiveness as a secondary English teacher. It also includes my search for understanding of the effectiveness of other teachers that I've observed and have worked along side during the time I have taught English at the secondary level and have taught preservice teacher education courses at the college level. In particular, I've been
interested in the teaching of writing as well, the science and art of learning to write long before I came to teaching. Since beginning my teaching career, I've been all the more intrigued by the stories of writers on writing and of "expert pedagogues" who profess the "write" way. Hence, this study is just that: It allows me to read about and take part in dialogues with others who share similar interests. Above all this is a tale of confession, for it's my story that led to its design.

Although I refer to this study as qualitative case study research, I associate it with various other qualitative orientations. One of these orientations is ethnography. Ethnography has been defined as a written representation of a culture or selected aspects of a culture and ethnographic writings as "pointing to the choices and restrictions at the very heart of social life" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 1). I have used "tools" of ethnography in the study of three teachers' knowledge and in learning how they construct their insights into practice. In the anthropological tradition of immersion in the field, I collected data primarily by interviewing and participant-observation. I also recognize the researcher as a tool, for it is I, the researcher, who has chosen the emphasis of content and the form of the narratives that constitute the cases that comprise this study.

In choosing to acknowledge the researcher as tool, I've borrowed from Van Maanen (1988) in declaring this study to be a tale of confession. Van Maanen (1988) states that ethnographers have three ethnographic conventions of choice: Realist tales, confessional tales, or impressionist tales. In realist tales, authors take the voice of authority and are absent from much, if not all, of the text; confessional tales view fieldwork as an interpretive act with authors very much in the text, sharing in the acquisition of their knowledge, the building of rapport, and even the encountering of hardships; and impressionist tales take great artistic license in the use of dramatic recall, artistry, and literary standards [recommended not for the novice researcher! (Emihovich, 1995)] . I have taken the "middle road" and confess to my "confessions" that include
both the roots for this study and the account of my wranglings as "beginning researcher."

Three descriptive cases. Before the collection of the data, I knew that I wanted to use case study design for the purposes of my research. I believed this design provided me with the greatest flexibility possible, because the nature of such design can be modified and new procedures can be utilized as more is learned about the topic from prolonged research in the field (Bogdan & Bilkin, 1992; Merriam, 1988). The nature of this case study design is descriptive and follows what Merriam (1988) refers to as "descriptive case study" in that it is inductive in nature, and description and explanation, rather than prediction based on cause and effect, are the end result. "The aim of descriptive research is to examine events or phenomena.... It is impossible to identify all the important variables ahead of time. Results are presented qualitatively, using words and pictures rather than numbers" (Merriam, 1988, p. 7).

I wanted to talk with and observe secondary English teachers in their classrooms: I wanted to learn about what they knew and how they came to construct their insights into practice. Specifically, I wanted to learn about their writing instruction, their assessment of writing, and how the contextual realities of their schools influenced these. Most importantly, I wanted these individual teachers to determine the pace and direction of our talks as much as possible: I wanted to follow the data wherever it lead. I desired to practice "the art of uncertainty and vision" which Dillard (1989) uses to describe the creative process of an artist friend of hers in the semi-autobiographical The Writing Life:

Paul Glenn was learning which techniques of dripping colors on the water, and which techniques of drawing the paper up through the colors, yielded the most interesting results. He had been working at it for six months. How he was going to use the papers was another matter, and the crucial one: he could cut them into collage materials, he could fold them into sculpture, he could paint over them and into them. He was following the work wherever it led. (pp. 84-85)

Narrative strategies. Although I refer to my study as case studies of three teachers, I have borrowed as well from narrative inquiries known as life story and life history. Whereas I had planned from the initial conception of this study to use case study
design, I hadn’t planned from the start to borrow from other modes of inquiry. But the more I read about case study research and the more I collected data, the more I realized I needed additional strategies that would truly reflect the nature of my data and its analysis. Using conceptions of life story and life history narratives, I’ve freed my own language as I’ve attempted to create significance for this study and have collected, understood, and reported my data.

Conceptions of both life story and life history narratives have influenced this study. Narrative inquiry has been defined as a discourse form in which events and happenings are unified by means of a plot (Polkinghorne, 1995). The purpose of narrative inquirers is to describe lives, collecting and telling stories of them, and to write narratives of experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I use narrative strategies in this study, because it is the presentation of voices and the stories told by those voices. It also is a study of collaborative engagement in which both the story tellers and the researcher joined in the creation of knowledge about education.

Goodson (1992a) defines the life story as that which we tell about our lives and the life history as the life story located within its historical context, told in collaboration with a researcher. Possible advantages to the life history narrative over life story inquiry might be the creation of a research community and a broadening in the conceptual understanding of the story in light of several interviews and discussions and by collective scrutiny of various texts and contexts (Goodson, 1992a). In a sense, this study is both life story and life history. It is one episode of my life story: It is told by me, its author, and it has been negotiated and given additional meaning by my engagement with the "stories" of (conversations with and written texts by) others. It also employs features of the life history narrative: In this study I present several conversations with (and my observations of) three teachers over a period of time. In my representation of their stories, the collaboration continues as I viewed their stories in light of various other texts.
and broader contexts and attempted to present their story (as a representational whole) in light of the individual conversations I had with each of them. I present both respective and collective narratives. I attempted to laud their individual idiosyncrasies and attempted to pull abstractions from all their stories in order to present them as a "collective" known as "effective writing teachers" in one urban school district.

"Conversations " as Metaphor

As I struggled early on to give heightened meaning to my study, I considered various metaphors. This study's primary data focus had been interviews: Five interviews with each of the three teachers; one interview with each of the five informants who nominated these teachers; and a total of nine interviews with the teachers' students (three per teacher). Obviously, I'd been engaged in a lot of talk. As the researcher I was aware of the color of details, the intonation of words, the laughter and pauses, and the collegiality felt during our days together. I knew it would take a talented writer -- a regionalist of some sorts -- to create atmosphere and meaning from interviews as well as from observations and documents collected. I confessed from the start to my inexperience (really, my self-consciousness manifested in fear). I needed a gimmick to hold my thoughts and transitions together. I turned first to the tried and true metaphor of "portraits" that had been used with previous case studies (Cohen, 1991; Lightfoot, 1983) but eventually decided that the dynamic and reciprocal act of "conversations" better fit the nature and presentation of my data, something I believed the more static act of "portraiture" might have obscured.

I arrived at the use of conversations only after realizing that the use of portraits did not fully recognize the dialogic nature of this study. Although I liked the sound and feel of portraits, after fleshing out this concept a bit, I still wasn't satisfied with its fit for this particular study design. The concept of portraiture implies moments of time captured in still life rather than dialogic construction of life stories and life histories. I had liked
the idea that portraits are intended to capture the essence of their subjects. In *The Good High School*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1983) refers to her use of portraits (case studies of high schools) as her attempt "to develop a form of inquiry that would embrace many of the descriptive, aesthetic, and experiential dimensions" of the institutional cultures she studied (p. 6). As the portraits' artist, the researcher must not view the subjects as objects but as persons (in Lightfoot's case, the high schools) of myriad dimensions (Lightfoot, 1983). In her book Lightfoot (1983) captures moments in time as she sketches the backdrops of these schools, paints their props, details their characters and the plots that involve them, and depicts at times individual faces and voices in order to tell a broader story about these high schools' institutional cultures. Like Lightfoot (1983), I am presenting case study research, but instead of a primary focus on school cultures, my focus was the knowledge and construction of insights of three effective writing teachers. And unlike Lightfoot's study (1983), this study also makes use of narrative inquiry strategies known as "life story" and "life history," both which imply an oral unit (Linde, 1993), something perhaps not so apparent in the metaphorical use of portraits.

I preferred the metaphor "conversations" for its implied multi-layeredness, something that I believe is befitting of research that presents the voices of teachers in their respective contexts and recognizes the impact of the personal on the professional life and vice versa. In defining this multi-layeredness, I have chosen to borrow from diverse sources to give it amplified meaning. Dillard (1989) states that in her life and in her observations of the writing lives of others that "being shaped" and then shaping right back has been the way to illumination: "Only after the writer lets literature shape her can she perhaps shape literature" (p. 69). I have been shaped and have shaped as well the concept of "conversations" for this study. I have borrowed meaning freely and loosely from several voices from my bookshelves, defining its multi-layeredness and stating the implications for using conversations to include the following: A sense that collective and
collaborative inquiry have taken place in which observations, reflections, and responses are the result (Bateson, 1994; Dahl, 1992); a sense that differences as well as similarities have been brought together (Neubauer, 1994; Pearlman, 1993); a sense that the sound and act of voices conversing implies "active listening" as opposed simply to a passive hearing (Bausch, 1991; Noddings, 1984); a sense that intertextuality is present (Scholes, 1994); and a sense that the negotiation of life stories and life histories has taken place, has been shared, and has been acknowledged (Coles, 1989; Linde, 1993; Taylor, 1996).

A cornerstone of my study has been the ethnographic interview, but also I have conducted conversations, have collected documents, and have utilized some personal experience methods. Although I devised tentative interview protocols, my intention from the start was simply to have several good conversations with each of the teachers in this study. Conversations as a metaphor for this study implies several things beyond oral units. Most importantly, it implies a process of collectiveness and collaboration. When I began conceptualizing this study's design, I was propelled not only by issues of teacher effectiveness but by my concern with the lack of teachers' voices in the professional literature and by my own experiences as a classroom teacher with little time and opportunities for shared reflections with my colleagues. Many of us teachers have agreed that some of the richest experiences in our professional lives have been those when we've come together as colleagues in conversations, sharing and creating new opportunities for learning and understanding of our practices and the practices of others in light of the contextual realities of schooling (Bedy, 1996; Buchanan, 1994; Conway, 1996; Hamlin, 1996; Lipsett, 1997; Scarborough, 1996; Starner, 1996). Most recently, I was reading Mary Catherine Bateson's (1994) *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* in which she describes the learning that takes place when "conversations" are ongoing. She alludes to this type of cyclical "give and take" as essential to finding "paths of insight":

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"These are all ways of learning, by encountering and comparing more than one version of experience, that the realities of self and world are relative, dependent on context and point of view" (Bateson, 1994, p. 12).

When I first began drafting a proposal for this study, I was enrolled in a course at The Ohio State University taught by Karin L. Dahl who shared with me a book she edited: Teacher as Writer: Entering the Professional Conversation (1992). She said, "You might see yourself in there." The message in this book, a collection of teachers' testimonials, is that more teacher-practitioner voices are needed in the professional literature and that riches abound when "publishing" takes place. Although it's primarily about teacher writers, Dahl's (1992) book is also about what happens when several teachers come together and create new information about teaching. I borrow this "sense of community-building" from Dahl's (1992) use of conversation in her title and use it to describe what took place during the course of my data collection and analysis. This community-building continues still today as these teachers and I continue to meet on an additional project, no longer just in the roles of researcher and subjects and colleagues but also as friends.

In using conversations as a metaphor, I also mean to imply the joining of individual voices into a "chorus." In both Neubauer (1994) and Pearlman's (1993) books, they pull together their respective interviews with several distinguished teachers of writing and pull together interviews with several women who write. In their conversations with these teachers and writers, both authors' goals are to present individual voices (idiosyncrasies) but seek to validate them as well into a collective whole in encouraging the reader to pull abstractions from these teachers' and writers' thinking and practices. Noddings (1984) has described the act of listening as intentions to be perceptive and creative rather than judgmental and listening as the "supremely important form of receiving" (p. 121). Additionally, Bausch (1991) in writing the
introduction to a collection of stories written by various authors heard on National Public Radio, *The Sound of Writing: America's Short Story Magazine of the Air*, alludes to the "hiss and static" of the narratives within this text as a "transaction between writer and reader," really a conversational act. These are stories that have been compiled for their individual riches: All were meant to be "read aloud over the nation's airwaves, and what I find most pleasurable in them is the stubbornness with which all of these writers, some of them better known than others, have maintained their own voices for the exercise..." (p. xi). It is this "sound" of the conversations that I held with these three teachers that I want to present in this study -- both their individual voices and unified voices, in the similar traditions of Neubauer (1994) and Pearlman (1992), for a collective purpose and part of a collaborative venture replete with the "hiss and static" of the contexts in which we talked.

Conversations as a metaphor for this study also refers to intertextuality and to a sense of negotiation and presentation of life stories and life histories. Intertextuality itself is a type of conversation that occurs between the writer and her writing: It also occurs between the reader and the written page. Scholes (1994) refers to "intertextuality" as the recognition that "texts are made mainly out of other texts" (p. 237). Somewhere recently I caught the words of Wilson Mizner: "When you steal from one author, it's plagiarism; if you steal from many, it's research." In *Writers on Writing* edited by Jon Winokur (1986), T. S. Eliot is purported to have said that "The immature poet imitates; the mature poet plagiarizes" (p. 203). Well, I do need to imply that this study *is* research, yet I don't mean to imply my maturity as a writer of social science research. How about if I just confess to "intertextual conversations" here?

I mentioned previously my tendencies as a "pack rat" with bits and pieces I've gathered coming back to haunt me. Coles (1989) states that we all bring "baggage" with us from one context to another: "Their story, yours, mine -- it's what we all carry with us
on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from
them" (p. 30). Throughout the course of this write-up, I've chosen to let in the "spirits" as
they come to me. These spirits are essentially voices that have been conversing for some
time with me and have and are helping me to negotiate (continuously) my own life story
and the life histories of others. As I have strived to learn about and present the
knowledge and constructed insights of the three teachers in this study, I have strived also
to make sense of my own wranglings as secondary teacher, as teacher educator, and as
beginning social science researcher. Scholes (1994) states that "We academic writers
must learn both that we have no choice but to be intertextual and also that we are obliged
to add our own labor to these intertexts in order to make them do productive work in
helping us with our own textual problems" (p. 231). I continue to take part in
conversations with voices from my past, current, and potential future. As I converse with
them, they converse with this study and in a sense help me push my language towards its
metaphorical (and intertextual) limits.

**Roots and Reciprocity**

**Roots.** This study is rooted in me. It is a study that is both empirical and
reflective. My experiences as a secondary English teacher provide the backdrop for my
understanding of the knowledge of these teachers and their practices, and I write this
study from three voices: As a secondary school English teacher, as a teacher educator,
and as a beginning social science researcher. It is a study that is both scholarship and
story -- one of qualitative research and one of lived reality.

As both a preservice and inservice teacher, I received my various districts' fill of
"inservice training." I remember as a student teacher going through TESA, GESA,
CoRT, Madeline Hunter's "Seven Components of Effective Teaching" and then as an
inservice teacher going through brain-based learning theories, Howard Gardner's multiple
intelligences, learning styles instruction, thematic-based instruction, performance-based
assessment, Essential Schools (Ted Sizer), and portfolio assessment to name a few. Early in my education career (really, prior to starting my first contract job), I had believed somewhat in these approaches, and I did try to make them work but always realizing that I had to adapt them to my specific contexts or to do some creating of my own.

Recently, I was shopping for office supplies when I ran into a 30-year-old former student of mine from two years ago (a secondary social studies person who was in one of my general methods courses) who said student teaching was such a miserable experience that he wasn't sad not to have a full-time teaching job but decided instead to go into business for himself. He said that "all those theories," meaning the learner developmental theories we had studied, were such a waste of time; he went on to say that once he started teaching "they were out the door." I reminded him that nothing was to be taken in stone: But rather, he (we) should be critical of everything we read and should try to make sense of it (and create new theories) from our respective circumstances, that this is a part of being "teacher." We observe, gather data, try to understand and create meaning, and we should never be satisfied with ever finding any one conclusion for all students and contexts -- there's never closure in teaching: Circumstances change daily if not hourly or by the minute.

He looked at me like I was giving him the "teacher-educator business" and said, "Listen, I made illustrated outlines, brought in pictures for my students, brought in current events, and this wasn't good enough." And I said, "But what did you do beyond this? What kind of relationships did you build with your students? How did you attempt to familiarize yourself with their individual needs and interests? In what manner did you execute your plans, and how did you engage your students in the developing of your plans and your plans' implementation?" Pondering for a bit, he then said, "Well, my cooperating teacher kept all the good kids." I said, "What do you mean by this?" He said, "The ones who weren't resistant to learning the stuff. They knew what it took to be
successful -- they could 'jump through the hoops.' I gathered then that this former student of mine was believing that failure starts with the students and never was started or encouraged by the teacher, that it was the students' responsibility to come to him on his time and from his understanding of theirs and his worlds, and that any student who couldn't do this was "bad." If this were a prevalent attitude of most teachers in the schools, I doubt very highly that many kids would keep coming to class. I shared with my former student the metaphor of the "sower and his field": "A farmer (teacher) has got to understand (value, love, and nurture) the 'soil' -- the nature of the ground, what's best for it and how to prepare it for planting and continual nourishment." But I just don't think he got it.

I have long been curious as to what makes one teacher more effective than another. It's not as simple as having a set of certain teaching methods. I've been interested as well in the "debate" of whether or not teaching is a science or an art although I realize some have contended it's both (Gage, 1978). I know many teachers who would say art is more important than science; although sometimes I think colleges of education emphasize science, science, and science, and use science as the gatekeeper to entering student teaching, though some demonstration of art does comes in but isn't necessarily a requirement for passing the practicum. The "art part" might even be more difficult to detect when "pass or fail grading" is used. In this study I also wanted to learn what other teachers (in this case, my informants) believed and why. If someone were to ask me, I'd say effective teaching is an art: The practice of art is discipline, creativity, careful observation and interpretation, an unreliance on status quo but reliance on ideas in the making, on individuality, and on the negotiation of yourself with the world around you. But then perhaps my definition sounds like science, too. However, science (the traditional view) to me implies more objective reasoning, generalizing, and "controlled
factors." The best teaching, many might agree, is science elevated to art. I see the three teachers in this study as artists — they have moved beyond the science of it all and have and see the need to create their art daily.

Prior to my full-time doctoral studies, I was part of a team of four teachers who were forging interdisciplinary connections in a pilot program at our high school in the Kansas City, Missouri Public School District. The four of us had been a product of "mining" in which a staff development specialist and adjunct professor associated with the school district and a local university befriended, took, and then interpreted "our" findings and presented them without our voices — all unbeknowingly to us, until we saw "us" in print. As a secondary teacher, I felt slighted and undervalued and sometimes ignored by the university community which, ironically enough, supposedly aided in "producing" us. This a sentiment often is expressed by other practitioners who have realized they're good enough when it comes to being observed or studied by researchers, and their classrooms are appropriate enough for preservice teachers who need a placement in those particular disciplines. Little value has been placed on classroom teachers' experiential knowledge, and there has been a lack of teachers' "voices" in the professional literature (Cohen, 1991; Goodson, 1991, 1992a; Ladson-Billings, 1994). It is possible to intimate that there's been historically a "creative dissonance" between the universities and the schools for which they're preparing teachers.

All research essentially is embedded in biography: It starts with an interest in something and at times the interest develops out of personal experience. In acknowledging herself in her case studies of English teachers, Grossman (1990) states she often wondered about the constructs of the teachers she worked with in government programs and at independent schools where teacher certification wasn't required. "As I suspect is true of many research projects, my interest in the effects of teacher education has its roots in personal biography.... Throughout my years of secondary-school
teaching, I wondered what difference, if any, teacher education might have made to the bright, well-educated teachers with whom I worked" (Grossman, 1990, p. 149). Many other researchers have attested as well that their case studies are rooted in the self (Cohen, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rouse, 1993). I am no different. As much as my study is about three teachers who've been "nominated" for their effectiveness as teachers of writing (see Chapter 1 "Definitions"), it is a study about me and for me. I came to this study wanting to take part in conversations with other English teachers but wanted to be the one who set the agenda (the frame) for what we'd talk about which was naturally what I have enjoyed talking about as an English teacher — writing instruction. I wanted to triangulate me (my experiences and observations) with what some other teachers had to say and show. Additionally, I've been interested in writers' biographies for a long time, but I became even more interested after becoming a teacher. Thus, came this study.

**Reciprocity.** I followed what Patton (1990) refers to as the "reciprocity model." In this model reasons for the participants to become involved are provided in some sort of suggested mutual exchange. The reciprocity that I suggested was in my ability to perform "legwork" in the form of resources that I could discover for them through The Ohio State University's library systems. I also explained that I wanted to engage them in a sort of collective analysis in which I planned to share with them my findings from their individual cases and my findings in terms of a cross-case analysis. I wanted them to realize that this study's intent was to validate practitioners' experiential knowledge and one way to model this was engaging them (and garnering their feedback) in the creation of knowledge about education.

Although none followed through on my willingness to gather resources for them, they did value the concept of collective analysis. In particular, they were desirous to "hear the voices" of their colleagues in the cross-case analysis. All three teachers shared with me in the course of their final interviews that something very meaningful had been
created in their participation in this study. During these respective conversations, I asked them why they agreed to participate in this study. In effect they all stated that they were ready, and had been for some time, to talk at length with someone who valued teaching and children as much as they did. None mentioned that she or he had been willing to participate, because she or he wanted to complain or even to propagate their "effective" agendas or formulas: This came as no surprise to me. If they had thought this -- something I believe would have come to my attention the first time that I met with them and introduced myself and this study -- I wouldn't have chosen them.

These teachers took me on, giving me a lot of their time both in and outside the school day, and still they said they got something valuable in return. What's most interesting to me is that what they got in return is something that I wanted all along and did get, but I had no idea of the richness that we would derive from sharing our time. What began simply as "conversations" truly evolved into what Dahl (1992) deems as "entering the professional conversation." These three teachers and I (plus five others from the district) decided it was time to come together and write a book -- to share and open up our collaboration and our riches as a community to others. Thus, the "T-Project" was born (Lipsett, 1997). In our proposed book, these teachers share their experiential knowledge -- their thinking and practices in light of their contextual realities. Essentially, they open windows into their classrooms, showing the processes (successes and failures) involved in teaching. The chapters are being written by these teachers (I'm in the role of editor). We have chosen as our working title *Open Windows: Epiphanies in Our Classrooms*. We're anticipating our proposed book's submission this summer of 1997.

I am honored these teachers agreed to participate in this study and that they stayed with me through its duration. What began with purely selfish intentions, I am so glad to share: A continued development of self and understanding through our lived experiences and through the shared stories of others. Learning along the way, several epiphanies
(other than a shared book) have come to my attention: Epiphanies of knowing how much we like and respect each other; epiphanies in recognizing our own strengths and effects as individual teachers; and epiphanies of what happens spiritually when two and more are gathered as one.

My Study's Purpose: Connections in Time

Research Problem

Many scholars and researchers have attested that there's a great deal of value to be gained from studies of teacher knowledge. However, knowledge about what teachers know remains elusive (Carter, 1992; Goodson, 1991; Schubert, 1991). Studies of learning to teach have tended instead to focus on socialization of teachers, the impact of particular programs, and the effect of cooperating teachers and university supervisors; even studies of teacher effectiveness have failed to focus on knowledge about what teachers know (Carter, 1990). It's this lack of attention to the beliefs, values, and images that guide teachers' work (Carter, 1992; Goodson, 1991), combined with a lack of scholarship that recognizes teachers as important partners in the creation of knowledge about education (Schubert, 1991), that propelled the design of this study. Additional guiding concerns in the design and development of this study have been the paucity of real teachers' voices in the professional literature (Cohen, 1991; Goodson, 1991, 1992a); the lack of exemplars of secondary English teachers in classrooms composed of diverse student populations (Bissex, 1990; Delpit, 1988; Farr, 1991; Gomez, 1990); and the perceived value of collaborative biographical inquiry between researcher and teacher practitioners in understanding how teachers have come to think and act in the way they do (Ayers & Schubert, 1994; Butt, Raymond, McCue, & Yamagishi, 1992; Hamilton-Wieler, 1990).
Research Questions

Part of the review of related literature that serves as this study's foundation consists of the research known as studies of teacher knowledge. This study is informed as well by the research that calls for the grounding of teacher knowledge in the recognition of contexts in which they teach that influence the nature of teacher and student interactions. Since this study focuses on effective writing teachers in urban secondary schools and/or classrooms composed of diverse students, I've also surveyed the literature in these areas. In the process of collecting and analyzing data, I've sought to answer the following questions, focusing in particular on the teaching of writing and its assessment:

1. What knowledge and experiences do these teachers consider most worthwhile?
2. How do these teachers construct their insights?
3. What has shaped the nature of their knowledge?

Definitions

Effective teacher. I began the conceptualization and initialization of this study without an exact definition of an effective writing teacher as I believed (and still do) that good teaching is culturally and contextually based -- what's perceived as good for one student or group of students is not necessarily good for all. When I asked my informants ["educational connoisseurs" (Eisner, 1985a, 1985b)] for names of effective writing teachers in their school district, I mentioned only that these should be the teachers who are known by colleagues, students, or supervisors for their commitments and innovations and for the "good works" [this notion borrowed from Macrorie's (1984) case studies] that their students produce and that these teachers should be among the best that they knew. I made no attempt to define "effective" in a precise operational sense and made no attempt to determine quality beyond reputation. Hence, when I use the concept of the "effective teacher," I must refer to the perceptions of the informants who first brought these teachers to my attention. Using Eisner's (1985a, 1985b) notion of educational
connoisseurship, I considered these nominators to be connoisseurs of teaching. All five of my informants have considerable experience in educational situations, and I believed had developed sophisticated levels of perception and discrimination similar to connoisseurship in the arts. Like Ayers and Schubert (1994) who utilized this same notion in their studies of "best" teachers, I believed that tapping these informants' intuitive and experiential insights was a defensible way to locate good teachers, and it followed the assumption of this study that valued the insights of practitioners.

Teacher knowledge. In this study I have attempted to learn about the knowledge and constructed insights of effective teachers of writing in the same urban school district. In particular, I was interested in knowing how their contextual realities shaped their thinking and practices. When I refer to "teacher knowledge," I refer both to the "mental lives" of teachers (Freeman, 1996; Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991) and to the body of research on what teachers know and how they act in their classrooms (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Freeman, 1996). In reviewing the literature on the body of research known as teacher knowledge, I've paid particular attention to studies of teacher thinking, teacher lore, and teacher voice (see Chapter 2). In terms of understanding the knowledge of the teachers in this study, in particular I've been interested in knowing their teacher lore (praxis) and the relationship between their "whole lives" and their "school lives" and have attempted to use strategies "which facilitate, maximize and in a real sense legislate the capturing of the teacher's voice" (Goodson, 1991, p. 39).

Urban schooling. I encountered a great deal of difficulty locating an operational definition of urban schooling. It seemed that authors of most texts hold the assumption that the notion of "urban" is so universal that it requires no clarification. Stromquist (1994) states she had similar difficulty in her review of literature on urban schooling and came to the conclusion that in defining urban schooling it's at least necessary to go
beyond terms of population size and density, and it's necessary to specify the particular characteristics of "urban-ness that are thought to influence educational conditions or vice versa" (p. 27).

As a result of my searching but finding no precise definition, I have taken artistic license in compiling a definition, or rather a general description, from a variety of sources on what it means to be an urban school. An urbanized area consists of a large central city [having a minimum of 50,000 people or more (1990 Census of Population and Housing Characteristics, California, 1991)] or cities surrounded by closely-settled territory (urban fringes) (1980 Census of Population, 1983, cited in Stromquist, 1994). Urban schools are located in large cities, in the inner-city and not the outlying fringes, where the political, social, and economic conditions of urban communities impact on the school conditions (Krevtovics & Nussel, 1994a). "Because urban problems have grown so much worse, students in big cities suffer in ways that seem much more resistant to improvement than the educational woes of students elsewhere" (Maeroff, 1994, p. 39). Unlike their rural and suburban counterparts, these districts are plagued often by violence, poverty, and racial tensions where students' motivation is often at its lowest with the result being poor attendance and high dropout and failure rates (Krevtovics & Nussel, 1994a; Rumberger, 1994).

Typically today's urban school districts consist largely of nonwhite minorities and of lower-socioeconomic class families. They are the result of court-ordered desegregation in the 1970s in which resulting population shifts tended to see middle-class families moving to the suburbs leaving lower-income families behind, typically non-white populations and the new immigrants, to comprise the populations of the schools (Hess, 1995; Maeroff, 1994; Weiner, 1993). Dilemmas facing urban schools today include diminishing financial capacity resulting from losses in the city's tax base and
continued potential for cultural clashes between a growing, largely nonwhite, nonmiddle-class student population and a largely white, middle-class teacher population (Carlson, 1992; Haberman, 1994; Krevtovics & Nussel, 1994a; Villegas, 1994; Weiner, 1993).

Theoretical Considerations

Considerations. As a social science researcher, I recognize that what I choose to write about and how I choose to write it are value constituting. I began this chapter by explaining that this study's design is rooted in my biography and the biographies of other teachers that I have observed or have worked along side. As I designed this study and collected and analyzed its data, some theoretical underpinnings have been present. Whereas I do not consider this study as one of feminist research, in order to provide "intertextual" validation of my researcher perspective as required by traditional scholarship, what follows are some explanations of parallels in my thinking and in the thinking of other researcher-scholars who happen to write "feminist research."

I refer begrudgingly to my theoretical underpinnings as complementary to issues that feminist researchers have highlighted in their work. Bahktin (1989) has written that "The majority of our information and opinions is usually not communicated in direct form as our own, but with reference to some indefinite and general source..." (p. 781). As I declare the nature of my scholarship to include characteristics associated with feminist scholarship of caring, dialogue, and personal accountability, I make note that these characteristics are not original to feminists and that all three have been long recognized as hallmarks of good character and teaching. [Instead, it's really more appropriate for me to declare my underpinnings as aligned with my spirituality and the spirituality of many others who share my same convictions of "Biblical truths," in which I confer that notions of caring, dialogue, and accountability actually were meant to transcend (and have transcended) biases by gender (II Peter 1: 5-20).] For the purposes
of this study, I'll discuss similarities in my own thinking with the epistemology known as feminist research and in particular with these three characteristics.

**Caring.** I have long been concerned with ethics and the notion of character in those who teach. As a teacher I believed the act of caring was the outcome of the ethical ideal. As a social science researcher, I have been careful to question my thinking and the methods I've used to collect and analyze data. Throughout the course of this study, I have practiced the ethic of caring. Several feminists [Ladson-Billings (1994) say it's the "white feminists"] have identified "caring" as a hallmark of women's scholarship (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberge & Tarule, 1986; Grumet, 1988; Noddings, 1984, 1992, 1995). Noddings (1984) has defined the act of caring as "taking some action." To care "requires some action in behalf of the cared for" (p. 10). It is our ability to care enough for another person to help her or him grow and actualize her or himself. However, in order for one to care about another, it is important that the person cares for the self, the ethical self (Noddings, 1984). The ethic of caring suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process.

**Dialogue.** An outcome of practicing the ethic of caring is the valuing of dialogue (Noddings, 1984, 1992). I mentioned previously that my intention from the start was to have several good conversations with each of the teachers in this study. This study has been designed around the notion that teacher lore is important and that collaborative biography in the sponsorship of teachers' voices yields rich results. The act of dialogue is paramount. Creating equal relationships through dialogue is an important characteristic of feminist epistemology. Dialogue is open-ended; it's a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation; and it permits us to talk about what we try to show (Noddings, 1984, 1992). Engrossment is the criterion to determine whether dialogue has taken place. "To receive the other is to attend fully and openly. Continuing
dialogue builds up a substantial knowledge of one another that serves to guide our responses" (Noddings, 1992, p. 23).

This reciprocal act makes struggling together for meaning a powerful experience in self-definition and self-discovery. Casey's (1993) work detailing teachers' life histories is based solely on analysis of teachers' dialogue. For this study dialogue was used and valued and continues in the form of an additional collaboration between me and these same teachers and with five others in the same district (Lipsett, 1997). From my early discussions with my informants to my interviews with these teachers and their students, dialogue has been explanatory and liberating. It has allowed us to view ourselves from various positions -- as teachers, researchers, colleagues, students, and friends.

**Personal accountability.** Practicing personal accountability has been a life-long venture, beginning with the values my parents instilled in and modeled for me, continuing throughout my life and to my commitment as a teacher and now as a teacher educator and social science researcher. Everything we do has moral overtones: Through caring and dialoging, I have hoped to model the ethical self. I have attempted to place myself at the center of scrutiny for the design and the nature of the findings of this study. "Many persons who live moral lives do not approach moral problems formally. Women, in particular, seem to approach moral problems by placing themselves as nearly as possible in concrete situations and assuming personal responsibility for the choices to be made" (Noddings, 1984, p. 8).

In practicing personal accountability, I have shared in the creation of knowledge about education with these teachers and have attempted to present their individual histories (voices) in an authentic way as much as possible. At the same time, I have attempted to give credence to them as a collected group of teachers known as effective teachers of writing. Both what was said and who said it has given meaning and interpretation to the claims of this study. Claims to knowledge have been grounded in the
individuals: Rather than have the researcher tell these teachers what they were doing or what they should be doing, these teachers relied on their own perspectives and pedagogical judgments. In the case of our additional collaboration known as the "T-Project," these teachers as well as others have demonstrated admiration and value for each others' practices and have stated to me on several occasions that this has been one of the most valuable experiences of participating in this study: Having conversations about their thinking and practices and developing an increased sense of community and validation of their experiences and ways of knowing (Lipsett, 1997).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"Experiences too indefinite of outline in themselves to be recognized for themselves connect and are identified as a larger shape. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect" (p. 98).
-- Eudora Welty, from One Writer's Beginnings (1983)

Introduction: A Mountain of Meaning Rising

During the initial conceptualization of this study's design and before the start of my fieldwork, I began a review of related literature that I hoped would inform my vision. In particular, I needed to become familiar with the research on effective teachers and in particular on effective secondary English teachers in urban school districts where classrooms tend to be composed of a diverse range of students from varying social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. However, I found very little research that contextualized secondary English teachers' thinking and practices to such school districts and classrooms and in particular teachers' thinking regarding writing instruction and assessment. As a result, my literature review regarding effective writing instruction and assessment in classrooms composed of diverse learners began to borrow from various other areas of general and specific study, including what is known about good teaching in general; the concept of culturally relevant teaching; effective writing instruction and assessment in general; and controversies aimed at process approaches used in classrooms composed of at-risk learners and poor and/or minority students whose access to the
"dominant culture" (Delpit, 1995) and/or Standard English has been limited outside of school.

Throughout the course of my data collection and data analysis, I found it necessary to return repeatedly to the library in order to search for literature that might inform the "curves" in my own thinking. Prior to the start of my fieldwork, my delvings into the professional literature had been narrowly in the areas of teacher thinking, urban schooling, and effective practices in writing instruction and assessment; however, I found that new "avenues" in the field meant new avenues to seek in the literature, so my searching and reading continued. Eventually, I was ready to discuss my study design in light of others' conclusions and believed, in a "Eudora Weltyian" sense, that "a mountain of meaning rising behind" me was "proven now through retrospect" (p. 98). My eventual and expanded presentation of related literature reflects what I refer to as three general areas that splinter into subdivisions of their own: (1) Tales Lives Tell -- this includes a conceptual definition of the field of research known as teacher knowledge, but in particular I discuss studies of teacher thinking, lore, and voice; concepts of narrative inquiry known as life story and life history research; and issues of professional development; (2) The Science and Art of Teaching -- this includes research on effective teaching practices in general and effective practices in the teaching of writing and its assessment; and (3) Contextual Realities -- this includes research on secondary school cultures and the nature of urban schooling.

Tales Lives Tell

Teacher Knowledge (Thinking, Lore, and Voice)

A definition. Various scholars' perceived value of studies of "teacher knowledge" has been centrifugal to this study from its initial conceptualization. The field of research known as studies of teacher knowledge has been referred to as understanding the "mental lives" of teachers (Freeman, 1996; Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991) and has been referred to
as research on what teachers know and how they act in the classrooms (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Freeman, 1996). The study of teachers' knowledge has emerged only quite recently in educational research as an outgrowth of the growing concern in the 1960s for qualitative or interpretive studies of classroom teaching. Its emergence has marked a substantial shift from a preoccupation with behavior and with what teachers need to do to a concern with what teachers know and how that knowledge is acquired through formal training and classroom experience (Carter, 1990, 1992). The development of research in this area has been a special concern of many curriculum scholars who see teachers' lives as central to the study of curriculum and schooling (Elbaz, 1991; Goodson, 1991). It also has been a concern for scholars who are interested in teacher effectiveness who have come to realize that if teachers are to be trained successfully to use particular behaviors or techniques of effective teaching, then it is important to know what propels teachers to use or to neglect them (Carter, 1990, 1992; Doyle, 1990; Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991).

Studies on teachers' knowledge and its acquisition are known to provide richly-detailed portraits of the demands of classroom environments and the ways in which teachers struggle to cope with these demands. These studies have challenged the image of the teacher as merely a technician and the idea that research is a source for empirically-proven and generalizable prescriptions (Carter, 1992; Clark & Lampert, 1986). These studies also have recognized something that teachers have known all along: That is, teachers are the ones who understand, know, and can be the richest and most useful source of knowledge about teaching (Schubert & Ayers, 1992). As I conceptualized this study, I wanted to have several conversations with teachers regarding their beliefs and classroom practices in light of their contextual realities: I merely didn't desire to learn about them, but rather I wanted them to share in the creation of knowledge -- that is, I wanted to ask them to reveal the experiential knowledge that informs their teaching, in particular their teaching of writing and its assessment. Based
on my own experiences as a secondary school teacher, it was important for me to recognize the teacher-participants of my study as partners in the creation of knowledge about education (see Chapter 1).

For the purpose of this study, when I refer to "teacher knowledge," I have chosen specifically to reference others' value of studies of teacher thinking (Clark & Lampert, 1986; Lampert, 1984, 1985); teacher lore (Ayers & Schubert, 1994; Schubert, 1991; Schubert & Ayers, 1992); and teacher voice (Butt & Raymond, 1987; Butt, Raymond, McCue & Yamagishi, 1992; Goodson, 1991, 1992a). All three of these "domains" have served in the development of this study's design, in supporting its significance and in aiding me in the articulation of my data collection and its analysis. At times it may be difficult to tell where one domain ends and the other begins, and the fine lines between these three domains perhaps will appear blurred: But for the purposes of this study and in order for me to provide a backdrop of "others' scholarly contentions" that have gone before me, I have attempted to discern different points of emphasis and confess that in the conception of this study design and in the presentation of its findings I have borrowed freely the significance and techniques of all three.

**Teacher thinking.** The study of teacher thinking has provided valuable insights into the mental lives that guide teachers' actions (Clark, 1988). In focusing on a particular slice of a teacher's mental life -- teacher cognition -- it has increased the understanding of teacher planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986), teacher decision-making (Eggleston, 1978), teacher personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985) and pedagogical content knowledge (Gudmundsdottir & Shulman, 1987), teacher reflection (Schon, 1983), and teacher experiences (Hargreaves, 1984; Buchmann & Schwille, 1983). Essentially, teacher thinking has been defined as the philosophical, ideological, and pedagogical constructs that guide teachers' practices, but perhaps more
specifically, teacher thinking relates to the different ways classroom teachers understand their students' thinking and their own role in their students' learning (Lampert, 1984, 1985).

Studies of teacher thinking are presented from the teacher's perspective and seek to validate the classroom teacher's wisdom. Traditionally, there has been a gap between research and practice: Some scholars have blamed this gap on the lack of faith in research methods and the lack of quality in what researchers choose to review (Burton, 1973; O'Donnell, 1991; Squire, 1991). Research on teacher thinking attempts to close this gap by providing classroom teachers' insights and research findings in light of the contextual realities of teachers' classrooms, while at the same time encouraging teachers to ask better questions of themselves and of their science and art (Clark, 1988; Clark & Lampert, 1986; Huberman, 1993a). Kantor (1990) states that "educational researchers and theorists need to have a greater awareness of what happens in classrooms and schools (and what it feels like to teach in those situations), while teachers need greater opportunities to read, write, talk, and think about teaching" (p. 61). Research on teacher thinking is one way to encourage this type of awareness and to create such opportunities for both individual and collaborative inquiry.

Both researchers and teachers gain from the collectiveness of this type of research. Researchers and/or teacher educators develop a truer sense of classroom complexities and the ongoing negotiation and development of teacher knowledge, whereas teachers benefit from both externally and internally imposed reflection of their practices and their effects on their students' learning. Teacher educators also can discover areas of focus for the courses they teach and potential constructs for the field experiences they supervise. "For example, if teaching necessarily involves coping with uncertainty and managing dilemmas, then we as teacher educators ought to think about how to reflect this in teacher preparation experiences" (Clark & Lampert, 1986, p. 30). Research on
teacher thinking also serves to sensititize teacher educators to the ways in which they
might think about their own professional development, encouraging them to ask
questions of their own practice and thereby guiding their efforts in providing role models
and mentoring for beginning teachers (Clark, 1988). Teachers who participate with
researchers in such studies have reported that their imposed process of reflection
influences the way they do their work, bringing their sedimentary theories of instruction
to their own attention and providing an opportunity for analysis and revision that is self-
initiated rather than externally directed by either a researcher or by an administrator.
Clark (1984) states that "the role of research on teacher thinking is to help teachers
understand practice rather than to dictate practice to them" (cited in Clark & Lampert,
1986, p. 30).

Researchers studying teachers' thinking use tools of ethnography to make visible
the hidden aspects of teaching, tools that teachers can use whether or not they are directly
involved in research. Ethnographic tools often employed by researchers are stimulated
recall, think aloud procedures, and structured journal writing -- ways to record and make
sense of what teachers think beyond what can be understood with structured or
unstructured observations. Some of these otherwise hidden aspects that are studied may
be knowledge about how teachers go about planning and knowledge that teachers have
and can use, such as contextual, interactive, and speculative knowledge. Contextual
knowledge consists of what teachers need to know about the whole, both temporally and
spatially (Doyle, 1977, cited in Clark & Lampert, 1986). "What one decides to do today
has a great deal to do with what happened yesterday and what effects such a decision will
have tomorrow, next week, and next month" (Clark & Lampert, 1986, p. 29). The
knowledge of their work context that teachers have is also interactive. "Teachers ask
questions of their students, expect responses, and watch for signs of understanding. This
contextual knowledge could not be acquired by someone who simply observed, no matter
how carefully" (Clark & Lampert, 1986, p. 29). Teacher knowledge also is speculative as there is a great deal of uncertainty in the teachers' work. For example, "a teacher chooses or rejects an exercise in the textbook, a particular seating plan, or a way of speaking to a child in the hope that it will produce the desired outcome. Everything a teacher does must allow for multiple, unanticipated contingencies, most of which are beyond the teacher's control" (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1984, cited in Clark & Lampert, 1986, p. 29).

The purpose of research on teacher thinking is not to reveal substantial or new discoveries as most of what it addresses is what the majority of experienced practitioners know. Rather, studies of teacher thinking seek to affect the character of what teachers know and the attitudes they take toward teaching practices and their effects on students (Clark & Lampert, 1986). For example, if a teacher sees herself as the source of students' knowledge and the judge of their wrong answers, her writing instruction and assessment practices might be quite different from a teacher who sees herself as an organizer of acquisition who is responsible for planning appropriate lessons and activities for each of her students in an effort to meet their individual learning needs. Ethnographic tools employed in studies of teacher thinking have been known to heighten teachers' sense of their own practices and to think of those practices in light of the researchers' knowledge. In this sense, research on teacher thinking challenges the teacher as merely a technician, and it can provide teacher educators with insights on how teachers think and organize subject matters which can provide direction on how best to influence preservice and inservice teachers' incomplete or partially mistaken preconceptions about teaching and its complexities:

This research has called attention to formerly invisible facets of teaching that are at once rewarding and demanding. This work challenges the image of teacher as a technician and the image of research as a source of empirically proven and generalizable prescriptions. In place of these images, teachers are cast as (potentially) reflective professionals, and research on teacher thinking as stimulus for thought in support of self-directed professional development.... Research on teacher thinking does not provide particular answers or solutions
to how teacher educators ought to address these issues, but rather serves to point out where we had best put our most creative energy. (Clark & Lampert, 1986, p. 30)

**Teacher lore.** Teacher lore is another area of study of research on teacher knowledge that has influenced this study's design. Whereas research on teacher thinking has tended to focus on the cognitive aspect of the teacher's professional life, teacher lore has been derived out of the need to understand *praxis*. *Praxis* refers to the act of blending theory (teachers' evolving ideas and personal belief systems) and practice (teachers' reflective action), a union that establishes teachers as professionals (Schubert, 1991). In essence, teacher lore refers to that knowledge which has guiding power in teachers' lives and work. The conceptualization of teacher lore as a field of study emerged as an outgrowth of an ongoing seminar led by Schubert (1991) for doctoral students at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1985. This seminar's purpose was to trace the historical roots of progressive education and to determine the extent to which progressivism flourishes in the working lives of teachers in today's schools. The outgrowth of this seminar became the Teacher Lore Project, composed of graduate students involved in research projects and dissertations that built upon the teacher lore idea. As a foundation for teacher lore as the study of educational praxis, the project drew a large part of its theoretical defense from the philosophical writings of John Dewey that called for the value of experiential meaning making and context-based inquiry.

After reading about the nature of Schubert and Ayers' (1992), work with the Teacher Lore Project, I understood teacher lore to be a part of the informal tradition of teachers drawing upon the knowledge and experiences of each other and teacher lore as different from previous studies of teacher thinking by having as its focus an "experiential component." This experiential component consists of teachers and researchers sharing in the creation of education knowledge rather than simply researchers viewing teachers as "objects of study." Like studies of teacher thinking, teacher lore relies heavily on
qualitative procedures, including tools of ethnography and personal experience methods. Studies of teacher lore "are based on teachers' own words and ideas, sometimes on autobiographical reflection and on telling stories about teaching, frequently used to interpret teachers' perspectives" (Ayers & Schubert, 1994, p. 114). In particular, Schubert (1991) characterizes teacher lore as

the study of the knowledge, ideas, perspectives, and understandings of teachers. In part, it is inquiry into the beliefs, values, and images that guide teachers' work. In this sense, it constitutes an attempt to learn what teachers learn from their experience. Teachers are continuously in the midst of a blend of theory (their evolving ideas and personal belief systems) and practice (their reflective action); I refer to this as praxis. To assume that scholarship can focus productively on what teachers learn recognizes teachers as important partners in the creation of knowledge about education. (p. 207)

According to Ayers and Schubert (1994), the study of teacher lore follows several overarching traditions: Action research that conceived of teaching as experimental and teachers as intellectual practitioners best suited to inquire into the constructs of the classroom; the teacher-as-researcher movement in which practicing teachers were paired with university researchers; studies of teacher thinking which attempt to capture teachers' thought processes through observations, interviews, videotapes, and stimulated-recall interviews; the call for teachers to be reflective practitioners (Schon, 1983); and the value of teacher biographies or first-person accounts to enhance understanding of pedagogical practices. The contention of teacher lore is to put the stories of teachers and their interpretation of them in the forefront, giving credence to their insights, ideas, and conclusions that have guided their lives. "Much of the study of teachers out there is about teachers and of teachers, but seldom for or by teachers (Schubert & Lopez-Schubert, 1981, cited in Ayers & Schubert, 1994, p. 114). Studies of teacher lore engage both researcher and teacher in meaning and purpose through shared interaction with and reflection on the contexts of teachers' experiences:

In teacher lore we are interested in what teachers have learned, or what they think they have learned. We are not seeking the truth of teaching exactly, but
more modestly, perhaps, the meaning of teaching to those who have lived it and practiced it. Teacher lore, like many other interpretive and qualitative approaches to inquiry, is in part an "experiment in equality" (Portelli, 1991). (Ayers & Schubert, 1994, p. 114)

Teacher lore also places emphasis on the importance of context in understanding teacher knowledge. It takes this emphasis from the writings of John Dewey who contended that logic or sense of reason grows out of context of inquiry. "Dewey holds that we come to know a situation, not by detached induction from it nor even by hypothetical deduction about it, but principally by interacting with it" (Ayers & Schubert, 1994, p. 115). From such interactions we gain insights about situations encountered and "are not duped into the tenets of research, misappropriated from the physical sciences, that put credence in the will-o'-the-wisp of certain knowledge, laws, and overblown generalizations" (Ayers & Schubert, 1994, p. 115). The Teacher Lore Project shared Dewey's assumptions that the teacher is a neglected and necessary source of insight about education and about teaching. To capture the discoveries of teachers, their insights "in process," is a central focus of teacher lore and to enable these insights to be shared with other teachers is its further mission. "Teacher lore, then, is in part a portrayal of teachers as they exercise aesthetic imagination to give pattern and meaning to their experience. Such portrayals are only partly sketches of what teachers have come to understand; they are illustrations of their wonderings as well" (Ayers & Schubert, 1994, p. 116).

In addition to recognizing the value of teachers' insights in context, teacher lore also recognizes that the researcher's own insights are the real instrument of research. As researchers we have lives that are embedded deeply in our work, and these need to be recognized and acknowledged in writing. Likewise, teachers inquire deeply, and their lives and stories cannot be revealed without a sense of the "research" they live and rarely write about. "In addition to written documents, the stories of teachers and researchers are
most thoroughly written in the collaboration and dialogue that in turn enable them to
grow positively with students" (Schubert, 1991, p. 224).

Teacher voice. As I mentioned previously, there are blurred lines between the
domains of teacher thinking, lore, and voice; it is difficult to tell at times were one really
ends and the other begins, yet different points of emphasis may be discerned. Studies of
teacher thinking and teacher lore, as well as studies of "teachers' voice," have contributed
to the articulation of this research. In making reference to "teacher voice," I refer here to
what Goodson (1991) has defined as the study of teachers' lives and teacher development
in the study of curriculum and schooling, giving recognition to both the "song" and the
"singer" who makes the song become relevant. Essentially, the study of teachers' lives
attempt to listen closely to relationships between the "whole life" and the "school life,"
using strategies "which facilitate, maximize and in a real sense legislate the capturing of
the teacher's voice" (Goodson, 1991, p. 39).

In presenting an argument for seeking to understand teachers' lives as part of
educational research, Goodson (1991, 1992a, 1992b) has stated that a broader focus is
needed to understand educational practice and its improvement. Typically, educational
research of the past has not recognized the impact of the teachers' lives on their
professional development and has not captured the teacher's voice; rather, the focus has
been on the teacher's practice -- almost the teacher as practice (Goodson, 1991).
Goodson (1991, 1992a) contends that you don't need to focus on practice in order to
improve practice. Collaborative modes of research known as "action research" and the
"teacher as researcher" have sought to give full equality and stature to the teacher but
have employed as their predominant focus the practices of the teacher. Putting the
teacher's classroom practice at the center of the action is to put the most exposed and
problematic aspect of the teachers' world and vulnerability at the center of scrutiny and
negotiation. However, Viewing the relationship between the teacher's whole life and
school life, putting forth the teacher's voice as the key ingredient, is meant to create richer
dialogue and data in order to provide better insights on educational practice and
development:

In terms of strategy, both personally and politically, I think it is a mistake to do
this. I say it is a mistake to do this -- and this may seem a paradox -- particularly
if the wish is to ultimately seek reflection about and change in the teachers'
practice. A more valuable and less vulnerable entry point would be to examine
the teachers' work in the context of the teacher's life. Much of the emerging study
in this area indicates that this focus allows a rich flow of dialogue and data.
Moreover, the focus may (and I stress may) allow teachers greater authority
and control in collaborative research than has often appeared to be the case with
practice-oriented study. What I am asserting here is that, particularly in the world
of teacher development, the central ingredient so far missing is the teacher's
voice. (Goodson, 1991, p. 38)

Despite the increase in investigations of teacher thinking, still it's acknowledged
that teachers' voices are muted and their perspectives are overlooked in the knowledge
Unless the experience of teaching is considered from teachers' perspectives, teaching
becomes an abstraction (Coles, 1989; Schubert, 1991). Studies of teachers' lives give
acknowledgment that autobiography and biography have significant impact on the
teaching act. Using a biographical approach in the studies of teachers' development is
essential to understanding how teachers think and act and how they have come to think
and act in the way they do. Goodson (1991) found in his work that not surprisingly
when teachers talk of their work their own lives are imported on the data. Goodson
(1991) suggests that close attention be given to teachers' life styles both in and outside of
school, to their life cycles, to their career stages or career decisions, to their shared
critical incidents, and to their life histories in intersection with their communities and
society's history.
In summation. Many scholars have attested that there's a great deal of value to be gained from studies of teacher knowledge -- value for the researcher and teacher educator and value for classroom teachers (both preservice and inservice). Yet despite this recognition and growing literature on teacher education, recent studies of learning to teach have focused primarily on aspects other than knowledge about what teachers know.

Studies of learning to teach have focused on socialization of teachers (for example, Zeichner, 1987; Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1985), the impact of particular programs (Feiman-Menser, 1983), the effect of cooperating teacher and university supervisors (Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Zimpher, 1987), and similar topics, but few have directly addressed what is learned. And despite a substantial data base on teacher effectiveness, knowledge about what teachers know has been elusive. (Carter, 1990, p. 109)

Perhaps this lack of attention to teacher knowledge is rooted in historical conceptions that intimate a teacher becomes "knowledgable" about teaching by exposure to studies of teacher effectiveness and behavioral training (Gliessman, 1984; Stallings, 1987). This lack of attention to teacher knowledge might also be due to the idea that the "smart" teacher has a set of well-refined skills derived from studies correlating teacher behavior with student outcomes or studies on controlling aspects of teacher behavior to gain experimental proof for prescriptions for practice (Peck & Tucker, 1973; Waxman & Walbert, 1986). Despite this, many teacher educators and researchers have reformulated their conceptions on what it means to be knowledgable about teaching and learning to teach (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1983, 1991; Lampert, 1985; ).

Though many preservice and beginning teachers may long for prescriptions to practice, once they're in the classroom they realize that these fall short of the ideal and that a simplistic view of teaching in light of its multiple and complex realities is not possible: There isn't anything known as a foolproof technique. Lampert (1985) suggests that teaching involves carrying out an ongoing personal argument with oneself. Studies of teacher knowledge have worked to uncover these mental wrangles and have provided
evidence that knowledge is not static but is in a continual process of transformation and creation and is context specific. How teachers know and repeatedly develop new and more appropriate knowledge, represented by their relationships with students and determined by their instruction and assessment practices, seems to be the ultimate determinant of their success.

**Narrative Inquiry: Life Story, Life History**

**A definition.** Narrative inquiry has been referred to as "a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). The term "narrative" has been used by qualitative researchers with a variety of meanings, but it can be said that in the context of narrative inquiry narrative refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are unified by means of a plot. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state that narrative inquirers "describe... lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience," referring to researchers and the subjects of research as storytellers and characters (p. 2). Many qualitative researchers have shown increasing interest in narrative inquiry, because as a linguistic form narrative seems to be more suited for displaying human activity as purposeful engagement (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Goodson, 1992a; Polkinghorne, 1995; Zeller, 1995).

In particular, narrative inquiries known as life story and life history research have provided this study with a rationale for the nature of its data collection and analysis. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the design of my study is case study research, but I've chosen to use narrative strategies in writing my cases to facilitate understanding in both the process and the product of my research. In my case studies of three teachers, I wanted to display their individuality as much as their commonalities in terms of their commitments to their students and to their professional development. I believed that narrative strategies best suited this goal. Zeller (1995) states that narration is the kind of discourse that answers the question, "What happened?" "It tells a story which, according to McCorcle (1984), is
what a case study should be: 'Its narrative form may be the case study's most compelling
attribute. It is the case's story line that connects and enlivens all the various actors and
processes' (p. 207)" (Zeller, 1995, pp. 75-76).

Narration provides a sense of immediacy of an event unfolding before the
reader's eyes. The writer provides many details that capture the reader's interest;
but, more importantly, the events, the story, or the characters exist in a world
whose clock is ticking. Description, a type of writing normally used to convey
how something may be apprehended through the senses, engages the reader's
interest by providing interesting details. Description also enables the writer to
display the events, story, or characters against a particular setting -- a place, a
culture, a set of norms. Narration can be a total organizing strategy, subsuming or
absorbing descriptions, scenes, and summaries. (Zeller, 1995, p. 76)

Life story. In defining life story and life history narratives, it appears that
the"lines that divide" may be indistinguishable at times. However, you can have one
without the other. I borrow my discernment between the two from Goodson (1992a) who
states that "life history is the life story located within its historical context" (p. 6). The
life story is the story that we tell about our lives; whereas the life history is a
collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence in which the life story teller
and the researcher work together in developing a wider account through interviews and
discussions and by scrutiny of texts and contexts (Goodson, 1992a).

We all have a life story: We are the products of all the stories that we've heard
and lived -- and many that we haven't heard (Taylor, 1996). "Stories link past, present,
and future in a way that tells us where we have been (even before we were born), where
we are, and where we could be going" (Taylor, 1996, p. 1). According to Linde (1993),
life stories "express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way. They are
also one very important means by which we communicate this sense of self and negotiate
it with others" (p. 3). Life story narratives are created by those who possess the stories
through their own autobiographical accounts. They become life history narratives only
when they are shaped by someone other than the speaker (Linde, 1993). According to
Linde (1993), a life story consists of all the stories and discourse units, such as
explanations and chronicles and connections between them, that are told during the
course of a person's lifetime and abide by the following two criteria:

1. The stories and associated discourse units contained in the life story have as
their primary evaluation a point about the speaker, not a general point about
the way the world is.
2. The stories and associated discourse units have extended reportability; that is,
they are tellable and are told and retold over the course of a long period of
time. (p. 21)

Life stories are in a constant state of negotiation. We use them to make sense of
the self, and we use them "to claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate
that we are in fact worthy members of those groups, understanding and properly
following their moral standards (Linde, 1993, p. 3). Life stories are both a social and a
discontinuous unit told in separate pieces over a long period of time that is subject to
revision and change as old meanings are dropped and new meanings are added (Linde,
1993). They can include certain landmark events, such as choice of profession, marriage,
divorce, religion, or ideological persuasions. What is most important is dependent upon
the individual. "For some people, although certainly not for everyone, a job or profession
constitutes a major component of their understanding of their lives. Consequently, they
must be able to give some account of how they came to have that profession. There are
exceptions, of course. People whose identity is not defined by their work circumstances
need not account for their particular job" (Linde, 1993, p. 4).

Taylor (1996) contends that our greatest desire in life is that our lives mean
something, and it's this desire that is the originating impulse of story. "If we discern a
plot to our lives, we are more likely to take ourselves and our lives seriously. If nothing
is connected, then nothing matters" (Taylor, 1996, p. 2). Stories are important for several
reasons: They shape our character; they help us to see the world differently; they can be
healing and can be life affirming; and communities are formed by sharing. Taylor (1996)
states that people should worry less about their personality and more about their character
-- that we do the opposite is a testimony to the decline of a moral consensus and the

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current ascendancy of popular psychology over storytelling. "We care too much about how we feel and how we are seen, and not enough about how we act and what we are. Seeing ourselves as characters in lifelong stories can help to correct this imbalance" (Taylor, 1996, p. 41). Through our stories we also can learn to see the world differently: "Identifying the core stories by which we define our values and our views can serve, in fact, as a reality check and as a measure of our integrity. If our experience repeatedly clashes with our defining stories, we may be led to change our stories" (Taylor, 1996, p. 84). Stories are healing in that they can heal our brokenness and "do so most often by reconnecting us with others who share our story, rescuing us from the sterile cycle of self-absorption, alienation, and radical skepticism" (Taylor, 1996, p. 114). They are life affirming in that they allow us to see our story interacting with others stories, giving us a sense of meaningful events that lead to significant conclusions in our lives (Taylor, 1996). And finally, communities are formed only by shared stories not by monologues. "Empathetic listening is followed, in time, by reciprocal storytelling. I know I have a place in the community not only as I hear and accept its stories but as it hears and makes room for mine" (Taylor, 1996, p. 120).

Writing one's life story is very important as it allows us to make further sense of our lives and is a valid consideration in the study of ourselves as researchers and teachers and in the study of other teachers and the role of teacher education in their lives. "Looking at life as narrative or storied allows us to see the unities, continuities and discontinuities, images and rhythms in our lives" (Clandinin, 1992, p. 124).

Too often we look at teacher education as separate from the ongoing lives of teachers and student teachers. We pull out the years of teacher education to examine them. In so doing, we separate teacher education experiences from the pasts and futures of our student teachers' lives. We do not create spaces to acknowledge either the ways they have already written their lives prior to teacher education or to the ways they continue to live their stories in the context of teacher education. (Clandinin, 1992, p. 124)
**Life history.** Various scholars and researchers have defined life history and narrative as separate entities, while others have defined life history as a type of narrative. For the purpose of this study, I have viewed both life history and life story as types of narrative inquiry as both, like the concept of narrative, rely on story and on meaning as it is constructed by people in various situations. Each focuses as well on life as it is lived with a past and a present open to meaning making. Whether or not narrative is considered the umbrella concept or is considered a separate approach in and of itself is a moot point for someone else's wrangle and is a debate of little importance to me. My issue here is that I have chosen life history narrative as a conceptual strategy for this study as it fits the demands of my research purpose which is to share in the creation of knowledge with my study's participants.

In defining life history as opposed to life story, I borrowed Goodson's (1992a) distinction — that life history is collaborative venture between the life story teller and the researcher, whereas life story is told by its teller without an additional collaborator. As mentioned previously, life history has been defined as the life story located in its historical context (Goodson, 1992a). Essentially, life history is shaped by both the speaker and the researcher. Linde (1993) defines life history in anthropology as "a subject's account of his/her life, guided by questions from the anthropologist. Such life histories seem to fall somewhere between autobiography and biography, since they are not shaped primarily by the speaker" (p. 47).

Unlike life story, the nature of the life history approach is that an author-narrator constructs the identity and point(s) of view of the individual(s) historically situated in their culture, time, and place (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995). Some of the limitations of the life history approach are that inquirers only have access to lives told (Goodson, 1992b) and that the story may be only as valuable as its narrator (Emihovich, 1995; Goodson, 1995; Huberman, 1995). However, the value of life history is also seen in its
limitations: Its shape (focus of its stories) and the nature of its collaborative exchange
seeks to widen and deepen understandings for both story teller and story narrator
(Goodson, 1992a).

Professional Development

A definition. The broad concept of "professional development" features many
facets in the professional literature; however, for the purpose of this study, I've elected to
refer to areas that evolved in my thinking during the course of my conversations with this
study's three teacher participants. In particular, I have addressed scholarship in the
following areas: Teacher careers, teacher frames, teacher inservice education, and
teacher stress and survival. In the former area, I have made references to what has been
written about teachers' careers in terms of demographics of the teaching force and to
studies that have depicted the "average" teacher career (cycles and stages). In the latter
areas, I have discussed the significance of teacher frames, effects of teacher inservice
education, and issues of teacher stress and survival.

Teacher careers. In terms of demographics of the nation's teaching force, it is
overwhelmingly female and white. According to the National Education Association,
over 73 percent of our nation's teachers are women (Status, 1992). Over 92 percent of all
teachers are white; just under 5 percent of all teachers are African American; and the
remaining percentage reflects a combined percentage of teachers who are Asians/Pacific
Islanders, Hispanics, and Native Americans (Goodlad, 1990). Currently, women
outnumber men at the elementary level by almost five to one, while the ratio of women to
men at the secondary level is about even (Mathis, 1987).

Various characteristics of the teaching profession suggest that it has been an
avenue of upward mobility for working-class families and that teachers largely have been
employed by their "home" communities which contributes to a supply-and-demand
Most public school teachers (over 80 percent) are first-generation college graduates and about 60 percent come from working-class families, and these proportions have remained fairly stable since 1961 (NEA, 1981, 1987, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1990). "About 30 percent of public school teachers are teaching in the community where they grew up; another 50 percent teach in a community where they have spent much of their adult life" (NEA, 1981, cited in Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 271). This lack of geographical mobility might also constrain competition that would increase wages.

In the future, although many districts are experiencing this as their present, public schools will be staffed by teachers who are on the average older, female, and more experienced. Forty percent of the United States public school teachers will retire or otherwise leave the profession by the 2003-2004 school year according to Education Department reports (Enrollment, 1996). The typical classroom teacher has taught for 12 years (Mathis, 1987), and 22.9 percent of the nation's teachers are females are over 50 years of age (Status, 1992). One of the reasons for this aging, more experienced workforce is that in the teaching profession there is little career mobility. Teaching is not seen as a powerful and prestigious occupation but is viewed more typically as an occupation of last resort and one particularly suited for women raising their own children while working (Mathis, 1987). Additionally, the broadening of career options for today's women has left teaching behind as low salaried and less desirable for high-achieving women.

However, this aging population "comes at a time when enrollment is rising dramatically with immigrant children and second-generation baby boomers" (Enrollment, 1996, p. 1A). According to Linda Darling-Hammond, director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the restaffing of schools in the next 10 to 15 years will be the biggest overhaul of the teaching force in history, even surpassing the
hiring boom of the 1950s and 1960s (Enrollment, 1996). These shortages are already evident in some of the nation's largest school districts where uncertified teachers have been hired:

A survey of the nation's largest school districts cited pressing needs for math, science, special education, bilingual and minority instructors. Recruiting New Teachers, a nonprofit organization based in Belmont, Mass., released a study in April that says 77 percent of the more than 9,000 teacher aides studying to become professional teachers are minorities. The aides typically live in the urban school districts in which they work, understand the culture of the community and can often figure out the most effective ways to teach the students, the study says. Other recruitment programs are being targeted at high schoolers, college students, mid-career professionals and victims of corporate or government downsizing. Interest in the profession also appears to be on the rise. (Enrollment, 1996, p. 2A)

Recent reports and media attention regarding the crises in public schools has created an image of low pay, undesirable working conditions, and loss of respect for authority of the teacher, especially in the urban areas. In 1991 the average annual salary for teachers was $35,723 (Status, 1992). In a profile of first-year teachers across America, the Washington Post stated that "new teachers must nakedly confront what has been a fact of school life for generations: students give an incredibly hard time to rookie teachers and only the strong survive" (Thompson, 1994, A1). Additionally, student behaviors have forced many highly-qualified people to avoid the teaching profession altogether as student behaviors have become more "increasingly outrageous, even dangerous in extreme situations," and have determined discipline to be at the very core of teaching and learning (Thompson, 1994, A14).

As far as teachers' careers, studies have shown that teachers' career paths share some common developmental stages and/or phases that seem to be associated with an evaluation or reordering of their interests, commitments, and attitudes (Cruickshank, Armaline, Reighart, Hoover, Stuck & Traver, 1986; Sikes, 1985). Frequently, these are in response to events and experiences not directly connected with the work situation (Sikes, 1985). Studies have identified eight stages which are related to levels of experience (Cruickshank et al., 1986):
1. preservice
2. induction
3. competency building..........first 5 years
4. enthusiastic and growing....years 6-10
5. career frustration.............year 10
6. stable but stagnant...........years 11-20
7. career wind-down...............30th year and beyond
8. career exit

Turnover in teaching usually occurs within the first five to eight years; beyond this, teachers typically have decided to make teaching or a position in educational administration their life careers (Sikes, 1985; Yee, 1990). In the last stages of the career, the twentieth through the thirtieth years, there's a decline in satisfaction and a determination to get out of a rut; however, after 30 years, retirement plans become paramount, and veteran teachers feel a loss of energy and start to pull away from teaching and students (Cruickshank et al., 1986). Teachers at this stage see little need for further training and usually are committed to maintaining competence rather than acquiring it (Melnick, 1989). They become more interested in their own education, skills, mental acuity, outside interests, and family relationships (Cruickshank et al., 1986). Many at this point would like to leave education but do not because they feel guilty about having wasted so much time in the profession and/or they've lost their youthful ideals (Cruickshank et al., 1986). If they do decide to leave, it's dissatisfaction that drives more older teachers out of the profession than their age (Mathis, 1987). However, if these older teachers' commitment to teaching is strong, and they remain in teaching with high morale between the ages of 50 and 55 until retirement, they reach a peak in their professional lives, and many are flexible in dealing with students and open and eager to try new curricula and instructional materials (Megyeri, 1996). Often times you read about the public that complains that older teachers need to retire as they cost the district too much money and that younger teachers are needed to enliven the schools. However, one study relating age to satisfaction with teaching found that older teachers are more

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satisfied with teaching than younger ones, and older women are extremely loyal employees, more so than male educators of all ages (Grambs, 1987).

Sikes' (1985) study of secondary school teachers in particular at varying levels of experience and age groups provides an overview of the ways in which secondary school teachers perceive, experience, and adapt to growing older in their careers in five phases: Phase 1: 21-28 age group; Phase 2: 28-33 age group; Phase 3: 30-40 age group; Phase 4: 40-50/55 age group; and Phase 5: 50-55 age group. In Phase 1, many young teachers do not see themselves as committed to a life-long career in teaching and see it as something they are trying out before going on to other things which they may or may not have ideas about. For the majority of Phase 1 teachers, coping with the job itself is their most immediate concern, and maintenance and discipline are areas of difficulty. Following discipline is subject familiarity: Learning how best to communicate the subject to the various groups of pupils tends to engage a large proportion of their time with pedagogy evolving through a mixture of trial and error, observing on rare occasions when possible, or by remembering their own teachers with the majority believing "their professional training, apart from teaching practice, was of very limited practical value" (Sikes, 1985, p. 36).

Phase 2 marks a time in life when people begin to get more serious about increasing commitments and responsibilities; also, gender differences become apparent as women who pursued careers in their twenties are now thinking in terms of families if they had no children earlier. This is the point where some teachers will leave to consider or explore alternatives to teaching. For others promotion becomes a more important issue than it perhaps previously had been as money has become more important. Teachers tend to become more relaxed in coping with the classroom and often become more interested
in curriculum development and innovation, becoming as well more interested in their pedagogy rather than their subject-matter knowledge.

In the third phase, the conjunction of experience and a relatively high level of physical and intellectual ability means energy, involvement, ambition and self-confidence: Many teachers are at their peak. Interest in administration is common among teachers at this stage. Some women have chosen to make their career secondary to their career as wife and mother and have pressure insofar that they have two jobs. Men will be working towards major goals of administration. Teachers may express at the same time a strong dislike of administrative work which may be a coping strategy to project their self-image in the event of failure to receive a promotion. Teachers in their thirties are no longer the same generation as the pupils, and negative comments about student standards, attitudes, and behavior are more frequent. Their relationships to students may become more parental as they frequently have children of their own.

In Phase 4, the "successful" teachers are in administration and have relatively little classroom contact. For male teachers, promotion after 40 grows increasingly unlikely. Evidence suggests that teachers begin a period of self-reappraisal, questioning what one has made of one's life and searching for new ways of expressing, fulfilling and satisfying oneself in the future. Teachers at over 40 often are authority figures in their schools and have taken on roles as maintainer of standards and guardian of school traditions. In Phase 5, many teachers are thinking of retirement. Teachers at or over 50 will have been at their present schools for some time and may have taught pupils' parents. Their reputations precede them. They may welcome this, but they can see this as a restraint. Teacher relationships with students are dependent (to a large extent) on personalities. Because of their age group, teachers may find it harder to get close to
pupils who may even have grandparents their age. Young teachers may regard them as old or outdated.

**Teacher frames.** The concept of "frame" (Shon, 1983) has been used to consider the ways in which teachers perceive and execute their professional tasks (Barnes, 1992) and has been referred to as a set of standard expectations through which all adults organize their knowledge of the world and their behavior in it (Barnes, 1992). According to Barnes (1992), teacher frames differ from teacher knowledge in that frames are seen as value-laden and dynamic where knowledge is not. Teacher frames are significant in that they determine how teachers understand what happens in their classrooms.

Teachers who can only "frame" in one way what happens in their classes can therefore only see one set of possibilities for teaching; however, the most effective teachers will have other interpretive frames available which will free them to see alternatives and to make informed choices. To achieve change, teachers need to discover that their inappropriate frame for understanding what happens in their classes is only one of several possible ones: This likely to be achieved only when the teachers themselves reflect critically upon what they do and its results (Abt-Perkins, 1993; Britzman, 1992, 1994; Shon, 1983).

In terms of teacher frames, these may include cultural structures and teachers' perceptions of their personal lives in conjunction with the enactment of their professional lives (Barnes, 1992; Clandinin, 1992; Grossman, 1990; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Hollingsworth, 1989; Pajak & Blase, 1989). Cultural structures are general guidelines by which people "ought to live" that in turn affect individuals' behaviors, their interactions with family and friends, and even their approaches to education (Hamilton, 1993). An examination of culture exemplifies an effort to understand the various ways people construct their lives as they live them. Hamilton (1993) found in her study of teachers' life histories that both the personal cultural history and the culture of the school affects
teachers' beliefs as they enact their practice and work with their students. Additionally, Barnes (1992) states that frames are created "from inside outwards" as much as "from outside inwards" and that teacher frames have been in construction since their days of being a student themselves when they first were introduced to the culture of the school:

All teachers construct their frames for themselves, beginning at the time when they were themselves playing the role of school student and (sometimes critically) observing their teachers. This foundation is built upon during their university courses and particularly during the short periods when they are experiencing school placements as interns. (p. 18)

Pajak and Blase' (1989) study concluded the impact of teachers' personal lives on their professional role enactment as they found that teachers' personal life factors must be satisfying and rewarding in order to have a positive influence on their professional roles. Belenky et al. (1986) state that what seems to be most important in the personal lives of teachers, in terms of the effect on the professional life, is a well-developed individual identity and a sense of connectedness to others beyond the self. In terms of juggling both the personal and the professional lives, Lightfoot (1983) states that female teachers typically seek to integrate their domestic and professional responsibilities and identities, while Biklen's (1986) found that female teachers considered their work lives and family lives to be opposed to one another.

Teacher inservice. Inservice education in the form of graduate courses and inservice workshops in schools often fails to have any measurable impact on experienced teachers' everyday instructional practices (Beach, 1994; Hampton, 1994). For many teachers, inservice training may be their only opportunity (given or sought) to keep abreast of new developments in the field. This is especially true for veteran teachers. "Given the fact that many veteran teachers are, often for financial reasons, staying longer in the classroom before retirement, their participation in inservice programs may be their only exposure to new ideas or innovative teaching approaches" (Beach, 1994, p. 143).
Reasons for ineffective inservice include both the constructs of inservice education and the nature of the teachers themselves. Beach (1994) provides a number of reasons for the dysfunctional nature of inservice education: The one-shot format of inservice workshops; the lack of relevance to particular subject-matter concerns; the disparity between university ("outside consultants") and school attitudes; administrator-mandated inservice workshops from which little input as to their nature and direction is provided by the teachers; and the lack of incentives (and even resistance) to change. Hampton (1994) states that most public schools acknowledge as a given what is called the "law of thirds": "One-third of the teachers look for ways to change; simply show them a better way, and they will do it. Another third will change, but they may need some staff development to incorporate new methods or to give up old ways of doing things. The last third, however, those teachers remaining, will never change. Period" (p. 127). Hampton (1994) states that many in this last group are simply burned out and have become "cynical and disenfranchised victims" of the public education system as they've seen innovative methods come and go, and they've come to believe in very little -- if anything -- when it comes to new ideas for the classroom.

Additionally, the notion of beliefs or personal constructs often works to undermine educational innovations; unconsciously teachers are likely to adapt innovative materials and approaches to make them fit their implicit theories of teaching (Hampton, 1994). This is especially true when there's a strong clash between theories of curriculum reformers and the personal constructs of teachers. Hampton (1994) also states that innovative teaching methods are routinely undermined in the following ways: By pressure from those teachers who are threatened by those teachers not threatened by change -- they discourage the innovator by alienating her or him from the community of other teachers; by administrative intervention in which principals may penalize
innovation inadvertently when their loyalty to students causes them to overburden the innovative teacher in an attempt to help more students by placing them in that teacher's classroom; by administrative reassignment in which the successful teacher from the classroom is rewarded with the title of "specialist" or "staff development" and thus is moved from the classroom; and by student reaction as both mainstream and at-risk students depend on the status quo as they've learned how the system works and how to work the system and do not want to figure out new ways of being successful (Hampton, 1994).

According to Beach (1994), there are several techniques to follow for effective inservice training: Ascertaining teachers' particular needs and concerns beforehand; involving teachers in the topic; exploiting the insights and experiences of veteran teachers; incorporating problem-solving activities; and ensuring development of action plans for implementing change. Inservice techniques for fostering reflection include ongoing support groups; utilizing cases and narratives; group discussion of classroom tapes; use of peer-dialogue journals; peer cross-visitations; and teacher research (Beach, 1994).

Teacher stress and survival. Many teachers have attested that burnout and stress are difficult to avoid in light of the multiple roles and responsibilities required by their jobs. Gmelch and Parkay (1995) state that teachers' changing roles and increasing responsibilities have resulted in higher levels of occupational stress and burnout among today's teachers. The outcomes of teaching are unpredictable and inconsistent inspite of carefully crafted lesson plans and good intentions, and students always don't respond as their teachers desire: Teachers must orchestrate a continually changing array of interpersonal interactions and build a cohesive climate for learning. For some teachers this complex and ambiguous aspect of the classroom is exciting, energizing, and rewarding; for others it can be stressful and even debilitating at times (Gmelch & Parkay,
1995; Heck & Williams, 1984). According to Gmelch and Parkay (1995), many factors outside of classroom planning and instruction add significantly to the stress of teachers, including disgruntled students, parents, community members, legislators, and members of the public at large. Additional factors that can contribute to their stress are new leadership roles (for example, in terms of site-based management), increased diversity in their classrooms in terms of cultural and ability levels, disruptive behavior and violence, accountability for addressing social problems, inadequate resources, lack of parental support and expanding partnerships.

In a study of "survivors," McEnany (1986) interviewed and observed 34 teachers from five different states who were able to maintain dynamic careers for 25 years. The following abstractions about these teachers' lives were pulled from her study: All teachers reported their perceptions of the importance and adequacy of administrative, peer, and family support; all teachers expressed an active involvement in their personal and professional life; all teachers communicated an internal locus of control, recognizing her or his responsibility for good days and bad days at school; and finally, successful teachers commented that their reward in teaching was in seeing their students succeed. Crist (1996), a veteran English teacher of 25 years, suggests four "commandments" be followed by others to avoid growing stale as a veteran teacher: Befriend the first-year teachers in order to learn fresh and innovative ideas and mentor in return; move from one grade level or school to another or at least rearrange the furniture to avoid rigid perspectives; read what the kids are reading in an attempt to keep current and facilitate relationships with students; and "beg, borrow, or steal" good ideas from anyone and everywhere in order to avoid going stale and failing to meet students' needs and interests.
The Science and Art of Teaching

In General

A definition. In defining the science and art of teaching "in general," I've discussed literature in several areas that include concepts of culturally relevant teaching and "good teaching" perceived in a more generalized manner. My purpose in this study has been to understand three English teachers' thinking regarding writing instruction and assessment in light of the contexts of their classrooms and school district. However, in reviewing the professional literature, I had great difficulty locating studies and/or accounts of English teachers' thinking in light of their urban classrooms or in light of classrooms filled with a diverse range of students. As a result, I've reviewed literature that would inform my thinking as an observer of these teachers in their classrooms. Hence, what follows is a discussion of teachers who are known to be successful teaching "children of color" (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994) and teaching children living in poverty (Haberman, 1995) and teachers who are known to be successful teaching a variety of subjects and grades (Cohen, 1991; Macrorie, 1984; Rouse, 1993).

Culturally relevant teaching. Recently, scholars have begun to examine the practice of teachers who support an empowering education for children of color (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994; Lipman, 1995). As stated previously (see Chapter 2 "Teacher Careers"), the overwhelming majority of the teachers in our nation's schools come to the classroom with white and usually middle-class perspectives, having either been raised in these constructs or having been a product of them in their own schooling experiences. However, for the majority of school children who are not from this background, the constructs of our nation's schools typically have failed them in encouraging them to achieve academic excellence (Quality Education for Minorities, 1990). In "traditional schooling" students who are non-middle class and usually non-white have lagged behind in academic achievement which may be due to schools' (including staffing patterns in
those schools) failure to recognize the cultures of these students. However, culturally 
relevant teaching is what successful teachers of children of color practice in order to 
assist students in maintaining those cultures they bring with them to school and is 
teaching that helps to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture on these 
children.

Ladson-Billings (1992) has defined culturally relevant teaching as a pedagogy of 
opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not 
merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant teaching also requires that students 
maintain some cultural integrity as well as academic excellence. "Culturally relevant 
pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic 
success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) 
students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status 
quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). In Ladson-Billings' 
(1994) The Dreamkeepers, a study of eight successful teachers of African American 
students, all teachers demanded, reinforced, and produced academic excellence in their 
students. "Thus, culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers attend to students' 
academic needs, not merely make them 'feel good' " (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160).

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), the trick of culturally relevant teaching is to 
get students to "choose" academic excellence. However, it is necessary to acknowledge 
various cultural referants that may be part of the cause of negative feelings toward 
schooling. Negative effects are brought about, for example, by not seeing one's history, 
culture, or background represented in the textbook or curriculum or by seeing that 
history, culture, or background as distorted. In some cases, students of color are given 
implicit (perhaps explicit) messages in their observations of the school staffing patterns 
as when all the teachers and and the principal are white and only the janitors and cafeteria 
workers are African American; also, other negative messages may be relayed from the
tracking of African American students into the lowest-level classes (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The primary aim of culturally relevant teaching is to assist in the students' development, allowing students to identify with their cultures while at the same time allowing them to choose academic excellence while identifying with that culture. Culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. "Specifically, culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 17-18).

Ladson-Billings (1994) states that culturally relevant teaching is the opposite of "assimilationist teaching." Assimilationist teaching does not seek students participation in the knowledge-building process, and the teacher's primary role is to help students "fit into" society. However, teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified by the way they see themselves and others: They see their teaching as an art rather than as teaching as a technical skill (Ladson-Billings, 1994). They also seek to acknowledge and expose racial and ethnic prejudices that have been historical aspects of our society and aim to assist students in acquiring the skills that will allow them to succeed in such a society and that will assist them in changing society for the better (Foster, 1990). Additionally, culturally relevant teaching differs from assimilationist teaching in the following ways: These teachers believe that all of their students can succeed rather than failure is inevitable for some; they see themselves as a part of the community, and they see teaching as giving back to the community and do not encourage achievement as a means to escape community; these teachers help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities and don't try to homogenize students into one "American identity"; their relationships with students
are fluid and equitable and extend beyond the classroom; they demonstrate a connectedness with all their students and encourage that same connectedness between the students; they encourage a community of learners; they encourage their students to learn collaboratively; they see teaching as "pulling out knowledge" rather than "putting knowledge into"; and finally, such teachers believe that knowledge is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared by teachers and students alike (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Teachers who practice culturally relevant teaching view the content of the curriculum critically and are passionate about it. Rather than expecting students to demonstrate prior knowledge and skills, they help students to develop that knowledge by building bridges and scaffolding for learning.

The need for culturally relevant teaching becomes all the more important in terms of the demographic trends in this country. In the 20 largest United States school districts, students of color make up more than 70 percent of the school population, while it is predicted that by the year 2020, 40 percent of all school-aged children in the U.S. will be children of color (Zeichner, 1993). Children of color, with the exception of some Asian groups, are caught in an educational crisis that demands change; these children are significantly behind white children in academic performance, are disproportionately assigned to the lowest academic tracks and to special education, and are disproportionately suspended (Quality Education for Minorities, 1990). In some urban areas with high concentrations of students of color, dropout rates are over 40 percent (Goodlad, 1990).

In White Teacher, Paley (1979, 1989) suggests that teachers must take care not to ignore color. In reviewing Paley's book, Delpit (1991) points to this as the beginning of the "journey toward acknowledgement and valuing differences" (pp. 5-6). Ladson-Billings (1994) states that her own experiences with white teachers in particular, both preservice and veteran, indicate that many are uncomfortable acknowledging any student
differences and particularly racial differences. She states that some will say, "I don't really see color, I just see children" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 31), but she warns that these attempts at "color-blindness" mask a "dysconscious racisim" or an "uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (King, 1991, cited in Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 31-32). "They do not consciously deprive or punish African American children on the basis of their race, but at the same time they are not unconscious of the ways in which some children are privileged and others are disadvantaged in the classroom. Their 'dysconsciousness' comes into play when they fail to challenge the status quo, when they accept the given as the inevitable" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 32). "Given the significance of race and color in American society, it is impossible to believe that a classroom teacher does not notice the race and ethnicity of the children she is teaching. Further, by claiming not to notice, the teacher is saying that she is dismissing one of the most salient features of the child's identity and that she does not account for it in her curricular planning and instruction" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 33).


In Star Teachers of Children of Poverty, Haberman (1995) discusses the difficulties facing students and teachers in the largest urban school districts in the U.S. as much different from those in smaller districts. In urban schools, students are generally poor, educationally challenged, limited in language, or handicapped in other ways. Increasing occurrences of school violence, drug abuse, displaying weapons in school, and
misbehaving reflect the social problems outside the school. When such conditions are part of a student's life, teaching and learning are affected significantly. Large city schools especially are in need of teachers who are committed to making a difference in such situations. By interviewing and observing urban teachers of all grade levels in the 120 largest school districts all over the U.S. since 1959, Haberman (1995) states that there are certain things these "stars" do and don't do. He states that

Five to eight percent of the teachers at each of these school districts are "star teachers" -- teachers who, by all common criteria, are outstandingly successful; their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers. (Haberman, 1993, cited in Haberman, 1995, p. 1)

Haberman (1995) lists star teachers' characteristics including some of the following: They are persistent problem solvers which is an indicator of their creativity; they value learning and constantly seek out and capitalize on problems, questions, discrepant events, current crises, and emergencies, and bring these into the classroom and use them to involve students in learning and go beyond traditional textbook curricula; they involve students in ways which are constructive and at the same time explain the purposes of the activities and their ideological underpinnings; they continually connect ideas with action in order to develop and improve themselves; and they are careful not to label students and see labels as prejudicial and culturally and ideologically-embedded and thus can be limiting and can lower expectations for learning. Star teachers use words like caring, respect, and trust -- they are aware and honest about the fact that many of the children they teach are not lovable as they do not necessarily engage in lovable behaviors toward others, themselves, or their teachers, but they do not regard "love" as a prerequisite condition for teaching a child or as a method of teaching. Star teachers also are sensitive to the fact that they work in mindless bureaucracies that treat them like functionaries and not professionals, but they learn as much as possible about the informal
structure of the school in order to avoid falling victim to the formal organization of the school. Star teachers do not function as complete isolates. They set up networks of colleagues who are like-minded and who serve as a support group and in some occasions a support group of individuals who may not all be teachers. Star teachers also admit their fallibility and are willing to confess to serious misjudgments that endanger the rapport and trust they have established with students and acknowledge that correcting mistakes is messy and takes some doing. They also do not criticize in public and then apologize in private but rectify situations with students in public. They also realize that real teaching puts the learner in charge. They believe their responsibility is to interest and engage students in wanting to learn and strive to make lessons relevant to students' lives and interests.

In Cohen's (1991) case studies of five veteran high school teachers of varying subjects, she found them all to be very diverse in personalities and teaching styles. In her presentation of case studies, she celebrates these teachers' differences but pulls various abstractions across the cases, including these veterans' capacity for "self-renewal." "All five are survivors who have come up against adversity and then slipped past it with relative ease. What is more, all share a remarkable capacity for self-renewal, even when circumstances seem adverse to growth. They are all equally devoted to their work, even though that commitment plays itself out in decidedly different ways" (Cohen, 1991, p. 4). She lists the traits shared by all five of these teachers as the following: (1) Their passion for their subjects plays a vital role in their longevity; (2) they have a lack of concern for conventional career mobility, and in this, there's an absence of a gender gap as both male and female share this perspective; (3) they have been praised in their schools for their originality, and all portray a kind of charismatic competence; (4) they have a capacity to retain the novice perspective and display a vibrant youthful quality for their subjects.
which is displayed in their outlooks, their enthusiasm, their politics, and their insecurities; and (5) they are first and foremost great "enablers" (Macrorie, 1984) of their students.

In Macrorie's (1984) case studies of 20 teachers from first grade through graduate school, he found them all to be enablers: "They were not teachers in the usual sense -- persons who pass on the accepted knowledge of the world and get it back from students on tests, but enablers who help others to do good works and extend their already considerable powers" (p. xi). Macrorie (1984) found that all 20 teachers believed in pretty much the same ideas and were using pretty much the same methods although they were teaching various subjects and working with various age groups in very diverse settings. In the classrooms of enablers, it is good works, not minimum competency, that they bring about; enablers make the social life of the school a part of the classroom experience -- the student becoming both more individual and more social while learning with others. "These enablers don't expect learners to be objective or subjective, but both objective and subjective -- not learning only from the experience and ideas of 'authorities' or only from their own experience and ideas, but from setting up a conversation between the two and listening to it" (p. xiv). Enablers hold high expectations for their learners: They arrange the learning place so that people draw fully on their present powers and are supported and encouraged rather than punished. They ask learners to take chances that sometimes result in failure and to use these mistakes productively. Finally, enablers bring together polar opposites: Process and product, individual and group, experience and theory, and doing and thinking (Macrorie, 1984).

Ayers and Schubert (1994) found in their interviews with teachers identified as being among the best by their peers that all of these teachers maintained a "need to know students, drawing linkages between student lives and academic work" (p. 111). In particular, they found that these outstanding teachers in their study shared these same characteristics in their work:
1. holistic, situational problem solving;
2. enjoyable interaction with students;
3. an interest in students' non-school experiences;
4. love and compassion for students;
5. a sense that teaching holds great importance;
6. a search for students' strengths;
7. a desire to continuously revise one's sense of meaning;
8. a quest for the worthwhile and just;
9. a search for developmentally appropriate teaching;

Writing and Its Assessment

A definition. In defining the "science and art" of writing and its assessment, I've borrowed from several sources. I've reviewed literature that discusses teachers of writing in general; literature that defines and discusses the writing process as opposed to "traditional" product-emphasis writing instruction; literature that discusses the assessment of writing; literature that discusses students' writing achievement; and literature that discusses meeting the needs of diverse students. In this latter section, I've had to borrow from various sources as finding research and scholarship that addresses diverse writers specifically in the secondary classroom are scarce. In particular, I've chosen to discuss scholars who've criticized "process approaches" and authors who discuss the role of the teachers' ideologies in meeting these students' needs.

Writing teachers. Various scholars have stated that few teachers have identified the teaching of writing as a major feature in their professional training and few have had any writing instruction in English departments; if at all, they tend to have this more so in schools of education (North, 1987; O'Donnell, 1991). North (1987) states that there were no graduate programs in composition before the mid-1970s, and it has long been described as the "stepchild" of English departments, something that had to be taught or rather endured and has not been perceived as a discipline or field suitable for graduate study. However, the growth of methodological awareness needed for the teaching of writing has caused many university investigators to "scramble for the power and prestige that go with being able to say what constitutes knowledge" (p. 3). This scramble for the
power of knowledge about composition has resulted in many investigators appearing to be unreflective of their work, resulting in "an accumulated knowledge of a relatively impressive size, but one that lacks any clear coherence or methodological integrity" (North, 1987, p. 3).

Hence, the field of composition is a relatively new, emerging just over the last twenty plus years. It's also a field in which investigators traditionally have given little credence to "practitioners" and to a lesser extent writers (North, 1987): "In other words, much of what especially teachers, and to a lesser extent writers, have claimed to know about writing has been ignored, discounted, or ridiculed -- so that, despite their overwhelming majority, they have been effectively disenfranchised as knowledge-makers in their own field" (p. 3). Furthermore, there has been a gap between research and practice in the classroom which some have attributed to teachers' lack of faith in research methods and the lack of quality over what researchers choose to review (Applebee, 1974, 1986; Burton, 1973; O'Donnell, 1991; Squire, 1991). There's also been a traditional misconception that the teacher is merely a "technician" and that the researcher (university scholar) "makes the knowledge." However, teacher "lore" remains composition instruction's dominant form of knowledge -- lore being informal learning that takes place between teachers, for example, in hallway conversations in which teachers share activities regarding the involvement of their students in writing and how they assess their progress (North, 1987). Most recently, a good bit of lore is getting written (Peter Elbow, Donald Graves, Donald Murray, Nancie Atwell, Linda Rief, Tom Romano). This written lore has been treated as "complete articulations of what Practitioners know and do" and the embodiment of what's been called the "current-traditional rhetoric" (North, 1987, p. 30):

It is driven, first, by a pragmatic logic: It is concerned with what has worked, is working, or might work in teaching, doing, or learning.... Second, its structure is essentially experiential. That is, the traditions, practices, and beliefs of which it is
constituted are best understood as being organized within an experience-based framework: I will create my version of lore out of what has worked or might work -- either in my own experience or in that of others -- and I will understand and order it in terms of the circumstances under which it did so. (p. 23)

In addition to building their "repertoire" of practice through shared lore, teachers seem to be influenced by the methods in which they were taught, by the influence of their students, and by textbooks and examinations (Boomer, 1982; Gomez, 1990; Neill & Medina, 1994). Teachers' views about writing influence how they implement writing programs in their classrooms. Teachers who hold "traditional" views of writing may believe that writing emphasis should be on appropriate syntax, grammatical structures, and other conventions and may have difficulties embracing process approaches. Teachers who believe in process approaches allow students to gain control over writing and its assessment, whereas traditional writing instruction holds the teacher as locus of control and the sole audience and judge of students' writing.

The National Writing Project has documented that teachers who are writers themselves find their writing instruction and assessment practices more effective (Gomez, 1988, 1990; Wilson, 1994). "If teachers are ever going to teach writing more and teach it better, they will have to produce more writing themselves" (Moffett, 1981, p. 81). "Surely, a major reason that many teachers ignore, slight, or mangle the teaching of writing is that they lack direct experience with the learning issues entailed in writing (Wilson, 1994). Teachers who write also find that they've an increased amount of credibility with their students (Gomez, 1988). Hence, many researchers and teachers contend this is an important aspect of any writing classroom that should not be ignored (Frager, 1992, 1994; Gomez, 1988; Gorrell, 1992; Smith, 1989).

A survey of successful United Kingdom and U.S. writing teachers and their students found that successful writing teachers had several practices in common (Freedman & McLeod, 1988). In particular, U.S. successful teachers of writing tended to focus on analytical writing and critical thinking and individualized instruction for their
students (Freedman & McLeod, 1988). These teachers placed less emphasis on mechanics and testing and more emphasis on allowing students to express their feelings, unlike their less successful counterparts found in studies conducted by Applebee (1986) who focused on writing meant to demonstrate mastery of language (mechanics, spelling, etc.) and student learning (recall of information). Successful writing teachers have their students correlate their personal experience with the topic in order to encourage students' thinking and use writing to help students clarify their learning of various concepts. Additionally, these teachers reported that response to students writing is more helpful during the writing process than after a piece of writing is finished. Individual conferences were seen as the most helpful type of response with the teacher as the most helpful responder. The teachers attributed their success to aspects of their curriculum -- to their use of a process approach, to their own writing with their students and to their sharing of that writing, and to their willingness to take risks in their writing instruction and assessment practices (Freedman & McLeod, 1988).

Process approach. Since the 1970s the focus on effective writing instruction and assessment in the English language arts classroom has been on process-oriented approaches over product-centered instruction (Applebee, 1986; Applebee, Langer, Mullis, Latham & Gentile, 1994; Marshall, 1984; McCarthey, 1992; Newkirk, 1986, 1990). This "true science and art" to the teaching of writing focuses on student-centered instruction and assessment, emphasizing process pedagogy as opposed to product pedagogy (Beard & Danielson, 1991). Traditional product pedagogy focuses on teacher-directed learning in terms of content and issues to be dealt with in class.

As part of the process approach, writing instruction looks vastly different than writing instruction in product-oriented classrooms. Attention is shifted away from the writing product to the writing process in which the writer is encouraged to draft, share, and rewrite in order to grow as a writer. Process-oriented activities such as the following
occur: The students are encouraged to move through "authentic" and meaningful writing activities of planning, prewriting, writing multiple drafts, and engaging in sharing and reflection; the teacher integrates reading, writing, and language tasks; and the evaluation of students' writings are viewed in light of the quality and coherence of ideas rather than solely and/or primarily in terms of its mechanical and syntactic features (Schuman, 1990; Schwartz, 1990; Willinsky, 1990).

In terms of language instruction, grammar is no longer the emphasis and especially isn't learned through drills and worksheets that isolate it from the real act of writing and speaking; but rather, grammar is taught in the context of writing with the use of mini-lessons provided by the teacher and based on students' needs that provide brief explanations of something that may be helpful (Weaver, 1996). Additionally, writing topics of students aren't restricted to the "Fifty-Star Theme" (five-paragraph essay usually told from the third-person point of view) that Emig (1971) addresses as an "enemy" that restricts what students could and should write about (p. 97). Rather, students are encouraged to explore various types of writing with the teacher encouraging their voices in terms of their experiences and personal interpretations or engagement.

In process-oriented writing classrooms, peer groups (also known as peer critiquing or peer workshopping) have been encouraged by scholar-teachers who are writers themselves (Elbow, 1973, 1981; Murray, 1982). In the facilitation of peer groups, students' audience for their work increases as they read and respond to each others' writing, helping each other discover new ways of thinking and helping each other develop their topics. Process-oriented pedagogy also encourages students' self-assessment of their growth and development. On the other hand, "traditional" pedagogy focuses on the product over the process with the teacher as the assessor of students' work -- with the teacher (usually) selecting the topic, correcting the errors, and then returning
the students' writing expecting to see improvements with regards to students' future writing assignments (Daigon, 1986, 1990).

Beard and Danielson (1991) contend that successful teachers of process pedagogy concentrate on building a community within the English classroom with classrooms becoming focused more on directed group work and with the students directing the choice of their discussions and exploring the world outside the classroom through their writing. With such student-centered classrooms, teachers look for ways to connect writing to the lives of their students (Willinsky, 1990). Teachers encourage their students to use the reader-response approach to writing instruction and encourage them to read themselves into their experiences (Beard & Danielson, 1991; Newkirk, 1986, 1990). Peer critiquing becomes central, and in turn, students become more respectful and have appreciation for the values and talents of each other. The teacher's role as facilitator is to encourage critical response: To give information where necessary and to promote students' critical thinking (Beard & Danielson, 1991). Furthermore, writing is not divorced from literature, but they're meshed together with writing sometimes the tool to encourage "ownership" of a text (Beard & Danielson, 1991).

**Assessment.** In terms of assessment in the process-oriented classroom, "feedback" is considered more valuable during the course of the drafting process (Beard & Danielson, 1991; Freedman & McLeod, 1988; Willinsky, 1990). Students' writing is graded when they're ready after writing a series of drafts, and they're encouraged to set their own time and developmental goals. Beard and Danielson (1991) found in their study of process-oriented teachers that most used very little grading but gave ample commenting and evaluating while other process-oriented teachers used student self-evaluations and peer critiques. Applebee et al. (1994) also found in their research that in terms of grading process-oriented teachers tended to place the most emphasis on whether the writing accomplished its purpose, followed in importance by organization and
coherence and by quality and creativity of the ideas. "Spelling, punctuation, and grammar were rated as very important in grading by only 35 percent of the teachers and length by only 3 percent" (Applebee et al., 1994, p. 190). Additionally, top-performing students were more likely to have teachers who talked with them while they were working on their writing, and during the course of their working on their writing, their audience extended to a variety of readers other than simply their teachers (Applebee et al., 1994).

Portfolio assessment has gained momentum in recent years with the shift from product to process in writing (Belenoff & Dickson, 1991; Graves, 1992; Odell, 1993). Portfolios provide a way of meeting many of the needs students share with all other writers. Because they're done over a period of time, rather than in a one or two-hour assessment session, students have the opportunity to discuss their emerging drafts with peers and teachers and, in some cases, may be given the opportunity to choose from their corpus of work which are to be evaluated (Odell, 1993).

These discussions can help students get a better sense of what counts as a good argument (or description, story, etc.) in a given discourse community; these discussions can also figure into students' efforts to monitor and assess their ongoing efforts. Moreover, the use of portfolios allows students to take a very active role in the evaluation process, since they have opportunity to negotiate criteria by which their work will be judged and have some choice as to which pieces of writing will be evaluated. (Odell, 1993, p. 301)

**Writing achievement.** In recent years, the methods being used to assess writing achievement have become increasingly varied. As more attention is focused on the quality and depth of student thinking, there have been moves away from traditional multiple-choice formats toward writing activities that involve students in extended thought and language -- in thinking about ideas as well as in communicating them (Daly, 1989, cited in Applebee et al., 1994, p. 141).

In a survey conducted in 1992 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the writing performances of school children in fourth, eighth, and
twelfth-grade public and private schools was studied. The results show that a higher level of writing proficiency resulted in those students whose teachers used process-oriented instruction with activities that centered on planning, on writing multiple drafts, and on defining audience and purpose (Applebee et al., 1994). Teachers in the poorest-performing schools were less likely to emphasize such process-oriented activities and were more apt to emphasize formal outlining. The report also showed that the top-performing schools' students were more likely to be assessed on the basis of longer essays and on individual or group projects, presentations, and/or portfolios (84 percent compared with 76 percent in the bottom-performing schools) (Applebee et al., 1994). Including more indepth, longer assignments, higher writing proficiency in these schools was associated with writing for more varied audiences and purposes (Applebee et al., 1994). These approaches suggest a greater emphasis in the top-performing schools on students' thinking and reasoning skills and the use of each of these approaches suggest higher levels of student writing proficiency.

The 1992 NAEP study also found that students who were provided with an array of opportunities to reflect on and gain feedback on their writing were the more successful writers. Teachers reported that over 90 percent of the eighth graders tested were at least sometimes asked to discuss what they wrote with other students as well as to comment on what other students wrote (Applebee et al., 1994). Both of these practices were associated with higher average writing proficiency. In addition, approximately two-thirds of the eighth and twelfth graders who took part in the study were collecting their writing in folders or portfolios that could be used for a variety of purposes that support reflection and learning:

Teachers' and students' reports on the evaluation of student work indicated that emphasis was placed on coherence and on the quality of the ideas expressed. The emphasis is consistent with research showing that it is important to focus on the quality of students' thinking and their ability to sustain and elaborate on an argument or point of view. Students, however, believed that the accuracy of their
spelling, punctuation, and grammar was equally important in grading, though their teachers ranked this criterion considerably lower. (Applebee et al., 1994, p. 13)

As far as parental involvement and student demographics, the 1992 NAEP report found that higher writing proficiency was linked to students in the upper-socioeconomic homes (Applebee et al., 1994). Writing proficiency was higher for students who reported more types of reading material available in the home and more discussion of schoolwork with someone at home. Other home life factors that correlated with higher writing achievement, included fewer hours of television viewing, more pages read each day for school, and more time spent on homework. It also appeared that the higher the educational attainment of the parents, the higher the students' writing proficiency (Applebee et al., 1994).

Diverse writers. Most Americans are aware that our schools have had little success in educating students who are poor, members of racial and ethnic minorities, and/or are speakers of a first language other than English. Although some of these students live in rural areas, most of them live in inner cities. The 1992 NAEP study reported a gap in the average writing proficiency of students in financially-disadvantaged urban schools versus those in financially-advantaged schools. Students in advantaged urban communities wrote better than those in disadvantaged urban communities, and on average, white and Asian-Pacific Islander students wrote better than black and Hispanic students and private school students wrote better than those in public schools (Applebee et al., 1994).

Various scholars and school personnel have many different labels for students known as financially poor or racial and ethnic minorities. These labels have been criticized as being offensive and insensitive and have been criticized for shaping a reductionistic view of students' situations that probably contributes more to their academic problems than to their academic successes (Hampton, 1993). One of these
labels is "at-risk" -- a label used to describe students who are "not expected to succeed academically" (Hampton, 1993, p. 186). Many people assume that at-risk students will not be successful academically because of the very factors that serve to classify them as at-risk, reasoning that for "these kids' life is so hard that it is no wonder they don't do well in school" (Hampton, 1993, p. 186). However, studies coming from today's classrooms, including teacher-researcher studies, offer convincing evidence that in classrooms where teachers are willing to depart from the conventional wisdom about at-risk learners, students struggling with poverty, violence, and other realities of contemporary life can succeed academically (Delpit, 1995; Hampton, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994). "Consequently, it seems likely that obstacles to school success for at-risk students are not rooted in factors existing out of school but, rather, in the conventional wisdom governing most at-risk schooling" (Hampton, 1993).

Various scholars have contended that programs established to empower those students who are most in need of help have actually denied them access to the development of literate behaviors that underlie success in all academic areas (Delpit, 1994; Hampton, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moss & Walters, 1993). "In other words, this country's schools and most of the programs designed to help at-risk youth present almost impenetrable barriers to their success" (Hampton, 1993, p. 187). Furthermore, improving the chances of academic success for at-risk students requires that teachers examine their own assumptions regarding these students' needs and abilities and that they consider how these assumptions have led to flawed educational practices (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 1992; Hampton, 1993; Moss & Walters, 1993). Hampton (1993) states that teachers must enact new practices and assessment procedures "based on what we know about what works and what does not work" (Hampton, 1993, p. 187).

According to Hampton (1993), the American school system has built its programs around research from the 1960s and 1970s that grew out of the compensatory education
movement that was designed to make up for things that some children (poor and minority children) do not have and that the school assumes most children should have. Other studies during this time reported that the poor are concrete rather than abstract thinkers; depend on real-life rather than symbolic experience; speak non-Standard English; are impatient listeners; prefer quick gratification; have low self-esteem; and are angry and mistrustful of mainstream people (Hampton, 1993). "It is important to point out that this research concentrates exclusively on what poor/minority children do not know and how these deficiencies influence their performance in school" (p. 187). Delpit (1995) states that "People of color are, in general, skeptical of research as a determiner of our fates. Academic research has, after all, found us genetically inferior, culturally deprived, and verbally deficient" (p. 31).

According to Moss and Walters (1993), writing instruction, as well as reading instruction, has been thought of from a purely psychological model of literacy in which literacy is considered a property of individuals who are seen only as individuals and never as members of groups (Moss & Walters, 1993). How we deal or fail to deal with issues of linguistic and cultural diversity in our own classrooms reveals much about our identity as individuals and as members of the many social groups of which we are or have been a part. It likewise reveals much of what we perceive teaching and learning to be about -- what we think the proper role of a teacher is and how she or he should think, plan, and judge the value of what goes on in her or his classroom (Moss & Walters, 1993). Moss and Walters (1993) also contend that despite what our common sense tells us and despite a body of scholarly research that has revealed otherwise, we as teachers often continue to evaluate ourselves and our students as if there was a single, appropriate way of using language and of being literate in this culture:

Large numbers of students -- mostly African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Appalachians, and other poor Americans of European roots -- are not succeeding in our schools and universities or in the workplace. At the same time, these institutions have begun to confront a major demographic shift in the
populations they serve, the ultimate result of which is that no single ethnic group will constitute the majority of Americans: instead, the majority will soon be composed of various groups of ethnic minorities that have traditionally been underrepresented in these same institutions. (pp. 132-133)

Moss and Walters (1993) suggest that teachers carefully consider the challenge of diversity in getting "those students" to use Standard English. We as teachers need to examine thoroughly our own assumptions about language -- and especially our assumptions of Standard English -- because of the many ways in which these assumptions influence our interactions with students and their texts. Moss and Walters (1993) state that teachers who are from communities other than those of their students often attribute the cause of their students' negative behavior to be something "lacking in" the students:

When any particular interaction with a student or students does not go well from our point of view -- when a class does not pay attention, when a student behaves in what we believe to be a surly fashion, when we cannot understand why an especially bright student refuses to speak up in class -- we might respond by claiming that whatever problems exist belong to the student or students who do not share our assumptions. In the past, such a claim was usually considered appropriate. Today, however, such a response seems less and less acceptable, logical, or fair. Increasingly, we are learning to ask questions about misunderstandings between teachers and students and are coming to realize that many axes of difference can interfere with what at one level seems like such a simple task: helping students to develop skills they already have in order to progress as writers and thinkers. (p. 137)

Many scholars and educators have critized process approaches for failing to meet the needs of minority and poor students. Hillocks (1986) claims that the "natural process" approach is not particularly effective because the teacher assumes too passive a role and because strategies like "free writing" (Elbow, 1973, 1981) fail to provide students with the assistance for complex writing tasks. Hillocks (1986) claims that an "environmental" approach with carefully structured writing assignments can provide that necessary assistance. Other scholars have contended that the language used to describe the writing process almost invites misunderstanding in the role the teacher is supposed to
take in students' learning: "For example, it is almost a commonplace to claim that the student needs a sense of 'ownership,' but if the student 'owns' the writing, what business do I, as a teacher, have asking him to change it?" (Newkirk, 1986, 1990, p. xix).

According to Delpit (1995), the writing process approach has potential to do a grave disservice for many if not most minority and poor students. This potential for harm has to do with its literacy focus on fluency as opposed to correctness in students' writing. As a result, the writing process initially attracted few minority teachers. One woman told Delpit (1995) after attending an inservice on its implementation that she believed the whole process was racist and designed to prevent her students from acquiring the necessary skills to write and speak the language of the "dominant culture." Delpit (1995) believes that many black teachers already see the fluency that other teacher might not see in their students' writing:

They are anxious to move to the next step, the step vital to success in America -- the appropriation of the oral and written forms demanded by the mainstream. And they want it to happen quickly. They see no time to waste developing the "fluency" they believe their children already possess. Yes, they are eager to teach "skills." (p. 18)

Delpit (1995) states that writing process advocates often give the impression that they view "the direct teaching of skills to be restrictive to the writing process at best, and at worst, politically repressive to students already oppressed by a racist educational system. Black teachers, on the other hand, see the teaching of skills to be essential to their students' survival" (p. 18). Delpit (1985) contends that black teachers' emphasis on skills is not a negation of their students' intellect, as is often suggested by progressive forces, but is an acknowledgment of it. Their emphasis on skills is meant to be useful and usable knowledge which contributes to a student's ability to communicate effectively in standard, generally acceptable literary forms. If minority people are to effect the change that will allow them to progress they must be taught "skills" within the context of
critical and creative thinking. These skills are a necessary but insufficient aspect of black
and minority students' education:

Students need technical skills to open doors, but they need to be able to think
critically and creatively to participate in meaningful and potentially liberating
work inside those doors. Let there be no doubt: a "skilled" minority person who
is not also capable of critical analysis becomes the trainable, low-level
functionary of the dominant society, simply the grease that keeps the institutions
which orchestrate his or her oppression running smoothly. (Delpit, 1995, p. 19)

Delpit (1995) is not suggesting that the writing process approach to literacy
development is wrong or that a completely skill-oriented program is right. But rather, she
is suggesting that much is to be gained from the interaction of the two orientations and
that advocates of both approaches have something to say to each other. Often teachers
who profess the writing process do not make various rules explicit. "If such explicitness
is not provided to students, what it feels like to people who are old enough to judge is that
there are secrets being kept, that time is being wasted, that the teacher is abdicating his or
her duty to teach" (Delpit, 1995, p. 31). This sense of being cheated can be so strong that
students may be turned off completely to the educational system, and many will find
themselves later in situations in which they are held accountable for a set of rules no one
told them about.

Teachers do students no service to suggest, even implicitly, that 'product' is not
important. In this country, students will be judged on their product regardless of
the process they utilized to achieve it. And that product, based as it is on the
specific codes of a particular culture, is more readily produced when the
directives of how to produce it are more explicit. (Delpit, 1995, p. 31)

In becoming responsive to the needs of minority and poor children, teachers need
to think critically about their practices and be open to dialogue with minority teachers.
Delpit (1995) suggests two qualifiers are necessary: The teacher cannot be the only
expert in the classroom -- that to deny the students their own expert knowledge is to
disempower them; the second qualifier is that merely adopting direct instruction is not the
answer. Actual writing for real audiences and real purposes is a vital element in helping
students to understand that they have an important voice in their own learning processes.

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Siddle (1988) examined the results of various kinds of interventions in a primarily process-oriented writing class for black students: She found that the intervention that produced the most positive changes in the students' writing was a "mini-lesson" consisting of direct instruction about some standard writing convention (cited in Delpit, 1995).

But what produced the second highest number of positive changes was a subsequent student-centered conference with the teacher. (Peer conferencing in this group of black students who were not members of the culture of power produced the least number of changes in students' writing. However, the classroom teacher maintained -- and I concur -- that such activities are necessary to introduce the elements of "real audience" into the task, along with more teacher-directed strategies). (Delpit, 1995, p. 33)

Minority teachers' voices are often absent from educational research, and many have felt silenced in the contexts of their own schools. "Too often minority teachers' voices have been hushed: a certain paternalism creeps into the speech of some of our liberal colleagues as they explain that our children must be 'given voice'" (Delpit, 1995, p. 19). Delpit (1995) states that "it is the responsibility of the dominant group members to hear the other side of the issue; and after hearing, to speak in a modified voice that does not exclude the concerns of their minority colleagues" (Delpit, 1995, p. 20). It's incumbent especially for white educators and writing process advocates, or any advocates of any progressive movement, to enter into dialogue with teachers of color who may not share their enthusiasm about new or "progressive" ideas. Scholarship in the past hasn't acknowledged alternative world views:

My charge here is not to determine the best instructional methodology; I believe that the actual practice of good teachers of all colors typically incorporates a range of pedagogical orientations. Rather, I suggest that the differing perspectives on the debate over "skills" versus "process" approaches can lead to an understanding of the alienation and miscommunication, and thereby to an understanding of the "silenced dialogue." (p. 24)

Delpit (1995) states that as teachers "we must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness. In other words, we must become ethnographers in the
true sense" (p. 47). Teachers need to attempt to get all of the issues out in the open to initiate a true dialogue. This can be done only by seeking out those whose perspectives may differ most, by learning to give their words complete attention, by understanding one's own power, even if that power stems merely from being in the majority, by being unafraid to raise questions about discrimination and voicelessness with people of color, and to listen to what they have to say (Delpit, 1995).

**Contextual Realities**

**Secondary School Cultures**

*Definition.* In defining "secondary school cultures," I have elected to discuss the contexts of teacher isolation, teacher workloads, organizational support for teachers, and roadblocks to schools' ability to change.

*Teacher isolation.* Wasley (1994) states that working in schools -- one teacher, one classroom -- creates conditions of isolation that work against teachers, preventing teachers from engaging in thoughtful discourse. Additionally, there is little time in schools that is not absorbed in dealing with students and their parents, preparing lessons, and grading student work. Webb (1985) states that teachers' isolation from each other also serves to provide little recognition and support from either colleagues or administrators (Webb, 1985). As a result, many teachers have come to feel that their professions are not fulfilling their needs or tapping their potentials, sometimes resulting in a sense of self-estrangement:

Many of the conditions of their employment promote an attitude of professional non-involvement with peers. Such conditions engender feelings of insecurity, status panic and self-protection through isolation and promote a form of alienation that social psychologists have called self-estrangement. Self-estrangement refers to a loss of meaningful connection between the worker and his work. (Webb, 1985, p. 85)

Little and McLaughlin (1993) make the point that high schools are places where multiple professional communities exist and that it is quite possible that two teachers, teaching side by side for years, experience the school quite differently; and despite their
proximity, these same teachers may not know each other at all. Their primary community within high schools is the subject area department — the English department, math department, and so on. The departments represent the power bases within schools: They compete for resources, influence the schedule, generate their own grading and tracking policies, assign classes to individual teachers, and so on (Little & McLaughlin, 1993).

**Workloads.** According to Yee (1990), workloads powerfully affect a teacher's sense of job satisfaction and intrinsic reward. Placing teachers in courses for which they are unprepared or lack expertise erodes self-confidence and self-efficacy, especially if proper training, support and encouragement are not provided. Experienced teachers are not immune from the effects of poor assignments although the consequences are not as dramatic for veterans as they are for beginning teachers. Examples of workload assignments that lend to teachers' demoralization are courses outside a teacher's specialty and heavy loads of remedial or general courses where the returns in student achievement are slow or sparse, a situation more common in inner-city schools (Yee, 1990).

Additionally, large class sizes in the context of diverse and intense educational needs of students also affects teachers' attitudes toward their jobs. Workload satisfaction and stress has been correlated with homogeneity versus diversity of needs in the classroom — diversity referring to the number of different "handicaps" represented in a single classroom (for example, the variety of languages spoken and emotional, motivational, and remedial needs). The level or intensity of need that contributes to a "heavy" workload feeling would be how far behind or advanced students' skills are or how serious the emotional and motivational problems are (Yee, 1990). As the diversity and intensity of educational needs increase, so do teachers' perceptions of workload stress, while their sense of effectiveness and satisfaction decline (Yee, 1990). In Yee's (1990) study of teachers from three workplace contexts (rural, suburban, and urban), she
found that in all three locations that students' educational needs and academic achievement constitutes an important component of the community context of a school which has a bearing on teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

Also, teacher attrition is highest were the need is most acute. Inner-city schools, known for their tough and stressful conditions, generally have the greatest shortages of teachers as well as the highest rates of transfers to other schools and defeaters from the profession (Bruno & Doscher, 1981, cited in Yee, 1990). High rates of turnover carry serious implications for the quality of education, especially in light of the effective schools research that highlights the importance of staff stability and continuity in successful schools.

Organizational support. Student characteristics are not the sole determinants of teachers' career attitudes. Organizational supports also have a bearing on teachers' attitudes towards their profession. Environmental factors -- community, district, and state -- interact with organizational conditions to mold the total workplace experience. A strong theme emerging in Yee's (1990) study of teachers' attitudes toward their workplace was the tension between them and bureaucratic top-down control. Teachers wanted schools to be more of a "share enterprise with more input on policy decisions. Also, teachers regarded the absence of basic support (such as, buffering from outside interruptions during class time and support for discipline) as a major source of dissatisfaction and a tremendous obstacle to their effectiveness (Wasley, 1994; Yee, 1990).

Lack of organizational support in terms of professional development also exerts a considerable influence over whether teachers regard their work positively or negatively (Wasley, 1994). Yee (1990) found that high-involvement teachers express the importance of their involvement in various aspects of professional stimulation: They expressed that opportunities for collegial interaction was their most valued form of this.
High-involvement teachers also reported more exchange with colleagues, more so than low-involvement teachers did who often experienced isolation from their peers and were more likely to be dissatisfied with teaching (Yee, 1990). In Yee's (1990) study, most teachers reported that their opportunities for peer exchange were inadequate: Faculties are fragmented in that they seldom are able to observe each other teach, give feedback, plan lessons, or solve problems together. However, when social and professional interaction among peers does occur, teachers find this to be a critical source of their professional identification and growth (Wasley, 1994; Yee, 1990). Additionally, many teachers, especially the high-involvement ones, stated that professional development in terms of "shared power" and in terms of interactions with colleagues carries additional meaning: It means taking part in decision making, exerting some influence over the teaching environment and assuming additional roles (Yee, 1986, cited in Yee, 1990).

Roadblocks to change. Many scholars and school people have contended that U.S. schools do a poor job of educating many students -- especially poor and minority students. U.S. schools also fail a great many mainstream (middle class, usually white) learners who graduate with acceptable grade-point averages and high standardized test scores but with a very limited understanding about what they studied (Hampton, 1994). A large part of this failure is due to schools' inability to change (Hampton, 1994). Hampton (1993) contends that some of the roadblocks to change in schools includes management constructs (schools are organized like factories and are characterized by discrete blocks of time and isolated disciplines which narrow the view of learning) and standardized testing which is at the heart of every curriculum in this country (such tests require the learning of disconnected skills and information and do not afford students the opportunity to link concepts or make judgments). Hampton (1994) also states that school to work linkages are problematic in that learning becomes circumscribed by the values of the marketplace and as a result literature and fine arts are slighted in order to accommodate
subjects that translate more readily into the development of marketable skills: This, in turn, perpetuates the "two-track educational system" -- one for those who will go to college and another track for the poor and minority students to do rudimentary, permanent low-level work. Additionally, Beach (1994) and Hampton (1994) contend that many effective teachers who desire to be change agents in their schools often find no support from their current school system and thus must rely on their own personalities to motivate their students and colleagues from the confinements of their own classrooms and eventually suffer from burnout (Ascher, 1991).

Nature of Urban Schooling

A definition. In Chapter 1 (see "Definitions"), I attempted to define urban schooling. In this section of the literature review, I have chosen to discuss the literature that describes this context in more detail, including workplace and community conditions, urban students, and have provided a brief discussion of Haberman's (1994) perspectives on the type of teaching that takes place in many urban schools. By discussing urban schooling, I risk stereotyping some if not all urban schools, something I find distasteful. Like all schools within the same school district, urban schools can be greatly diverse in terms of not only their geographical settings but in terms of their curricular focus, in terms of their teachers and administrators, and in terms of their students and students' parents. As both a former urban school teacher and as a researcher and teacher educator, working in the urban schools in the context of this study's field site, I realize this to be true. Additionally, very little attention has been given to urban schooling in the professional literature other than to say what's wrong with it and what should be done with it in terms of reforms. However, like all districts, there's some bad and good, but it seems mostly the "bad" has been addressed in the professional literature.
Hence, this section of my literature review addresses the negatives because finding the positives was, unfortunately, next to impossible.

**Reflections of a violent society.** Urban schools have been known to be reflections of the communities in which they reside. Whereas violence isn't exclusive to urban schools and their surrounding communities, violence seems to be more concentrated in these locations where poverty and racial tensions aggravate the frustrations of many. On average, a minimum of 157,000 crimes are committed every day in school (Quarles, 1989). Approximately 525,000 attacks, shakedowns, and robberies occur in secondary schools on a monthly basis (Harper & Epstein, 1989, cited in Haberman, 1995). Three million incidents of assault, rape, robbery, and theft occur on school property annually. In urban communities, 25 percent of inner-city youth have witnessed a murder; 72 percent know someone who has been shot (Wilson-Brewer, Cohen, O'Donnell & Goodman, 1991). Ten percent of children treated in hospitals have witnessed a stabbing or a shooting before the age of six (Will, 1993, cited in Haberman, 1995). In a relatively small city such as Milwaukee, 119 school-age children have been murdered in the last three years (Haberman, 1995). Nationwide 900 teachers are daily threatened with bodily harm (National Education Association, 1993).

The United States society is violent. Urban neighborhoods tend to be violent and that is reflected in its schools. People who want to teach in urban schools must recognize the reality of this situation, for it influences greatly on what they do and don't do and how they perceive their students. "Beginning teachers must recognize that preventing violence is an integral part of their legitimate work; the more effective they are at empowering youngsters, the less violent they will engender; the less effective they are, the more violence they will cause" (Haberman, 1995, p. 87). Furthermore, Hampton (1994) states that chances are teachers who work in hostile environments will not nurture their professional development, but in fact they will subvert it.
Students. Urban schools have seen a continuing population shift in the last two decades with middle-class (typically white) students moving outward to the suburbs with poor and minority students becoming the majority in many of the nation's urban schools. Very little research exists in the context of classrooms populated with diverse groups of students, especially in light of urban school contexts. Research is needed that informs thinking and practices in all classrooms -- but especially in these classrooms where a very small amount of literature exists that is "culturally responsible" (Delpit, 1988; Farr, 1991; Gomez, 1990; Grossman, 1995; Krevtovics & Nussel, 1994a, 1994c; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Many students attending urban schools speak different languages and dialects and with different levels of proficiency. Diversity extends to differences in their learning and behavior, as well as to their relationship and communication styles due to their ethnic, socioeconomic, regional, and gender cultures (Grossman, 1995; Heath, 1983; Ogbu, 1987).

Many of the students who populate urban schools are from lower socioeconomic homes, sometimes resulting in cultural and relational constructs that are foreign to teachers who tend to be from middle-class communities where they've also been reared. Haberman (1995) states that there are five forces influencing youngsters growing up in poverty: First, a lack of trust in adults makes them suspicious of adults' motives and actions -- not expecting or seeking safety from adults or the solution to one's problems from adults might be another reasonable response; second, violence is typical of urban life today -- children are surrounded by people around them who are potentially dangerous and life threatening, and it's normal to avoid interacting with them whenever possible; three, there's a perception of "no hope" that characterizes urban life for older children and adults in poverty as it seems useless to expend effort; fourth, the impact of mindless bureaucracies encourages passiveness, responding to what "it" wants rather than responding sensibly and honestly -- it teaches people to reveal as little as possible and
only what is being asked of them; and fifth, there's a culture of authoritarianism -- the
giving and taking of orders becomes a normal way of life -- one's power becomes one's
self-definition (Haberman, 1995).

Many urban students become "at risk" in U.S. schools with constructs that are
designed to meet students' needs from primarily middle-class and mainstreamed cultures
(Gomez, 1990; Krevtovics & Nussel, 1994a, 1994b; Maeroff, 1994; Manning & Baruth,
1995). These students often are brought up in neighborhoods with people of the same
background and as a result come to school with few of the middle-class mainstream
experiences that most traditional U.S. schools expect and require (Grossman, 1995).

**Teacher pedagogy.** Urban school teachers find their situations are quite different
from their suburban and rural colleagues' situations (Ascher, 1991; Grant, 1994;
Krevtovics & Nussel, 1994b; Rumberger, 1994). Many teachers find their educational
and teacher training backgrounds have provided them with ill notions of how to meet the
ever-growing student diversity and classroom complexities that are typical of these
schools (Banks, 1994; Erickson, 1994; Giroux, 1994; Haberman, 1994; Maeroff, 1994;
Neill & Medina, 1994; Rumberger, 1994; Villegas, 1994). At a time when student
demographics are shifting dramatically, the teacher workforce is not (Cruickshank, 1990;
Goodlad, 1990). Goodlad (1990) reports that teaching is an occupation that attracts
women and white candidates, and the current number of preservice teachers in our
colleges do not represent any major demographic shift that might indicate otherwise.

In terms of good teachers, inner-city school districts have the poorest track record
for attracting the best teachers -- they also have the largest number of at-risk students.
According to Hampton (1993), teaching in the inner city is more difficult than teaching in
the suburbs: In some cases, the degree of support from parents and communities are
often not comparable; the pay scale does not match what some suburbs can afford to pay;
and there exists a greater possibility for violence associated with teaching in the inner-
city schools. "Much has been made of students who come to school carrying guns and knives, and while this practice is not restricted solely to inner-city students, the perception, at least, is that it is inner-city kids who must represent the threat of violence" (Hampton, 1993, pp. 208-209).

Another reason that at-risk students do not often have access to the best teachers grows out of inner-city teacher placement policies. "Large urban districts routinely place new teachers and/or less competent teachers with those students most in need of good instruction" (Hampton, 1993, p. 209). This is rooted in several traditions: Rewarding the best teachers with the "best" teaching assignments (honors, gifted and talented classes); placing the weakest teachers in schools located in the poor and minority neighborhoods where parents are not likely to be critical of their performances; and assigning new inexperienced teachers to the toughest schools because the most vacancies exist in these schools even though teachers will have less experience to draw upon (Hampton, 1993).

The result of such placement policies is that teachers who lack teaching experience or who do not feel empowered or challenged to implement a varied repertoire of teaching techniques are faced with working with students who desperately need the best instruction (Hampton, 1993). That at-risk students continue to come to school at all is a wonder, given what schools often offer in the name of education. As a result, many do give up on school completely.

Haberman (1994) contends that urban schools in particular suffer from what he terms the "pedagogy of poverty." This type of teaching is aimed for "control" and often gears students toward discrete skills learning as opposed to encouraging "thinking and doing responses" that well-informed individuals and citizens should hold and practice (Haberman, 1994). This type of teaching often restricts the content to be taught and often repudiates the students and their home lives. This type of teaching does irreparable
damage to students at all ability levels and perpetuates many of the problems within public education (Hampton, 1994).

Haberman (1994) states that good teaching involves the process of "drawing out" rather than "stuffing in" (p. 313). In contrast to the pedagogy of poverty, effective teaching is that which involves students with issues that are of vital concerns to them; involves students with explanations of human differences; involves students in their abilities to explain human differences; involves students in viewing major concepts, big ideas, and general principles and not merely engaging them in the pursuit of isolated facts; involves students in the planning of what they'll be doing; involves students in applying ideals such as fairness, equity, or justice to their world; involves students in real-life experiences and involves students in active learning situations; involves students in heterogeneous groups; involves students by asking them to think about an idea in a way that questions widely-held assumptions and relates new ideas to ones previously learned; and involves students in reflecting on their own lives and how they have come to believe and feel as they do (Haberman, 1994). As opposed to the pedagogy of poverty, effective teaching builds upon the knowledge of students' experiences both in and out of school and demonstrates that good teaching makes valuable linkages between students' lives and their academic work.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"What discoveries I've made in the course of writing stories all begin with the particular, never the general. They are mostly hindsight: arrows that I now find I myself have left behind me, which have shown me some right, or wrong, way I have come" (p. 107).

-- Eudora Welty, from One Writer's Beginnings (1983)

Introduction: Circles and Arrows

During the course of conducting and writing this study, often I felt that I had chased far more "circles" than I had followed "golden arrows." What began as research using case study design evolved midway through data collection into research that incorporates as well narrative inquiry strategies known as life story and life history. Indeed, I discovered that naturalistic inquiry is truly emergent, and the "young poet" in me found herself realizing the advice of Rainer Maria Rilke (1934, 1993) from Letters to a Young Poet that "Everything is gestation and then birthing" (p. 41). With three case studies in mind, my intent from the start was to have several conversations with each of these teachers participating in this study. I liked the sound of case studies in conjunction with "stories" as it matched the intention of this study which was to explore the experiential knowledge of each of these teachers (and to present their voices in context) and to share with them in the creation of knowledge about education. Patton (1990) states that case studies are "rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question" (p. 54). And providing an additional rationale for using case design for this study, I have utilized Bissex' (1990) definition:
A case study I see as a reflective story of the unfolding, over time, of a series of events involving particular individuals. The persons studied are regarded as full human beings, having intentions and making meanings, not merely "behaving." The researcher includes these intentions and meanings in the meaning that she makes of the story and, as interpreter if not also actor, is herself a character in it. (pp. 70-71)

Not only was my intent to present individual cases of the knowledge and constructed insights of these teachers, but my intention from the start was to complete a cross-case analysis as well. My motive here was not to deduce a formula for effective teaching of writing, but rather my purpose was to build abstractions across the three cases that I believed might provide insights into the teaching of writing with a diverse student population and provide insights into the context of urban school teaching. I wanted to determine what Ayers and Schubert (1994) refer to in their studies of teacher lore as the identification of basic "assumptions that were progressive in character" (p. 109). In comparing these teachers' individual differences and similarities, I had hoped to determine not just the interrelations between these teachers in their respective schools but the interrelatedness of their thinking and practices in light of teaching in the contexts of their respective schools and shared school district. According to Merriam (1988), cross-case analysis forces the researcher to see processes and outcomes that occur in each case and to understand how much these are specific to local contextual variables.

Life story and life history strategies that have been used in this study include open-ended interviews with the teachers determining the shape of our conversations; the process of shared life stories, providing a sense of both the professional and personal lives and their relationships to each other and with others; and use of collaborative biography (presentation of life histories) as I've sought to present episodes from their life stories in light of other texts and in the contexts of their school and school district and have sought a sense of collective analysis in making sure their voices are the ones represented. Additionally, because this study validates practitioners' experiential
knowledge, and its contention is to present real teachers' voices in their contexts, the ethnographic interview has been the primary source of data. Additional complementary data included classroom observations, documents, and data derived from personal experience methods.

In deeming this study a "confessional tale" (see Chapter 1), I have admitted the researcher to be the real tool of research. The more I grew to know these teachers, the more I grew to admire them both professionally and personally. And the more I recognized the potential for this tool (me) to be "dull," the more I looked at my data with "resistance" and grew fearful of losing their individualities as I considered what and how to write their respective cases and the cross-case analysis which seemed most times to be too reductionistic. On November 8, 1996, I chronicled my growing "stale air" in my researcher's journal: "My apartment became more organized, and there was less dust.... Ornaments for the holiday more than a month off came out of closet.... I had a noticeably more important need for fresh air and rotated between closing the window to stop a chill and opening it to put in the window fan so that I wouldn't pass out from stale air...."

Finally, about a month later, I broke through my writer's block: "Whenever I couldn't write it, especially after several ill attempts to get started and then maintain momentum, I tried writing about why I couldn't write it. This, became a key...." After those long periods of resistance, suffering in part from what I pronounced "the doldrums," I soon began to live Bonnie Friedman's (1993) definition of the successful writer in her semi-autobiographical Writing Past Dark: Envy, Fear, Distractions, and Other Dilemmas in the Writer's Life: "Successful writers are not the ones who write the best sentences. They are the ones who keep writing" (p. xiii).
Importance of This Study Design

Teachers' Stories

The importance of this work for some readers will lie in the stories of the teachers and of their teaching itself, and for others it will relate to possibilities of study replication. The intent of my research has been to acknowledge the "wisdom of practice" and to present the voices of effective secondary teachers of writing in three cases and then in a cross-case analysis. Schon (1983) in *The Reflective Practitioner*, a set of case studies of professionals reflecting in action, speaks of cases as "exemplars," an exemplar being a situation or experience seen as similar to a subsequent one and being an example of a way of thinking about something that is applicable in another situation. As consumers build a repertoire of exemplars, they become more knowledgable, resourceful, and successful. There is a value for "case studies as exemplars not only for the researcher herself but for others: teachers, teachers in training, and other researchers" (Bissex, 1990, p. 72).

My intent has been to learn more about these teachers' knowledge in light of the contexts in which they teach, but at the same time, I wanted these teachers to experience something valuable in return for their participation. Kantor (1990) states that "educational researchers and theorists need to have a greater awareness of what happens in classrooms and schools (and what it feels like to teach in those situations), while teachers need greater opportunities to read, write, talk, and think about teaching" (p. 61). In providing significance for her case studies of career teachers, Cohen (1991) states that there's a paucity of literature, particularly at the secondary level, that deals with real classrooms and real people. A theorist in the field of English education, Pradl (1988) states that attention to the significance of narrative understanding in "the sharing and testing of stories" is important to our growth as teachers (p. 133).
Experienced teachers in particular have developed an awareness that is in certain ways qualitatively different from, but not inferior to, the knowledge that is held by researchers and theorists (Kantor, 1990). It's this recognition of teachers' practical knowledge that I have strived for in this study. I have attempted to learn about what has shaped these teachers' knowledge and what has influenced their classroom practices. I have attempted as well to learn why and how some career teachers remain enthusiastic and committed to their jobs. In no way have I, or did I intend, to promote a model or formula for effective practice (including the perpetuation of certain personalities and styles as germane to a teacher's effectiveness). But I have sought to determine what some "educational connoisseurs" in this school district believe to be effective teaching and how some classroom teachers determine their effectiveness in working with students.

**Procedures**

The procedures of data collection and analysis reflected the purpose of this study's design which was to validate the experiential knowledge of teachers and to share in the creation of knowledge about education. In the anthropological tradition of immersion in the field, I collected data primarily by interviewing and participant observation. I have valued the act of "collective biography" and made use of utilized collaborative analysis of those biographies in identifying the nature, sources, and manner of their knowledge. In following an ethnographic orientation, I sought to define as a written representation the "culture" of these teachers and have recognized myself as the real tool of research in determining the content and the form of the narratives that comprise these individual cases and the cross-case analysis.

This study involved indepth, ongoing "close to the classroom" interviews and observations that facilitated understanding of the patterns and intentions of the teachers' thinking and practices. Each teacher agreed to participate in collaborative research that would analyze and interpret the data. Each teacher was interviewed on several occasions,
and all agreed from the start that dialogue and collaboration were valuable aspects in this study's design and that combined meaning-making would make the findings richest for those involved and would enhance this study's value. Butt, Raymond, McCue, and Yamagishi (1992) have professed the value of collaborative biography inquiry and analysis in which the teacher practitioner and the researcher combine their observations of patterns and intentions in teachers' thinking and practices: "It permits us to make sense of individual experience, to discover the educational significance of teachers' experiences; and to discover the quality of experience through relation to previous and later experiences" (pp. 50-60), and

The collaborative interpretation of these teachers' autobiographies identifies the nature, sources and manner of evolution of the special kind of thinking, action and knowledge that pertains to their teaching. A brief comparative analysis is included to reveal similarities and differences and illustrate themes that might characterize many other teachers' lives. (p. 51)

From the start I held the assumption that these teachers already were involved in the articulation of their thinking and practices in some form or another. Berliner (1988) has contended that expert teachers operate on an intuitive or automatic level and have difficulty explaining or defining their own and others exemplary practices that they observe. However, as a former secondary teacher, I believed this might be true for some but not for all. From the start of this study, I held the belief that the value of these case studies resided in these teachers' abilities to articulate their knowledge and experiences. It had been my belief that these teachers were more than likely the intuitive practitioners referred to by Berliner (1988) but were also teachers who were highly reflective and articulate of their own and others' practices. I assumed as well that these teachers were involved already in this articulation not only with the self but with others in the profession: My findings held my assumptions to be true. Additionally, all of the teachers stated in the final interview that my presence with them as both researcher and colleague encouraged their articulation, and all of the teachers stated that the reason they agreed to
take part in this study was because they knew that the articulation of their practices would benefit them further in their classroom teaching. Hence, like Ladson-Billings (1994), I contend that "in the presence of other experts, teachers are capable of explaining and defining the exemplary practices that they observe" (p. 146).

My approach throughout this study has been to ask what can be learned from these teachers that depicts the culture of their personal and professional lives and how these affect their world views and classroom pedagogy. I have not made comparisons between these three teachers and other teachers considered less effective nor have I made comparisons with other teachers who are nonwhite (two of the teachers in this study are white women and the one male is of European and Latino descent). I do believe that both preservice and inservice teachers and teacher educators could learn greatly from both negative as well as positive cases and that nonwhite world views are of utmost importance and should be a part of teacher training and that the professional literature should be filled with such exemplars. However, this study's intent has been to look at a sample of the teachers currently in the classrooms. The majority of teachers currently aprising the English language arts tend to be typically white and female and from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and training. In looking at this study's sample of teachers perceived effective, I wanted to learn how they view themselves as teachers and how they view their students, their schools, and the communities in which they teach. In light of this, when contrasted with, for example, the studies of nonwhite teachers by Foster (1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1993a, 1993b) and Ladson-Billings (1994), perhaps further enlightenment can be found in the findings of this study. Thus, I have presented the findings of other researchers (see Chapter 2 "The Science and Art of Teaching") who have studied successful teachers of diverse student populations and teachers who are known to practice what has been referred to as culturally-relevant teaching (Elbaz, 1991;
My role in this study was to represent these teachers' experiences as accurately as possible while realizing that no inquiry is without initial values, beliefs, conceptions, and driving assumptions regarding the matter under investigation (Fine & Weis, 1996; Greene, 1994; Richardson, 1990; Sirotnik, 1991). Not only have I attempted to practice a self-analytical stance, but as I mentioned previously, I've engaged the teachers who participated in the analysis of my findings in their respective cases and in my cross-case analysis and asked them to view critically their understandings of themselves and their collective whole in light of their cultural circumstances and any potential obstructions.

Teacher Selection

In selecting teachers for this study, I relied on the notion of the "educational connoisseurship" (Eisner, 1985a, 1985b) of my informants (see Chapter 1 "Definitions") and borrowed somewhat from Foster's (1993) use of the concept "community nomination" in "triangulating" my nominees. When Foster (1993) identified the effective teachers for her case studies, she began with parents of the children in the school district that was her field site and then "triangulated" their nominations in selecting her participants. Whereas I believe that community nomination in the sense of Foster's study provided rich results for determining her sample, my time constraints and my "etic" involvement with the school district (at most as a graduate student who had supervised student teachers in a few of its schools) did not lend me the familiarity with the students and their parents. Instead, I made my informants (all employees of the Columbus Public School District) a key aspect of my findings (their perceptions of effective writing teachers) and used a form of triangulation of their nominations when possible in choosing participants who had been nominated more than once.
All five of my informants have considerable experience in educational situations as classroom English teachers, part-time college faculty, and professional development staff for the school district that is my field site. I knew all of my informants with varying levels of familiarity. When approaching my informants (all certified English teachers all with more than 15 years in the district and some with almost 30 years), I asked if they could provide me with names of teachers who were known to be effective at writing instruction and its assessment. I made no attempt to define "effective" other than to say these teachers should be among the best that they knew, and these were the teachers who were able to encourage students to produce "good works" (see Chapter 1 "Definitions"). I did not ask any of my informants for specific quotas pertaining to gender or race but left it up to them to provide me with names; and none asked about this -- whether or not I desired a "balance" in my sample. One thing I found curious was that none of my five informants asked me to define further what I meant by "effective" and believed that it would be interesting to determine their definitions of an effective writing teacher in interviewing them. As a result I held 30 to 60 minute interviews with each of my informants. I found their elaborations regarding "effective teaching of writing" and "knowledge of their nominees' effectiveness" to be another interesting aspect of this study's findings, especially when triangulated with the conversations of the three teacher participants. It meant as well additional insights for providing interesting implications for the school district.

In choosing the teachers to participate in this study, I strove for a maximum-variation sample. Interestingly enough, all five of my informants (white themselves -- four females and one male) nominated a group of teachers who happened to be white and typically female (only two male teachers had been nominated). I later asked all five informants why they nominated a group of this gender and racial make-up: In effect, they all replied that this is the overwhelming majority of the English teacher population
in this district. Only one of my five informants (a female) gave me the name of male teachers (and then only two names): One of those male teachers had retired as of that year and the other I chose to contact fortunately agreed to participate.

As part of my maximum variation sample, I chose to contact teachers based on the nature of their schools. In the beginning I began with names of teachers from two alternative schools and two "traditional" schools and from one middle school. In contacting these teachers, I was unaware of the number of years experience they had as teachers and was unaware of their teaching experiences, if any, outside of their current urban school district. To my surprise and good fortune, all five agreed to participate without any cajoling on my part; and their full-time years of teaching experience ranged respectively from four years to 28 years in the classroom. Four of these teachers were white females of European descent and one was a male of both European and Latino descent. I completed preliminary interviews with all five. As I completed these, I began to note some redundancy in my findings and decided to focus on three cases. I omitted the fourth and fifth teachers by viewing their years of experience and current teaching assignments in light of the other three teachers'. One of these teachers omitted had only four years of experience, and the other currently was teaching only one English class and the rest history. Though I interviewed and collected some data from these two teachers, I decided to focus on rich descriptions and information about the other three who had either more years of teaching experience or were teaching English courses full days.

A form of cross-checking my nominations took place in that three of my five informants (who did not have any relationship with each other prior to this study other than familiarity by name) gave me names of teachers that the others gave. As a result some teachers in this study were nominated by more than one informant. The teachers with the fewest amount of years experience were not cross-referenced in this manner, in part I believe because of just that. Originally, I contacted seven teachers before reaching
my initial sample size of five: Two declined because of new job circumstances and
changing responsibilities that had begun at the start of that school year. One had taken
the position of a Chapter I guidance counselor so was no longer teaching English, so she
became a fourth informant and recommended the teacher I eventually contacted at that
same middle school. The other teacher who declined had taken on new responsibilities as
the creative writing teacher and faculty adviser of her school's acclaimed literary
magazine, a legacy left over by the male who was originally nominated for my study but
who had retired just as of that year. She declined based on this, but she nominated
another teacher (in the process becoming my fifth informant) based on that teacher's
reputation as a poet engaged in writing pursuits outside of teaching.

Data Collection

Time Frame

Data collection began January of 1996 when initial contact was made with all five
teachers and ended in September of 1996 when I conducted final interviews in which the
questions that I asked were formulated from their answers to the previous four (formal)
interviews and were questions that I had in light of my initial "categories and themes"
findings. Four of the five (formal) interviews with the teachers were conducted at
varying points from February through May; while interviews with their students followed
the same time frame; interviews with four of my five informants took place in May and
an interview with a fifth informant took place in September. Observations of the teachers
in their classrooms were made beginning in February and ending as well in May.
Document collection was ongoing throughout and was for the most part at the initiation
of the teachers in order to enhance my understanding of their thinking and practices.
Personal experience methods were used twice -- both at the end of my data collection (the
months of May and September) and were used to confirm what I perceived to be existing
themes in their thinking.
Interviews

Teachers. Each teacher agreed at the start of this study to participate in several ethnographic interviews over a five to six-month period of time. Several indepth interviews were conducted that lasted anywhere from one to two hours. In securing their participation, I had all the teachers in this study (including the students and informants) sign written consent forms that articulated the purpose of this study and its design, including a timeline for its data collection and analysis; written as part of the consent form, I included a provision for deciding to stop participation at any point during the course of this study without any resulting repercussions in terms of lost respect or other implications for the participants.

My intention to conduct indepth interviews was to allow time for building relationships and to allow time for understanding the details of their experiences from their point of view. In the course of indepth interviews, I developed a growing respect for these teachers and believed these interviews helped me to relish the understanding that I gained from them and allowed me to take pleasure in sharing their stories. Seidman (1991) states that indepth interviewing allows the researcher to "see how their individual experience interacts with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work, and we can discover the interconnections among people who live and work in a shared context" (p. 103).

In addition to the indepth (formal) interviews, informal interviews took place that consisted of spontaneous conversations or comments before, between or after classes, or during telephone conversations in the evenings or on weekends; information gathered in this way was recorded in my field log within 24 hours. Five indepth interviews with each teacher were conducted: Although I devised tentative interview protocols (see Appendixes A, B, C, D, and E), my intention was simply to have several good conversations with each teacher (and their students and my informants). My initial
interview (see Appendix A) consisted of questions that allowed me to gather some biographical data, including the number of years having taught, current work assignment, and previous experiences as a teacher or in other occupations, and so forth. From these initial interviews, I determined a tentative interview protocol for Interview Two, and this process of protocol development continued to Interview Five which was the follow-up interview.

All formal interview protocols were considered merely framing, and I hoped to let each teacher determine in their interpretation of my questions the "theme," or the direction, in which to progress. I did my best to follow what Seidman (1991) cautions against -- for researchers "to avoid imposing their own interests on the experience of the participants" (p. 70). I believed this consideration of my protocols' limitations to be a valuable part of my study design as one intent of this study was to reveal idiosyncrasies of each individual teacher and not to perpetuate a potential myth for a "one size fits all" mentality of effective teaching. Each teacher was asked and answered questions from interview protocols that were organized as follows: Interview One -- Biographical Information; Interview Two -- Knowledge of English and Conceptions of Teaching and Assessing Writing; Interview Three -- Perceptions of the Nature of Urban Schooling and Their School; Interview Four -- Classroom Experiences and Miscellaneous Personal Data; and Interview Five -- Follow-Up Questions (see Appendixes A, B, C, D, and E).

Some teachers spoke extensively about their backgrounds and their own early schooling experiences, while others talked more about contemporary concerns. Additional questions to those framing questions listed on the interview protocols were asked and were dependent upon the nature of previous conversations I had with that teacher and were dependent upon that teacher's responses at that moment. In conducting these interviews, I tried to ask questions that answered "How does that look in practice?"
and additional clarifying questions that answered "Why do you do that?" I also asked at varying points for the participants to share stories (anecdotes) about what they were discussing in order to convey their experience as concretely as they could.

Each formal interview was audiotaped and later transcribed. The teachers were given copies of their respective transcribed interviews and were asked to check for errors in either fact or intent. None of these teachers pointed to such errors, hence, the transcripts were analyzed in original form. The interviews were hand-coded: I searched for characteristics, perceptions, and themes relating to pedagogy and context. Through this coding process, I was able to arrive at teaching characteristics for each individual teacher and later in a cross-case analysis an abstraction of teaching characteristics that were common to all three teachers. During the course of my conversations with these teachers, I did not refer to my intent to determine patterns and themes relating to pedagogy and context and did not use terms such as "culturally relevant" or "contextually relevant"; I also did not share with them the "tentative" nature of my interview designs. My reason for not revealing these aspects was my fear of influencing their behavior and the content of our conversations. Rather, I shared with them the idea that I was interested in learning more about their experiential knowledge and what has shaped it and how they've constructed their insights into their classroom practices, and I shared with them from the start the unifying structures of these interviews (that is, Biographical Information; Knowledge of English and Conceptions of Teaching and Assessing Writing, and so forth). For the same reason, I did not give them coded interview transcripts, and I shared my initial findings with them only after all interviews and observations were completed.

**Students and Informants.** Interviews with students and informants were designed to garner information about the nature of these teachers, both directly and indirectly, by
asking students and informants to reflect on such direct questions as "What is good writing?"; "What makes a good writing teacher?"; "What are your experiences as a writer?"; and "What are your experiences with this particular teacher?"

Audiotaped interviews with the informants were transcribed and then analyzed in terms of viewing categories and themes in their thinking in light of my findings from my coded interview transcripts with the teachers. I completed as well a collective analysis of the informants' thinking and used these in consideration of my findings in the cross-case analysis. I need to note here as well that taped interviews with the students were not transcribed: Unfortunately, several of the tapes had "flaws" (poor audio pickup at scattered points on some of the tapes from the same package, leading me to suspect the quality of the tapes themselves and not researcher error) that weren't detectable until rewinding and attempts were made to transcribe the entire tapes. At that point it was evident that poor quality precluded transcription of several tapes, and my attempts to enhance the volume on these tapes only distorted the audio quality further. However, in light of these student interviews, I analyzed the interviews of both teachers and informants. At some point in time, I hope to locate a source for "remixing" the audio quality of those tapes found deficient and will incorporate this data at a later date in light of my other findings.

I interviewed (on individual bases) three students of each teacher at varying points throughout my data collection: Interviews were scheduled during the students' study halls or lunch periods and lasted about 30 minutes. I asked the teachers to identify "highly skilled, average, and basic or poorer" writers that I could interview and gave the teachers letters for the students and their parents or guardians explaining the nature of this study and my reasons for wanting to talk to these teachers' students; a consent form for the parents' or guardians' signatures was attached. I strived for a maximum variation sample as I thought these students' answers might provide the richest data in terms of
these teachers' instructional and assessment practices and in terms of the climate of the "writing class." I was careful to develop an initial rapport with each of the students by explaining to them that I was studying the practices of their teachers in terms of writing instruction and assessment and that I valued their insights in helping me understand these better. I started the interviews by asking them "less personal" questions such as "Describe your school." and "What is your favorite subject?" As the interviews progressed, I asked each student questions about their feelings toward writing and how they viewed themselves as writers and how others might view them. As with the teacher interviews, I strived for "How does that look?" and "Why do you think this way?" (see Appendix F).

Interviews with my five informants lasting between 30 to 60 minutes were scheduled at the end of my data collection in the month of May and a final informant interview in September after classes had begun for the following school year; consent forms were distributed to them as well. I decided to interview the informants after I had completed the bulk of my data collection and had completed some initial analysis in which I had identified categories and themes. I believed the informants' answers to my interview questions would provide an interesting form of data triangulation, helping me to confirm or shed new light on the data collected from interviews with and observations of the teachers. With the informants I was interested especially in garnering their definitions of "effective writing teacher" and wanted to know the specifics of why they had nominated these particular teachers (see Appendix G). All five informants were every bit as ready with their answers and were just as articulate as the teachers selected for this study. I found all five to be highly reflective and thoughtful in their considerations, and they equally were interested in knowing more about my initial findings in my data analysis. I believed they valued their participation as did I, and I planned to share with them the conclusions of this study.
Observations and Field Log

Classroom observations took place from February 1996 to May 1996. The teachers and I attempted to create a schedule for my visits that would provide me with a variety of observational experiences that included both morning and afternoon classes and on days in which writing activities were highlighted. I asked the teachers if I could observe their writing instruction on at least three occasions and then caught other days (snippets) as well as other types of instruction (discussions, readings of texts, viewing of films). Sometimes events anticipated didn't happen (as in the case of one visit to Charlie's classroom: I missed the "writing seminar" but caught students doing performances -- skits they'd written and were performing).

My observations lasted from 60 minutes to two hours, dependent upon the length of the teachers' classes. I tried to schedule visits for both morning and afternoons when possible. This schedule allowed me to visit each teacher's classrooms on a minimum of five occasions from February to May. When possible, classroom observations were followed by on-site conferences or interviews with the teachers. In a few instances, post-observation conferences took place on the telephone on the evening of the observation. I functioned as a participant-observer in the classroom when possible. I was allowed to speak to students on one-to-one bases and with small groups of students engaged in classroom activities. On some occasions I functioned as a student group member. I found this enabled my presence to be far less distracting than if I had been an onlooker only. I believed as well it helped my presence to be less of a distraction from the regular routine and activities.

I chronicled my observations in my field log that I wrote during my classroom visits with additions (further elaborations and reflections) made immediately afterward. In my field log, I took notes as I observed phenomena; drew diagrams of the classrooms and the teacher to student interactions and student to teacher interactions; drew placement
of desks and bodies; and noted artifacts on shelves and on walls. I noted relationships; instructional methods and assessment methods; resources used by the teacher; feedback given to the teacher; nonverbal as well as verbal communication; issues of classroom management and use of time; and I noted the nature of the kids -- how they interacted with each other and with me in the room and in the hallways. I described the school outside and inside; the social climate in the halls; and my meeting with some of the building principals. I also wrote reminders to myself for the next interviews (questions to ask, including follow-up questions) and recorded anecdotes -- dialogue between teacher and students, teacher and other teachers, between me and the teacher; and my end of the day impressions of this teacher/classroom/school/district.

Additionally, in analyzing my data, I recorded in my log patterns in the teachers' reflections and behaviors and recurring themes in my respective interviews with them; I recorded as well my personal as well as professional reactions as both a student and colleague of these teachers, reactions on meeting their students, and reactions from interviewing their informants. Finally, I wrote cross-case notes regarding the similarities and differences between these teachers and their schools, including their students and the schools' faculty.

Documents

At the start of my fieldwork, I asked all teachers for documents that might give me a feel for their schools -- documents such as school philosophy or mission statements, statement of school reforms in progress, bell schedules, course offerings, and school newspapers. I asked them to share lesson plans or handouts only if they thought they would provide me with additional insights in understanding their pedagogy, and when observing in their classrooms, I made a point to observe what and how any handouts or other resources were used in classroom activities. In a couple of cases, teachers provided
me with materials that they had published or had written for courses taken. They also provided me with copies of grants they'd helped to write for their schools.

**Personal Experience Methods**

In defining personal experience methods for the purpose of this study, I borrow loosely from Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) notion of the "creating of field texts": "They are texts created by participants..." and are a method for having "participants construct annals of their lives or parts of their lives" (pp. 419-420). According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994), just about anything that provokes a personal life story construction can be placed under the umbrella of "personal experience methods," but the "fact that it is a participant's experience and not a researcher's interpretation or reconstruction of it" makes a difference in its meaning (p. 413).

The aim of this study was to learn about the experiential knowledge of these teachers and to share with the readers their stories told in the sound of their voices as much as possible. All people live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones; they educate the self and others, including the researcher who is new to their community. In using personal experience methods to invoke these stories, I relied on the notion of the "oral history" and the construction of "thematic webs." In obtaining oral histories of these teachers, I put together (interview protocols) a structured set of questions in which the intentions of this research could be met, yet I also allowed for a loose interpretation of all interview protocols and deviations from them, encouraging the teachers to determine the shape of our conversations and what they wanted to focus on in particular. This process has been referred to as shifting attention "from information gathering where the focus is on the right questions, to interaction, where the focus is on the process" (Anderson & Jack, 1991, cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 419). In keeping with the conceptions of other studies of teacher
knowledge, I have shared the belief that to understand the whole person it is necessary to understand the whole life and sought in my conversations (interviews) with these teachers to understand relationships between their personal and professional lives.

Some researchers have contended that journals are a powerful way to garner accounts of individuals' experiences, however, I did not require these teachers to keep journals: For one reason, they didn't have the time nor did they want to make the time (I even hypothetically posed this during our first meetings). I also didn't want to pour through them, knowing that many of the entries may have been constructed in hindsight or in haste reducing the value of the shared insights. I was concerned as well that the teachers might opt to write "what I wanted to hear." Whereas they could be revealing or confirming, they also could be created and artificial and dashed off (I used observations and several conversations over a period of time instead). However, as I mentioned previously, some of the teachers had written some things and offered them as potential insights into their thinking and practices, so I took these when offered. Hence, I was concerned more with "oral history" in which I would rely on other processes.

In addition to asking questions that pertained to both personal and professional experiences, I involved the teachers in an "exercise" of intertextuality in which I asked them to "see themselves" in literature (see Appendix E). The purpose of these questions was to see a bit of how they saw themselves and to determine the potential for what they value. I asked this of them during our fourth interview in May, so I believed I had a good feel for their personalities and teaching styles at that time. None hesitated (it seemed they'd been "here" before -- but then they all are very reflective and are literary-oriented people). I was given a variety of responses from a character in Sam Shepherd's Pulitzer Prize winning play Buried Child to Shug Avery in Alice Walker's The Color Purple to the narrator in one of Anne Sexton's poems. Additionally, during the course of the fourth
interviews, I asked the teachers to talk about their hobbies, favorite colors, times of the year, and recent books they'd read in order to get the same impression.

Another personal experience method that I used was the "thematic web," a sort of diagram or outline of constructed experiences and a teaching method common to most teachers in which the goal is to draw connections from one idea or experience to the next. I had the teachers construct a thematic web of their thinking in September during our final interview. I asked them to sketch for me a "who I am" and "what I value" writing teacher portrait. This came right after the start of another school year (our previous interviews were in May), so I was able to contrast this with their words and actions at the end of the previous school year. I believe what made this appropriate is that all of three of these teachers are metaphorical or visual artists by nature, so this wasn't and didn't appear to be an awkward experience. Again, none hesitated. All constructed their webs within five to 10 minutes (pen was to paper immediately); it seemed that they had done this before. I then asked the teachers to explain their webs. I found these to be validating of the themes that I had noted in their individual thinking and actions, and I believe it was a very valuable exercise as a result (see Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3).

Data Analysis

Thick Descriptions

An initial step that I took in the analysis of my data was what Patton (1990) refers to as "descriptive analysis" in which I sought to revisit the contexts that I observed. I embarked on this process before, during and after coding all interview transcripts. In this process I returned to my field notes and to the documents that I collected during the course of this study, and I returned repeatedly to my research questions. In doing this I wanted to reestablish my purpose for the focusing of my data, and I wanted to recreate in my mind (eventually to be put on paper) the frameworks in which I collected the data.
Following the process of coding my data, I began to think in terms of describing the contexts in which the data were collected. In doing so I strived in my writing for what Denzin (1989) refers to as "thick description" in order to clarify the contexts of the data:

A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick descriptions, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 83)

I strived for the presentation of a description of each of these teachers' contexts -- their classrooms and their schools. This facilitated the grounding of my thinking of their knowledge and constructed insights in light of these contexts. As I coded the transcripts, I visualized the contexts (the days and times) in which we talked, and I remembered questions that were asked as a result of various incidents that I observed in their classrooms. Additionally, I was able to consider formats and content emphases for writing the teachers' individual cases and the cross-case analysis. Patton (1990) states that description is balanced by analysis and interpretation -- that endless description becomes its own muddle. "The purpose of analysis is to organize the description so that it is manageable. Description is balanced by analysis and leads into interpretation. An interesting and readable report provides sufficient description to allow the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation, and sufficient interpretation to allow the reader to understand the description" (Patton, 1990, p. 430).

Characteristics and Themes

Teacher transcripts. My primary data source had been indepth interviews -- a total of five transcribed tape recorded interviews with each of the teachers. After conducting an initial descriptive analysis of my field notes and documents, I started the process of coding my transcripts. My interviews already were categorized according to the nature of the questions on the interview protocol: For example, Interview One (see
Appendix A) consisted of teacher biographical data, including family background, educational background, and work experiences. I started by looking for characteristics of each of these teachers as writing teachers and by writing brief profiles of each teacher in which I sought to depict "idiosyncrasies," representative of their personalities and teaching styles (and that included their biographical details). I noticed as well their perceptions of their contexts, including their students, colleagues, schools and district, and their perceptions of their own effectiveness. Eventually, I began to note themes in their knowledge and constructed insights in each of their respective cases.

While determining each individual case, I also began noticing that although different in personality and teaching styles these teachers worked in similar ways and shared many attitudes and principles. Hence, my cross-case analysis had begun. I compiled characteristics of them as teachers of writing (see Table 4.8) and shared perceptions of their contexts (see Table 4.9) and perceptions of obstacles to their effectiveness (see Table 4.10). I then began to consider themes in their thinking (see Table 4.1). I was careful not to lock into themes early but kept them tentative. I noted patterns (pointing to themes in their thinking) that seemed promising early in the process and died out at times, while other patterns seemed to return repeatedly, connecting to the same theme. During the process of reading and marking the transcripts, I also labeled passages that were interesting and that exemplified those themes in that particular teacher's thinking. I decided to present these excerpts from the interviews in order to let their data "do the talking." In writing their individual cases, I decided to organize them according to each teacher's idiosyncrasies. In this "idiosyncratic organization," the headings used in writing each teacher's case can be considered as representative of those idiosyncrasies that are representative of them respectively, and the text that follows these headings is an elaboration of these.
Informant transcripts. Following the coding (of characteristics and themes) in the transcripts of all teacher interviews, I began the same process with the transcripts from my interviews with the informants. In reading the informants' transcripts, I was looking primarily for their definition of "effective writing teacher" and was looking for validation of the characteristics and themes in the thinking of each teacher that I already had determined based on my coding of the teachers' transcripts. The informants' transcripts assisted me in developing further insights about these respective teachers, and I used them as a confirmation of my findings in terms of these teachers' thinking and practices.

Questions Asked

After coding all transcripts and reviewing once again the findings in my individual analyses of each teacher's case and in viewing the abstractions that I pulled from my cross-case analysis, I asked myself these questions suggested by Seidman (1991) as the last stage of interpretation and analysis: "In the course of interviewing these teachers, what has this experience meant to me? What was the experience like? How did I understand it, make sense of it, and see connections in it?" (I found these questions to be an interesting parallel to the question that I asked all five teachers in the course of my final interview with them: "Why did you agree to take part in this study?") In my ponderance of answers to these, I wrangled further with my understanding of my overall findings (both individual cases and the cross-case analysis) and eventually determined some possibilities for presenting this data in narrative form.

Writing Narratives

I discovered quickly that indepth interviewing generates an enormous amount of data just as transcribing takes a massive amount of time. I was overwhelmed by some transcripts that were 60 pages or more in length. I followed Miles and Huberman's (1984) advice in reducing data to the bare bones of what was most important and of most interest for the purpose of this study. But in the process of my data analysis, I embarked
on data reduction by seeking first a descriptive analysis of both contexts and purposes for
my research. This aided in my marking the passages in the transcripts that were most
interesting and were germaine to the purpose of this study.

Several times I lost confidence in my ability to reduce my data: More than often,
I felt my whole process just too reductionistic and thus unauthentic in its resonating of
the teachers' voices. Marshall (1985) describes this as the dark side of this process in
which you wonder if you are contriving it all, and you feel considerable doubt about what
you're doing. Miles and Humberman (1984) caution that is is the bane of those who
analyze qualitative data. Eventually I began to learn to live with my doubts [Friedman
(1993) calls this the writer's ability to "risk appearing ugly" (p. 127)], finding myself
working through them as I began to write profiles of each teacher and then began writing
their individual cases (the act of writing truly became "therapeutic" for me in this sense).

As much as possible, I tried to let the data embedded in the research topic arise
without too much "researcher voice" purported on its meaning. My goal was to present
narratives that gave some essence of my interactions with these teachers. Truly, writing
was my epistemological tool: Throughout the writing of the individual cases and the
cross-case analysis, I was cognizant of my effects on the shape of the narratives (and
inclusions of the teachers' voices) that I was writing -- in particular, their limitedness. I
continued to listen to Rilke (1934, 1993) in terms of using my doubt as a form of
reflexive action: "And your doubt can become a good quality if you train it. It must
become knowing, it must become criticism" (p. 109).

Collaborative Analysis

The final step in the analysis of the data consisted of collaborative analysis. After
my analysis of all transcripts -- including my drafting of each teacher's case and of the
cross-case analysis -- I met with each individual teacher to share my findings. The
teachers had received previously sets of their five transcribed interviews: They also had
received the portion of this study that included the case study written exclusively about them and had received a draft of the cross-case analysis. With these we discussed the nature and integrity of my findings in a form of collaborative analysis. All five of these teachers supported the idea of the research collective in which their expertise would define their practice and in which they would interpret and analyze with me my reporting of their case study and my reporting of the cross-case analysis of all five of them.

We talked about my findings (themes) regarding their thinking and practices, and we talked about the cross-case analysis in which I pulled abstractions from the five of them into a collective whole. We discussed theoretical and philosophical beliefs about teaching English (writing in particular), their students, their curriculum, and their schools and school district. We talked about how "consideration of cultures" was paramount in their success. We also discussed the "politics" of education and how their self-imposed reflecting contributed to their classroom practices. Additionally, I referred them back to the thematic webs that I asked them to create during the course of our final interviews, and we talked about these in relation to my findings. During this meeting I asked the teachers to confirm or disconfirm my perceived themes in their thinking, and I asked them for further insights that might contribute to my understanding their thinking and practices. This collaborative analysis, then, determined the basis for the final presentation of this study's findings and implications.

**Self-Critique**

**Validity**

Issues of validity have been addressed in the following ways: Prolonged engagement in the field (including a five-interview structure); triangulation of data; and use of member checks (collaborative analysis). At the inception of this study, I planned to be collecting data for the course of two grading points or spread over the course of five to six months. I began collecting data in January of 1996 and ended with final
observations in May of 1996 and then final interviews were conducted in September of 1996 (and these followed my transcription of interview tapes one through four and some initial coding of these). Seidman (1991) states that validity in terms of participants' comments can be addressed by conducting multiple interviews that are spread out over the course of time which can help to account for idiosyncratic days and to check for the internal consistency of what they say. Additionally, by interviewing a number of participants, it is possible to connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others: The goal of this process is to understand how participants understand and make sense of their experiences (Seidman, 1991).

In triangulating my data, I collected primary data from interviews with the teachers, interviewed their students, and interviewed the informants of this study. Hence, teacher interviews were triangulated with student (but not transcribed or coded) and informant (transcribed and coded) interviews. I also collected data (recorded in field notes) from observations of teachers in their classrooms; from various documents; and from a personal experience I deemed thematic webs of their thinking. All these data were then cross-referenced with the interview data and contributed to discovery of patterns that lead to determining themes in these teachers' thinking.

Since this study was based on a sense of collaborative biography, member checks in the form of collaborative analysis was used in which the teachers reviewed my findings of their respective cases and then the abstractions I compiled in the cross-case analysis; they were asked to confirm or disconfirm my thinking and to add to my findings or make suggestions for deletions. In this sense, we shared in the creation of knowledge about education, and these teachers were involved in the verification of the narratives that I had constructed from our conversations, something that aided as well in building trust between participants and researcher.
Reflexivity and Trust

I attempted to practice reflexivity throughout the course of conducting and presenting this study. Not only did I adopt a critical stance of myself as the tool of research, but also I've looked critically at the way I selected participants for this study and at the way I defined "effective teacher of writing." Throughout this study's duration, I kept a researcher's journal in which I wrangled with such issues and with other methodological and analytical concerns; I found this process especially to be freeing in terms of my writing as I've noted previously in this chapter that I discovered that "my writing soon began to generate my writing." Another form of reflexivity came from my participation in a "peer group" (consisting of four members until last May of 1996 and since then three) that has been meeting to discuss issues of research since the fall of 1995: This group has functioned as both a "debrief" and an "ethics check" from field work and data analysis and in terms of our viewing our theoretical orientations as social science researchers. Issues discussed in the context of our group are intended to remain confidential not to be shared outside our group.

As far as encouraging the participants' trust for my researcher role, I had been concerned with both reciprocity (see Chapter 1) and my theoretical stance (see both Chapter 1 "Theoretical Underpinnings" and Chapter 3 "Limitations") as displayed by my behavior during my interviews and observations of these teachers. At the start of my fieldwork, I stressed to these teachers that I planned to spend some time with them (five interviews) and in their classrooms (a stated minimum of three observations although more were conducted) on various occasions throughout a five to six-month period. I also explained to them the importance and my value of their experiential knowledge and emphasized that this study was designed to acknowledge their expertise and that I sought their knowledge as well in the interpretation of the data. Hence, the findings of this study
are not derived solely from the researcher's perspective but are the result of a collaborative analysis.

**Limitations of This Study Design**

**Secondhand Stories, Missing Voices**

A limitation of this study is that there's a story teller who is telling stories secondhand. Measor and Sikes (1992) have stated that it's the intimacy which raises some of the sharpest ethical questions in recreated biography: "The life history 'taker' is bound to 'observe and record things potentially damaging to individuals'..." (p. 210). My fear has been whether or not I present with richness the stories of these teachers. My resistance to my role as researcher became stronger the more I grew to know and respect these three teachers, and my only hope is that this admiration for their professionalism and commitments to their students' learning has been evident. Huberman (1995) states that "Working with life histories brings home sharply the intrinsic dilemma of doing social science research. The source material, an account of people's lives, is so multifold yet at the same time unique that we seem to corrupt it from the moment we lay our descriptive or analytic hands on it" (p. 157). In my "corruption" I can only hope that no damage has been done, for I've strived to respect the authenticity and integrity of the narrators' discourse -- to view the speakers as subjects creating their own life histories rather than as objects of research. In this way, I hope that the voice of the teacher has been given equal stakes with that of the researcher: I hope that as much possible, the interpretation has been relinquished to the subjects themselves, while the researcher has concentrated on discovering patterns of priorities and themes in the narrative texts.

Additionally, in telling stories secondhand and in telling the stories of only some, I realize that some voices may be missing -- voices that might have made the findings of this research much richer. Some of those voices that I'm thinking of here are the voices of these teachers' students. As I mentioned earlier, interviews with three students of each
teacher were conducted and were audiotaped; however, they have not been included in this write-up. Ayers and Schubert (1994) state that what students can tell us about teaching and teachers, about curriculum and the purposes of schooling, about the place of school in their larger life patterns, will yield potentially rich results. However, at this time, I'll leave this idea for pondering in Chapter 5 in my suggestions for further research.

The Sample and the Tool

My concern and admittance from the onset of this study has been the "narrow perspectives" that are being relayed to the readers. As I conducted this study, I have been concerned and critical of my own stance as both teacher and researcher and of the perspectives of the teachers in my study. We are four white teachers, all of European ancestry of some sort or another, with the exception of the only male in this study who is also of Latino descent. We have all been acculturalized in primarily European perspectives and have been influenced as a result by the values of a largely white middle-class society. The school district in which these teachers are employed, however, consists primarily of a nonwhite population and of a white population with roots in Appalachia, consisting of students who are primarily economically poor with families that migrate to and from the city at various points throughout the school year and migrate within the school district itself with residences changing frequently accompanied by changes in school attendance and location.

It has been my intention to view the constructs of this study (including me, the tool) and the results of its analysis in a critical light, and I need to point out as well that these teachers maintain this same questioning and "critical pedagogy" themselves. I believe that to be a very valuable aspect of my findings, and I believe this continual questioning of the self and its effects on others lends to their successes as teachers -- in developing their relationships with their students and in modeling their critical inquiry in terms of their classroom instruction. It is here that I am reminiscent of a "talking to" that
I was given last fall by a fellow doctoral student in my same college who evidently had been "itching" to share a few things with me. She and I have spoken during several occasions in the time we've known each other as full-time graduate students, and during one of those conversations, I was asked about my dissertation topic and shared that it was case studies of English teachers. Although I hadn't discussed the design or the purpose of this study or even my theoretical orientations with her (or with anyone outside of my dissertation committee and peer group), I believe she had held several assumptions about my topic (the nature of my work and me, the researcher) for some time and had felt inclined to share these with me on that particular day. I would venture to say that she was upset by the fact that I was doing "such" case studies. She said that she disapproved of what I was doing and said there was little significance to be gained from my efforts but rather I was perpetuating a "status quo mentality." I listened and did not speak, for I had decided a long time ago that some people, though willing to hear, are not willing to listen. That same night I confessed to my journal, irritated by her assumptions but bothered more by my silence. Once again, I caution the readers to beware of the writer's frame:

She has preached to me often about *who I am*....
She says my research isn't valid, because I'm a white woman looking at white teachers and that I see only what *I know what I want* to see in these classrooms. She says, "Besides, 'urban' really means 'nonwhite.' "
She says *she would see* things differently and probably wouldn't see "them" as being "effective" with "these types of kids."
But, she hasn't experienced these teachers and students in my study, so how can she really know what possibly could be?
*But*, she says, *she believes she knows* without really having to see. I don't know many people who like to be preached at....
But, as usual, I say nothing, and yes, I realize, *this* is something....

— from *A Researcher's Journal*, "11/1/96: Frames of Mine"

**Context of Research**

**This Urban School District**

In gathering some demographic information for this school district, I spoke with a woman at the district's call-in service provided to the city's community that renders any
information from school closings to bus routes to questions regarding open enrollment to questions from inquiring doctoral students like me who want some historical information for their studies. I was told at this time that this city is considered one of the top 60 largest school districts in the nation (the woman didn't know where the district resided in this number -- whether it was in the top quarter or top half and so on). Looking at the city map, this city is comprised of over one-half a million people. The statistics and information that I present here are from various flyers and conversations with the district's personnel who work the call-in service, and it should be noted that the statistics that I present are from the 1996-1997 school and not the 1995-1996 year that I collected the bulk of my data. I was told that there had been minor statistical changes from last year and that the new difference from last to this year resided in the switch from the "busing" of students -- a system required by the former court-ordered desegregation plan to the new policy of open enrollment, marking the end of this court-ordered compliance for the 1996-1997 school year.

There are 63,368 students enrolled in this urban school district. Its pupil composition consists of the following: 55.75 percent black; 44.25 percent white or other; 51.5 percent male; and 48.5 percent female. This district is the second largest school system in its state and is the fifth largest employer in city. Its teacher composition consists of the following: 77 percent are non-minority while 23 percent are minority and the overwhelming majority of the teachers are female (roughly three to one). As far as teacher training and experience levels, the following was supplied as well to me by the FACTline staff: 47 percent have master's, while 29.5 percent have bachelor's plus 30 hours graduate study, and 53 percent have eleven years or more teacher experience.

As of the 1996-1997 school year, a court-ordered desegregation is no longer in place: Open enrollment has started, so students are no longer "bussed" to designated
schools but now are "transported" in terms of their choices to attend either their neighborhood schools or other preferred schools. Students' enrollment in the schools of their choosing is based on space available and after this is determined by a lottery process which means admittance is no longer based on racial balance that relies on set quotes. According to this staff member at the call-in service, the desegregation in this district was relatively peaceful when compared to other districts of its same size and composition, such as the city school districts of Boston and Louisville. Forced busing began the fall of 1979 and followed six years of legal challenges, including a stay of implementation granted just 17 days before the first day of school in 1978. At this time this district was the nation's fourteenth largest school system. This city avoided the civic trauma experienced by other cities in the wake of court-ordered desegregation for two reasons: Community leaders (though some were opposed to it) emphasized the city's responsibility to the law and numerous channels of communication were available through which both busing's opponents and proponents could voice their opinions.

In describing the city's community and the nature of its schools, its composition is similar to other cities that experienced what has been deemed as the "white and largely middle-class flight." Roughly there is a "ring" around the inner-city that consists of a mostly black population and consists of a largely lower-socioeconomic population; the west side of this ring consists mostly of a large white, lower-socioeconomic Appalachian population. The further you go out from the core of the city, the more middle class and the more white the population becomes. As a result of its demographics, the district receives state and federal dollars for compensatory programs for low-income students, allowing for additional support in mathematics and reading.

Students take the state-required Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test in reading, writing, citizenship, mathematics, and science for the first time in March of their eighth-grade year and retake portions of this test as needed in order to receive a high school diploma in
this particular. All students in in the state must pass four parts (reading, writing, citizenship, and mathematics) of the state's Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test in order to graduate; the science section will become a graduation requirement after September 15, 2000. All students who pass all portions of the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test by February of their senior year are required to take the Twelfth-Grade Proficiency Test. Scores determine if students are at proficient or honors level in each test area. This test may be used in awarding the state's Honors Diploma.

This school district's secondary programs include middle schools with students in grades six through eight and high schools with students in grades seven through 12. Middle schools differ from the traditional junior high in that their aim is student-centered not subject-centered instruction. Teams of teachers work with smaller groups of students, connecting subjects to learning across the curriculum; often there is a "flex" period for individualized counseling, adviser groups, tutoring time, and regrouping of students for activities such as band, choir, or intramurals. High schools have begun to organize the school day into block scheduling in order to improve the teaching and learning of core academic subjects. Several different models of block scheduling are found in various schools in addition to the traditional 42-minute, nine-period school days. There are three alternative (magnet) high schools in the district; additionally, each conventional high school (18 total) is developing a particular curricular focus or emphasis.

An Introductory Note About These Teachers

Only one of the three teachers in this study has taught outside this urban school district. One of the teachers began her teaching career in the early 1970s during the time of the Viet Nam war and the counterculture scene. In the following decades, she experienced desegregation and the resulting demographic shifts in the district's population, experiencing as well the surge of "crisis reports" in the 1980s on the poor quality of academics in United States' schools and the poor intellectual abilities of its
teachers. A second teacher spent his kindergarten through junior high school years in parochial schools until graduating from a public high school in the early 1970s. He then taught in parochial and suburban schools until moving to this school district in the early 1990s where he has taught for the past four years. A third was attending an east side high school in this same school district when desegregation began in the late 1970s, graduating in 1981. For all three of these teachers, teaching has been a calling -- a chance to facilitate and be a part of a generational growth. They care about what they do. They see change as an opportunity -- both externally-imposed changes and the self-reinvention they all actively seek. They hold themselves personally accountable for failure, and all have said that they are committed or otherwise they wouldn't be teaching young adults.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: CONVERSATIONS WITH THREE TEACHERS

"Side by side and separately, we each lost ourselves in the experience of not missing anything, of seeing everything, of knowing each time what the blows of the whistle meant" (p. 79).
— Eudora Welty, from One Writer's Beginnings (1983)

Introduction: Listening to Their Voices

The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge and constructed insights of three effective writing teachers from three secondary schools within the same urban school district. My approach throughout this study has been to ask what can be learned from these three teachers that depicts the culture of their personal and professional lives and how these affect their world views and classroom pedagogy. From the outset my goal has been to show how practical wisdom in teaching is expressed through these teachers' particular experiences and idiosyncrasies and to determine interrelations between these teachers' thinking and practices in a cross-case analysis. My motive has never been to deduce a model or formula for effective teaching as I believe, as do many others, that good teachers come in all shapes and sizes, temperaments and personalities. In compiling abstractions across three cases, I believed insights might be provided into the teaching of writing with a diverse population and into the context of one urban school setting. It has been my contention throughout this study that to acknowledge these teachers' differences is to pay homage to the art of teaching, and to acknowledge these teachers' similarities is to do the same.
As I watched and was engaged in several conversations with these teachers and was engaged in conversations with their students and my informants, I sought to understand what I was seeing and hearing. I made charts, coded, wrote, organized and reorganized. I constructed lists of them separately and then as a group that characterized them as writing teachers (see Table 4.8); that characterized their perceptions of their contexts, including their students, colleagues, schools, and district (see Table 4.9); and that characterized their perceived obstacles to their effectiveness as teachers (see Table 4.10). Eventually, I began to identify themes that were reflective of their knowledge and constructed insights (see Table 4.1). Although the findings of my cross-cases analysis revealed that these teachers worked in similar ways and shared many attitudes and principles, it was evident as well that they differed in personalities and teaching styles. In this chapter, I've attempted to determine how these themes in their thinking came into being and have analyzed how these themes may function as factors in the teachers' effectiveness -- first by defining these themes; next by presenting the teachers' respective case studies; and finally by presenting other aspects of the cross-case analysis that includes characteristics of them as writing teachers. This is followed by brief discussions of the teachers' perceptions of their contexts and their perceived obstacles to their effectiveness.

**Four Themes in Their Thinking**

Essentially, four themes appear to be their "ideological underpinnings." These underpinnings serve as a basis for these teachers' knowledge and constructed insights as both writing teachers and as teachers in general. These ideological underpinnings also are associated with excellence in teaching. They not only represent features of the concept of teaching, but they also represent what is valued in teaching. This is important because the concept of teaching is difficult to dissociate from what is believed worthwhile in teaching. Although a number of cross-case comparisons might have been
possible, when looking back at my conversations with these teachers, these four themes emerged as most compelling and perhaps most deserving of reflection and examination: Peripheral vision, responsiveness, intellectual lives, and reinvention.

Some of the findings of this study replicate what already is known in terms of the contexts of secondary and urban schooling. In terms of teaching success, this study does not profess to offer a "fool-proof method." Surely most good teachers would realize that the themes I've identified in these teachers' thinking are indeed indicators of the teachers' progressiveness and contribute to their effectiveness in their urban classrooms -- and more than likely would contribute to their successes in any classroom setting. However, why is it that some teachers are able to become and remain progressive and effective practitioners while others never do? Is teaching so simple and so easy to master, and methods so transcendent of time, that anyone interested in the classroom can be effective in terms of meeting their students' needs and interests? What these four themes, and other findings of this study, do reveal is how these particular teachers came to be the way they are and how they've managed to maintain their momentum and continue their growth and commitment as teachers. In conducting this study's review of related literature and then discovering further resources after completing it, I've found many commonalities between these three teachers and what others have stated as traits indicative of teaching success. What is different about this study, however, is that it's a collaborative effort between these teachers and me. I have acknowledged their experiential wisdom and have shared with them in the creation of knowledge about teaching in their contexts. Readers are provided with real teachers' voices, their conceptions of what matters to them and what they value in themselves. This latter aspect, I believe, is the real key to what is often elusive knowledge. In every sense this has been a very spirited collaboration between me and them and one that has revealed a sense of spirituality in their thinking and practices.
It should be noted that the following four themes are not separate entities but blend together, grow out of and into, and enhance each other. Somewhere in time, during my observations and our conversations, it became evident that the methods by which these teachers work were far less important than the teachers themselves and that success in teaching depends more on the teacher than on the system. In discussing the themes of peripheral vision, responsiveness, intellectual lives, and reinvention, followed by the presentation of the individual case studies of these teachers, I've sought first to define these themes and then to exemplify them in these three teachers' respective cases by sharing how their thinking and practices reflect them and how they came to be this way in spite of themselves and in spite of a system that seems to encourage otherwise. These themes relate to how they understand their students' needs and interests; how they plan for instruction and assessment; how they view their roles and responsibilities as teachers of writing; how they determine their effectiveness; and how they've come to perceive their need and have nurtured their desire for professional development as not only teachers of writing but as teachers in general.

Peripheral Vision

One of the most significant findings in this study has been these three teachers' desire to know their students and to learn along with and from them. All three have mentioned "gaps," both cultural and at times generational, between them and their students and their perceived need to overcome these by learning more about their students' lives and experiencing their students' interests and building upon them when possible. It's this process of a desire to know, experience, and build upon that I've referred to as "peripheral vision," a concept that I've borrowed from Mary Catherine Bateson (1994). In Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way, Bateson (1994) writes about an exploration of life by learning from experience and encountering the unfamiliar. Peripheral vision implies that we function like anthropologists, working as participants
Peripheral vision also requires improvisation, an acceptance of ambiguity and learning to savor the vertigo; it is a realization that different isn't necessarily inferior and that the possession of insight refers to a depth of understanding that comes as a result of setting experiences "yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another" (Bateson, 1994, p. 14).

In exemplifying the notion of peripheral vision, all three of these teachers live their lives as researchers — they are knowledge seekers and knowledge makers. In their knowledge seeking and making, they desire to know their students and "listen" to them. As teacher-researchers they view their students as participants rather than as objects: In doing so, they engage in dialogue and meaning making with their students. In this process of seeking and knowledge making and engaging their students in dialogue, it is evident that these teachers are holistic planners and situational problem-solvers. They are child-centered and believe the context and/or situational reality should guide their planning and instruction. Also, they don't see their classrooms and what they teach as compartmentalized units -- but rather they see connections, linkages to experiences, people, and places in the readings and writings they and their students are engaged in. When I asked them to talk about their writing instruction and assessment, they talked about other things as well. They talked about various literatures and reading for pleasure and the need to stretch the mind, and they talked as well about the use of other literacies, such as art, drama, poetry readings, and class discussions in conjunction with writing. All prefaced their ideas with the need to know their students and the importance of engaging their students in living lives of purpose. They shared ways in which their students' needs and interests informed their planning, and they alluded to situational realities that influenced their instruction and assessment strategies.
Also, in practicing peripheral vision, these teachers think in terms of possibilities regarding their students' potentialities. It's a matter to them of seeing the "glass half full" as opposed to "half empty." They start from where the student is and try to find what's best in and for that student. Bateson (1994) states that people learn "to understand the world by learning to invent it, and it is the invented world that we must survive. Our best chance of survival lies in seeing and inventing that world as beautiful, inventing it with prevision of wonder" (p. 226). She also writes "Courtesy is one of the great human inventions for bridging uncertainty" (p. 13).

**Responsiveness**

A second theme is responsiveness. I use the notion of responsiveness to imply an action on these teachers' parts: In their practice of peripheral vision, they not only learn from their encounterings and experiences, but they aim to do something with this knowledge. They act upon on it. Their responsiveness to their students' needs and interests is aided by these teachers' continual reflective and reflexive behaviors. In being reflective they consider their impact, if any, on their students' development by observing and encouraging feedback from their students. In being reflexive they look inward by challenging their philosophies and by attempting to politicize their beliefs and constructs. It is evident that these teachers are very much in touch with who they are and maintain a cautious sense of their effect on their students and their students' effects on them. These teachers are not threatened by such self-scrutiny but see a need for it. They seek opportunities for autobiographical inquiry, and all three stated this was the reason for participation in this study. Their outward and inward scrutiny also could be deemed a form of "critical pedagogy": As they look inward and not just outward, they politicize their thinking and instruction, and aim to raise the consciousness of those who are
teaching (themselves and at times their colleagues) and the students who are the consumers of that teaching.

It is these teachers' reflectiveness and reflexiveness that aids them in building upon their students' powers. In reacting to what they learn from their students and in asking questions about their own effectiveness, they respond by building valuable linkages between students' lives and academic work. In this responsive way, they also exhibit culturally-relevant teaching. Ladson-Billings (1996) has stated that a hallmark of the culturally-relevant notion of knowledge is that it is something that each student brings to the classroom. Students are not seen as empty vessels to be filled by all-knowing teachers. What they know is acknowledged, valued, and incorporated into the classroom. "The ability to examine critically and challenge knowledge is not a mere classroom exercise. By drawing on the perspectives of critical theorists, culturally relevant teaching attempts to make knowledge problematic. Students are challenged to view education (and knowledge) as a vehicle for emancipation, to understand the significance of their cultures, and to recognize the power of language" (Ladson-Billings, 1996, p. 251). These teachers see their students as individuals but also as members of groups and/or various cultures. They listen to what their students have to say, learn from it, and do something with it.

These teachers also have a strong sense of who they are as professionals. This facilitates their responsiveness as well. As professionals they easily are able to articulate their practices and theoretical underpinnings. All three of these teachers, in exhibiting a responsiveness to their students' needs and interests, have stated in both direct and indirect terms that holding themselves accountable as professionals to their students' development is a moral imperative. As part of their responsiveness, these teachers also exhibit strong academic task orientations marked by caring and insight. In terms of their emphasis on academics, they realize that skills learned in their classrooms are skills
needed to change lives, or as Paulo Friere (1993) puts it, to read the world. It is also important for them to have their students know that they care for them, and as teachers they show this both verbally and nonverbally. During our conversations they shared how much they cared about what happened to their students, and during my classroom observations, I saw the ways in which they cared about their students as individuals. These teachers see education as a process of becoming more human in the vocation of thoughtfulness and care. This is evident in the warm, supportive environments they build for their students.

**Intellectual Lives**

A third theme is the notion of teachers having (maintaining and developing) intellectual lives. As mentioned previously, in exhibiting peripheral vision, these teachers realize we live in a diverse and changing society. In the practice of peripheral vision, they encounter and compare more than one version of experience — they also seek new experiences and research for meaning in their personal as well as professional lives through these. They see the need for it, and they also model this perceived importance to their students, because they want their students to remain "open" to understanding as well. All three of these teachers believe that a teacher's life should be one of knowledge — that their "fruits" should exhibit the principles that they teach. All three of these teachers nourish this part of their being in both their personal and professional lives which tend to come together in their classroom practices. They often share their interests and experiences with their students and attempt to involve their students in new pursuits. In this way they model this "power of knowledge" for their students, showing the students what it brings to their lives.

In exhibiting intellectual lives, these teachers seek collegiality with others. Ayers and Ford (1996) state that "Urban classrooms must not be places where teachers bite their lips and endure, but rather they should be places where teachers can pursue their ideas,
explore their interests, follow their passions, and be engaged with students in living lives of purpose" (p. 214). Whereas the contexts of these teachers do little to support their interests and pursuits in terms of professional engagements with each other, these teachers make opportunities for explorations relating to schooling and relating to their personal interests in and outside the school day. As one of my informants said, "These teachers like to get together and talk about what they do. It's their avocation, not just their vocation" (Interview, 7/8/96).

Reinvention

Perhaps one of the most striking commonalities of these teachers is that they are progressive in both thoughts and actions. They are not bound by traditional or familiar constraints but rather look to change as opportunity. All three of these teachers seek reinvention in their lives. They see change as opportunity rather than as a threat. It's their practicing of peripheral vision and its outgrowth of responsiveness and the fact that they lead intellectual lives that aids them in this perceived importance of searching for opportunities for reinvention. Other scholars have written about teachers who seek "renewal," implying that an attitude change is necessary for survival. Here I use reinvention to mean a course of action that is physical not derived simply from a mental pursuit.

All three of these teachers consider themselves "in process," and it's this value of growth and development that they want to engender in their students. They model their questioning and searching for understanding and meaning to their students and encourage them to be open to this. They also provide opportunities for students to challenge current ways of thinking and to develop new ways of understanding. "Instead of passing on hallowed certainties and maintaining the status quo, they must make childhood an open-ended introduction to a process of continual change in which self-observation can become the best of teachers" (Bateson, 1994, p. 8). It's these teachers' abilities to be
accepting of ambiguity, something necessary for maintaining peripheral vision, that aids them in their own openness to pondering and engaging in opportunities for personal and professional growth. Bateson (1994) states that "This awareness is newly necessary today. Men and women confronting change are never fully prepared for the demands of the moment, but they are strengthened to meet uncertainty if they can claim a history of improvisation and a habit of reflection" (p. 6).

Table 4.1

Four Themes in These Teachers' Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peripheral Vision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They researchers -- knowledge seekers and knowledge makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They desire to know their students and &quot;listen&quot; to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are holistic planners and situational problem-solvers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They think in terms of possibilities regarding their students' potentialities.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsiveness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are highly reflective and reflexive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They build upon their students' powers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They have a strong sense of who they are as professionals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They hold themselves accountable: They believe this to be a moral imperative.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have strong academic task orientations marked by caring and insight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>They build warm, supportive environments.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Intellectual Lives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They believe a teacher's life should be one of knowledge.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are interested in their students' lives, because they are interested and involved people: They are readers, writers, artists, scholars, activists, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They seek collegiality: They are both takers and givers.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Reinvention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They see change as opportunity: They are threatened more by growing stale or not at all than with developing new ways of understanding and operating.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>They consider themselves &quot;in process.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Their excitement spurs students' interest and involvement.</td>
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Note. As with the shared characteristics and perceptions of these teachers, the lines between these themes are blurred with all four themes feeding and enhancing the other.
How They've Come to Be This Way

Although these teachers have similarities in their thinking, their characteristics as writing teachers and in their perceptions of their contexts and obstacles, their differences have been evident. It is these differences that I've strived to capture in their individual cases -- cases which modulate according to their respective voices, although their similarities undoubtedly will be heard. In writing these three individual cases, I've attempted to avoid redundancies from one case to the next and instead have highlighted these in the cross-case analysis that addresses themes in their thinking, characteristics of them as writing teachers, and their perceptions of their contexts and obstacles. Instead, these respective cases are an attempt to feature some of these teachers' particularities, depicting their personalities and working styles as they have developed over time.

Between these teachers, they've taught from 10 to 23 years. They were nominated for their effectiveness by informants who described them in a variety of ways that included innovative, creative, flexible, caring, student centered, nurturing, intelligent, dedicated, motivating, and involved professionally both in and outside the classroom. During my observations of them in their classrooms and during my conversations with them, I came to similar conclusions. Their candor and humor made for easy conversations at great lengths which made for great difficulty in abbreviating the extent of their cases. Much has been excluded. All three offer different yet similar responses to the nature of themselves as teachers in general, as teachers in their respective schools and within the larger context of urban schooling, and in particular, as teachers of writing and its assessment. In writing these cases, I've attempted to present them largely in the teachers' own words, utilizing at times a dialogic formula, as true to the contexts in which we sat and they teach. For as one listens to good teachers and as one begins sitting in on their classes, their methods often seem no more important than the teachers themselves -- their experiences and personalities, their flexibility and dedication. I have chosen major
"movements" in their stories, from our five formal interviews, that depict who they are and that hint at how the commonalities in their thinking (four themes) and constructed insights (pedagogy) may have come into place. I have used vignettes from my field log, including recalls and notes from classroom observations to illustrate various points when possible. Presented here are their voices, though their real names have been changed and the names of their schools have been omitted for reasons of confidentiality. But in the end, these three cases are really about vision -- how these teachers see themselves and how they see their students and help them become better writers.

Conversations with Sam

First, Second, and Third Time's a Charm

I eventually met Sam for our first interview the Tuesday after our first scheduled interview (which was the Thursday before!). I was waiting in the school office that initial day when Sam walked in to check his mailbox at about 1:28 PM (our interview was to begin at 1:30). He saw me and asked to reschedule for the following Tuesday, January 30, apologizing by saying grades had come out, and he had about 10 students waiting for him who were "disgusted" with their humanities grades. So we rescheduled for the same time the following Tuesday.

— from Field Log, 1/30/96

Once again, we met outside of Sam's classroom -- this time in the hallway. Sam was on his way to meet me, and I was headed to the humanities teachers' office (a small classroom that doubles as well as a humanities students' study area) to meet him. He suggested we head to the faculty lounge. We took a table there and talked for about 30 minutes until one of his team teachers (he has three) came in to make copies and informed Sam of a conflict occurring between students. Again, we rescheduled, and the remainder of "Interview 1" took place a couple of days later on Thursday, February 1.

I returned on February 1, and this time we "hid" in the school librarian's office where we finished this "first" interview. At first I wasn't sure whether or not it was a female-male issue as Sam appeared more reserved than the others in this study. He told me that he considers himself a highly private person; I am now all the more curious why he has joined my study. I know he's highly motivated and dedicated to his job based on his informant's nomination of him. He's also a male teacher, evidently one of few in this district ruled by female English teachers, who gets rave reviews from both colleagues and students. But after wrapping Interview 1, I now think that me, the researcher, and this study seem to intrigue him as much as he and his effectiveness as an urban secondary teacher intrigue me. Undoubtedly, I get the sense that he is studying me!

— from Field Log, 2/1/96

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I realized that I knew Sam when I called him on the telephone to engage his participation that December of 1995 before the January I was to begin this study. I recognized his voice. The previous spring quarter of 1995 we both were enrolled in the same graduate course, a seminar composed of teachers and full-time graduate students interested in the fine and performing arts. At that time Sam also was appearing in one of the professor's theater troupe's productions, the only male in an all-female ensemble. Although I hadn't remembered his name when given to me by one of my informant, I recognized that voice which was made for oratory -- resonant, animated and punctuated with laughter. Evidently, this class for Sam symbolized completion of his master's coursework in drama education followed by a spring graduation. For me it meant hearing, for one thing, tales of a high school teacher in his third year at an urban magnet school introducing process drama to his two team teachers and to his students.

Sam shared his first "experiment" with us, his classmates, the week before he was to engage it. He told us that his team teachers were "nervous about letting go of their classroom control"; he hoped their skepticism of "alternative methods" would be dissuaded if this experiment were successful. I found his tale ironic -- his colleagues' skepticism towards alternative methods -- in light of the name of their school which includes the word "alternative" in its title. The following week we heard about *Beowulf* and lit candles amongst other artifacts used to simulate a mead hall. We heard stories of students' richly metaphoric writing and reflective kennings and heard about involved discussions of language use -- style and rhythms -- and the vitality of oral language in a print-illiterate society. And we heard about the continued resistance, despite their observations of their students' writing successes and deeper understandings of a difficult text, of the teachers with whom he team taught. And I remember noting Sam's
enthusiasm dampening somewhat by their consternation. And so began my introduction to Sam.

**Learning Along the Way**

**At His Elbow...**

Sam said that he has enjoyed learning all of his life — that school was always more of an enjoyment for him rather than a crux. He spent the first three years of his life in Philadelphia and then the family moved to Dayton, Ohio, where he graduated from high school in 1973. Sam says he was reared in a very middle-class community. "The homes were very modest. Families were large. It was a Catholic community tied to a church. Everyone knew everyone's name around the neighborhood" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). His father didn't graduate from high school, and Sam remembered his father who in his early 30s studied for the G. E. D., though he eventually lost interest which Sam believes was due to the fear of failure. His mother graduated from high school while still in Panama where she also met Sam's father who served in the Navy and was stationed there in the 1950s. As far as Sam knows, none of his immediate family was college educated.

For his mother it was important that all five of her children go to college or to some sort of technical school after high school. Sam is also the only teacher and the only sibling living outside of Dayton where both his older and younger sister and his younger brothers still reside. Sam said he grew up in a "sexist" home where opportunities were provided for the males more so than the females, "so all the males have bachelor's degrees and graduate degrees but not the females" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). His two brothers are engineers for the Air Force, while one sister is a nurse and the other attended technical school for two years. Early on Sam says he can remember his mother "at his elbow," encouraging him in his schoolwork and to speak and write well as she was very
conscious of her own limited English proficiency. He believes this greatly influenced how he views cultural differences and "marginalization" that sometimes occurs in the act of schooling and with the notion of "assimilation":

L.: *So the culture of the students -- as well as that of the teachers -- does matter?*
C.: I think it matters a lot. I don't think all of the time we address students investigating their cultures here. I wish that we spent more time taking a look at Asian cultures for our Asian students. I think we traditionally neglect them by addressing them, though very little, as a "whole" culture. I think we'll probably have a week or two emphasis this year to do a little bit with that, but I think next year we'll try to do more with that in our program.

L.: *What makes you more sensitive to differences than other teachers might be?*
C.: I guess my own background. My mother is from Panama. I think my own Hispanic background -- I denied it for a long time. I wanted to fit in with all the other kids. I can remember as I was growing up a friend of mine was always talking the way my mother talked. She was always -- not always, but I know the tendency of how I perceived it -- that she wasn't the "Betty Crocker mom" or the "Beaver mom," that she wore her admissibility. It was not something that she could hide behind. My mother came to the states in the '50s. That was when it was popular to assimilate -- the "white bread stuff" to have the "ideal" family, a car, a television, and all that good stuff. I think my mother was trying to be as American as she could be and not speak Spanish in the home. Now as I'm an adult, I think of my mother's past, and I think of all the traditions of that culture that I've missed because of her trying to assimilate so strongly into "our" culture that I feel almost that my personal crusade is to allow students to perceive and to cherish their own cultures, and I'll do what I can to help them.

(Interview 1, 2/1/96)

Sam went to a Catholic grade school one through eight grades before enrolling in a public high school. Sam said that high school was a "better" experience for him, because he was exposed to other kinds of students. For the first time, he wasn't in a classroom with all other Catholic students but was in classrooms with students from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. The racial composition of his Dayton, Ohio, high school was approximately 10 percent African American but is now in the reverse with about 90 percent African American. He said roughly 75 percent went on to college. While some of his high school classes weren't challenging enough, Sam said now in hindsight he remembered teachers who may initially have inspired him into becoming a teacher:

I can say right now that if anything spurred me on to think about becoming a teacher early on it was some of the teachers in my high school. It was their
passion for teaching that turned me on. I can remember a history and government teacher I had my senior year. First of all, I started high school in 1969, so it was just after the Kent State incident when I had this particular teacher. I can remember Kent State as being a point of discussion in the classroom. For quite a long time, I never had a teacher talk about current issues so pervasively as this guy did.... I can remember classrooms where the teachers were humorous... they didn't take themselves too seriously. I think a teacher who is able to laugh at himself or herself is very powerful to the student who tends to think that teacher is an authoritarian who is up on some sort of power trip.... (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Sam also talked about how early on he was encouraged by many of his high school teachers to value the liberal arts and to see school not simply as preparation for a particular job but as preparation for life:

Another thing that impressed me about my high school teachers is that they always pushed the liberal arts. They were beginning to see the trend in higher education of placing an emphasis on the technical arts, and my teachers were very wary of that. That was something that was very powerful: You shouldn't think about college as necessarily getting you ready to have a job but as getting you ready for life and knowing as much about yourself and about life as possible. I don't think if I wouldn't have had that stimulant that I wouldn't have graduated from college with so many credits in history, art history, English, philosophy, math, and theater.... I think I really did have a humanities education in college. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Sam first graduated from college in 1979 with a double major in English and history and with minors in art and art history. He had planned to go to law school until he experienced being a writing tutor at an inner-city high school while still a student at the University of Cincinnati. He was getting ready to take the law school qualifier examination when a faculty member from the English Department called him about a writing program about to commence at a high school in the Cincinnati school district. A woman had received a huge grant to develop a writing program and tutors were needed. This experience as a writing tutor spurred him to continue his education and become certified in secondary English and history:

I was getting very little pay for the time I put in, but that was okay as I just wanted to see how effective I could be around kids. And I put myself into a situation in which I had never been before and that was with a classroom that was 99 percent African American, and I thought to myself that there was no way that I'd be able to relate to these students. I don't speak their language. I come from a totally different background. They're going to see me as a foreigner, as an alien
trespassing and trying to tell them what to do.... The students did all kinds of writing.... I did that for two years, and it was such a positive experience discovering that I could communicate with children -- young adults.... I decided to go back to school to get a degree in education. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

**Failure as Feedback**

Although his earliest school experiences were characterized by successes academically, Sam said failure soon became feedback for him as well. When I asked Sam if there was anything in his family background, community, or education that he believed either enhanced or limited his ability to work effectively with student writers in his classrooms, he mentioned his shock to discover in college that a professor believed he needed "remedial assistance." This was disturbing to him as he had graduated in the top 10 of his high school graduating class of 500 and had received as a result a full-ride scholarship to college:

"I graduated with honors from high school, and I went to the University of Cincinnati. I can remember my first year in an English classroom, and we were writing essays. I was pretty confident as a writer, and I always took my time putting an essay together. I was pretty confident as I had gotten good grades in high school in writing, and all of a sudden I was getting papers back from the instructor telling me that I had severe writing problems, and he was going to suggest tutorial help for me.... I thought, "You've got to be kidding me. I went through four years of high school honors English, and I got all good grades, and now you're telling me that I can't write a paper. This does not make sense." (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Sam said that this experience so jostled him that he started to rethink seriously his writing and to look carefully at what he was trying to say. As a result his writing went through a major change between his freshman and sophomore years in college. "Because I found this challenging, I continued to take English classes. I started taking classes that English majors were taking even though at the time I was originally a math major (laughs)" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). Today, as a writing teacher, he realizes development occurs over time and that it's also valuable for him, the teacher, to engage in writing with his students as "practice makes practice and improves one's writing":

At that stage in the game, I would have said to you that I could not teach writing, because I didn't know about the process of writing to be able to teach it. I think
good writing takes experience. I think being a good writing teacher takes experience, but it also takes a lot of practice with the students. So many times we think of just handing out an assignment and letting the students do the assignment but never engaging ourselves. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Sam said that the negative experience of being told he was a poor writer in college had such an impact on him -- not only because he worked hard to improve -- but because it also became difficult for him recognize when his writing actually did begin to improve, something that he is very cognizant of as a writing teacher when giving feedback regarding his own students' growth and development as writers. When he began teaching, he further modeled the value of the writing process by "practicing what you preach" in terms of learning and practicing writing along with his students:

By my second year in college, I was taking a class in survey of English Literature, a class for English majors. It was fascinating, because I had worked on my writing so much that by my second year I really couldn't tell after being handed this statement that "you can't write, and you need a lot of help" -- well, it really does encourage a mindset and makes it impossible for you to recognize when your writing has improved. You continue to think there's always something wrong, or there's something you're not seeing. But I had a professor for this class, and she was just going on and on about "You're an English major, of course." It was a completely different feeling I was getting from her..... I don't think you begin to become a good teacher of writing, until you actually go through the writing process all over again and relearn it as a writer. (Interview 1, 2/1/96)

After teaching in parochial schools in both Ohio then Florida, Sam spent the next six years of his teaching career in a suburban district outside of Cincinnati, where he taught high school English literature, theater, and a writing course. He said that during the time he taught at this high school he began taking writing courses from the University of Cincinnati and was involved with the Ohio Writing Project. He also took writing courses as well with the University of Dayton in which he was introduced to writer-teacher philosophies such as Natalie Goldberg's (1986) *Writing Down the Bones* and Peter Elbow's (1981) *Writing Without Teachers*. As a result, he continued his evolution as both a teacher of writing and as a writer. Since being employed by his current district for the past four years, his writing has included writing grants that have supported his current high school's reform initiatives adopting notions of William...
Glasser’s (1990, 1992) *The Quality School* and (1993) *The Quality School Teacher* and has included papers written to fulfill his coursework requirements for his master's degree in drama education which he completed last spring. He says he’s been tooling as well with ideas for a novel he plans to begin writing in the near future:

I think in the past I would consider myself to have little confidence in what I was doing. Language was important to me but more so than that was vocabulary. Now what's most important to me is expression and voice and honesty. In terms of the kind of writing I do now, well, I just graduated from OSU. I do some grants -- I guess that's formal writing. Informal writing -- letter writing and that kind of thing. And it's always been a notion of mine in the back of my head to write a novel, a story of some sorts. (Interview 1, 2/1/96)

Like his experiences as an undergraduate writer in his English courses, Sam said his preservice education courses had an impact on him as well. Our conversation went from criticisms of education courses that lacked pertinent instruction and any real rigor to the notion that teachers were to be "voices of authority in the classroom," a belief purported in his preservice classes. Sam said he attempted this "model" during his first years teaching though he felt this was against his personality type. He soon began evolving as a teacher, discovering his strengths and building on the "art" that he believed was an innate aspect of his personality. He soon became a "better" teacher and one not so preoccupied with maintaining the "voice of authority." He believes his evolution as a teacher was encouraged by his "geographical mobility":

C.: You see, those education courses that I had to take for my education certificate I found them to be such useless classes.... I think, if anything, I came out of those education classes believing that I had to have a voice of authority, and I think when I first started teaching that authority voice was very strong. Maybe it was okay for teaching eighth grade, but by the end of my three years doing that -- well, it just wasn't the way I love teaching. I mean, I'm a much better teacher now than I was then. I started evolving as a teacher.

L.: *What encouraged your evolution?*

C.: I think it was putting myself in a different location -- not staying at the same place or relying on old habits or relying on old forms. I think part of the biggest problem with education today is that the system doesn't encourage teachers to be mobile. When we're forced to work in systems for much too long, we can become stale. I really don't understand why "they" encourage that. I think all of my hopping around from different school environments has made me a stronger teacher -- it definitely has made me more flexible. It definitely has made me more
open to new methods of instruction, because I've had to work in all kinds of environments with all kinds of kids with all kinds of cohorts. It amazes me -- I think about these teachers who have been in a place for so long, can they really be able to sell what they do in a very energetic and believable way?

L.: I've wondered about this too. In higher education, I'm finding, that my variety of experiences is valued more and tends to make one more marketable. However, as a secondary teacher, I used to worry about being perceived as "unstable" in the job market, because I liked the challenges new job changes provided me.

C.: There's something to be said about dedication being measured by longevity at a particular school. I don't think that necessarily measures dedication. That might be a measurement of laziness more than dedication in many respects.

I Am. I Said

Sam currently team teaches his ninth and tenth-grade humanities courses with two other teachers at an alternative school known for its "academic and college preparatory focus." In sharing his conceptions of writing instruction and assessment, he often spoke of "we" and at times "them." "Them" often has been the point of frustration for Sam in light of "them's" focus in terms of what and when to have their students write. Perhaps a most surprising aspect of my findings in terms of Sam's high school is the English Department's perceived value of having students write primarily if not solely using a third-person narrative voice and the department's belief that writing to be done should consist primarily if not solely of literary analysis and in the "saluted style" of the three-point theme. His high school, being a "college preparatory" magnet, seeks as its mission to prepare its students to be at an advantage rather than at a disadvantage in terms of their understandings and abilities of what it means to do academics or scholarship.

Evidently, this means writing minus the "I" format, a "minus" that appears to be the bane of Sam's existance as a writing teacher as it is diametrically opposed to his professional conviction that "I" is alright and should be an integral and natural aspect of writing instruction.

In addition to team teaching humanities courses, Sam is also the faculty adviser of the school's literary magazine which according to Sam is a solitary outlet for
"suppressed" writers who dare to use "I." During one of my visits, Sam gave me some back issues of the annually-published magazine. Upon opening 1995's, I couldn't help but revel in the student "Editor's Dedication" on page two which read as follows:

One day in English class when we were discussing an assignment, I became rather upset. We were to analyze a piece of poetry, citing criticisms and generally proving that we had studied the poem, the poet, and the conditions, events, and ideologies relevant to the poem. I inquired, since we were to analyze the poem, whether it would be appropriate to use personal pronouns. (I should have known better; what student is ever allowed to use the "I" format? Yet, foolish dreamer that I was, I had my hopes.) I got an unsettling response. It seemed the teacher did not want any personal views or reactions at all. We were not to voice an opinion unless we had an expert to endorse it for us. Expert. An odd term to use with poetry, I thought. If it takes an "expert" to understand and to react to a poem, it might be wise to reevaluate the poem's worth to a high school student's life. I smiled and said, "Of course, of course," and smiled and picked up my books, and smiled as I left the room. I did the assignment as asked and received an A on it. But that "expert" nagged me. What makes a person an expert? Writing a book? That's all it seems to take to be on an "expert" panel on Rolanda's show. Yet anyone could write a book if they took the time.... I pondered the various possibilities until my mind came to the answer. Well, my answer anyway. Everyone is an expert on poetry. And I dedicate this edition to each and every one of you.

It's this "New Criticism way" of looking at the literature world that seems to frustrate Sam the most -- a view that says knowledge comes from "experts" other than the self and that to leave out "I" means to remain "objective, scientific, and factual," so to speak. It seems that the English Department at Sam's school believes this to be "real" academic writing -- to write in third-person voice and to express those opinions of others researched and published in other texts as, after all, "expert" does not come from within. I asked Sam to explain further this departmental belief which seemed rather "retro" to me as well, and he gave me its historically-rooted "legacy." [I couldn't help but wonder if even Macrorie's "I-Search Paper" might be tolerated here -- or would all "hell break loose" with such an attempt?]

L.: Isn't the idea of not writing in first-person a rather dated concept of writing? It's been my belief that many colleges complain, because students are not articulate of their voices. It seems strange that the English Department at your high school doesn't encourage students to write from personal experience.
C.: I know Miami University finds it stiff and unnatural for students in the undergraduate programs to be writing from that third-person voice — that they prefer a first-person voice in the writing.

L.: *There's really someone "cracking the whip," so to speak, over you? This is a definite departmental emphasis?*

C.: It's conscious. Yes.

L.: *I'm really surprised by this.*

C.: Yes. If you look around, you would see — but you're not going to see — I mean, look, for example, do you see any examples of poetry by students hanging on the walls? Do you see any short stories? Do you see any papers that we're proud to show off hanging in the classrooms or hanging out in the hallways? No. Absolutely no. We don't publish the student voice except in that yearly student magazine. It's a big, big shame.

L.: *That's too bad. So what about writing for the use of "personal discovery"? Doesn't this happen or do students just regurgitate "facts"?*

C.: I think we're empowering our students to a certain degree for college situations that expect them to use "that" voice — that kind of formal language all the time. I think we do a service to those students, but when I see the kinds of students that we're getting in our classrooms today — well, this school used to be a very high academic school. Students who enrolled here went to Princeton, Harvard, and —

L.: *Really? You mean this was a "past phenomena"? How long ago?*

C.: Late '70s. We still have students who do go off to those schools who are very, very bright and intellectually-minded and self-motivated. We do still have some of those students, but they are a very small fraction of the student body.

L.: *Why do you suppose this changed?*

C.: I think it changed with the busing issue, number one. When white students were to be bused across the city, a lot of white parents — there was white flight — moved to the suburbs. I think next year with open enrollment there's the hope that maybe some of these families will be coming back here. As far as this school is concerned, there is no test to get into this school. There are no interviews that are conducted. It's just a lottery only. If an eighth grader has a desire to be here, then he can. Sometimes it's not always his desire but the parents' desire because this is a safe school for students to be. Students are selected through a lottery, and some students are here whose skills, right now, will never get them into a college. *(Interview 1, 2/1/96)*

Sam has been teaching at his current high school for three years and prior to this he was at a middle school for one year in this same district. His first year here he taught one section of eleventh-grade English in addition to humanities courses which are all team taught to ninth and tenth-grade students. Currently, he team teaches three sections (all doubled blocked and equivalent to six traditional class periods) of humanities. I asked Sam if the school always has offered humanities to both ninth and tenth graders. He said that previously it had been offered to ninth graders only, but eventually it became a requirement for sophomores as well. Evidently, this was due to poor cooperation on
the part of the students in their sophomore English classes. Sam also attributed students' lack of cooperation in their English classes due to their rejection of the English teachers' efforts to turn them into "English majors." He believes students often are turned off by many English teachers before they're turned on, especially in terms of wanting to write. He believes this is due in part to an emphasis in the department on the "third-person perspective." Sam believes that he's alone in his opposition to this solitary emphasis.

C.: "We" want our students to all be little English majors (laughs) -- to appreciate and love it the way that we do. I think we turn away more students this way -- I'm saying in the three years that I've worked here I know that I'm doing a lot of good, but I can't think of any students that we've turned on who feel that they should go on to make it their major. I really can't think of too many students.

L.: But don't you think it's in part due to the times we're living in -- that there are not jobs that specifically call for a major in English other than teaching English?

C.: No, because I actually felt -- don't get me wrong, I absolutely love this school and particularly love the students who are here -- I just don't particularly like the program. I like what we offer our students overall, but in the area of writing, no. I think it's retro. I think it's going back in time. I'm a singular voice in this area.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

Despite the fact that he disagrees with his team teachers' and the school's English Department about the focus of writing instruction, Sam said he still believes in the value of teachers teaming and that "two heads are still better than one":

I think teaming is particularly powerful and probably used to its best advantage when there is that kind of dialogue not going on only in the planning but is going on in the instruction and in the lesson itself. If the teachers who are involved -- if it's a shared experience of the instruction, and it's not a "your turn, my turn." If it's this latter way, you might as well be working in separate classrooms. But when teachers team and it works, we're modeling dialogue for our students.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

Sam also believes that he still has been able to make a positive impact on some students who've decided they too will become English teachers. I asked him how he was able to create impact, and he said by showing students how being a teacher enriches his life -- the opportunities and rewards he has wrought, such as traveling abroad and participating in various activities including teacher education and theater events as well as getting to know his students:
C.: But I have turned kids on to English — not to be teachers in a grade school setting — but wanting to be teachers in a high school setting.

L.: What are you doing to turn them on?

C.: I guess they see, first of all, that it can be fun as it enriches my life.

L.: How do you show them it enriches your life?

C.: I guess I come to school in good nature all the time (laughs) and telling them where I've been and what I've done. They're still under the belief that salaries are just so awful — that there's no way anyone can survive on a teacher's salary. That's ridiculous. What really makes me feel good as an English teacher is when I influence a student to want to go on to study English and eventually become a teacher of English. That says something. That says that I, in some way, have opened a door that previously was closed, because I don't think when that student entered my class that was his or her intention to do this with his or her life.

L.: It sounds to me that your students focus on the relational aspects rather than the content aspect of the job — and so do you.

C.: I think a lot of it has to do with that.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

"Ulysses"

In knowing Sam both in and outside the classroom, it is evident that he is a seeker of new experiences. He's also a careful observer of others. I noted this early on when I found myself to be the object of his study. In particular, he wanted to know my "life story" to here and how I came to the doctoral program of study as he too was considering beginning one too. Sam is moved by psychology and said to me on previous occasions that he believed more psychology in preservice teacher preparation would have been beneficial to understanding students' behaviors. He also said he was considering a doctorate in psychology and wanted possibly to focus his dissertation on some aspect of personality and writing. His topic of choice came as no surprise to me as I noted very early that he was a keen observer of people; he not only "diagnosed," for example, my Myers-Briggs type but provided me with the test itself as well as its final analysis.

Sam perceives his primary role as teacher to be that of a scholar and that reading and engaging in new learning experiences are exemplary of this. He also said he believes life both in and out of teaching would be dull without such a perspective. He mentioned as well his desire as a teacher to develop in his students a love for language and learning,
mentioning, for example, a favorite poem that he likes to have students "experience" that he believes also speaks of his own desire:

...I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd...  
... For always roaming with a hungry heart...  
... How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life...  
... To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought...  
... My mariners, Souls that have toil'd, and  
wrought, and thought with me.... Come, my friends,  
Tis not too late to seek a newer world...  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. (pp. 147-148)  
-- from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's (1994) "Ulysses"

Sam has been teaching for a total of 15 years. Somewhat of a Ulysses himself, he has sought opportunities for growth in changing job locations and courses, staying involved in theater or the arts in some aspect outside of the school room, taking university courses, and involving himself in whatever inservice training opportunities are offered to him by way of his school and district. During the course of this study, he shared notions of "multiple intelligences" as defined by Gardner (1993) and how these are recognized in his classrooms, how the writings of Glasser (1986) have influenced him in terms of relating to students, and how he perceived his current involvement in a portfolio project for teachers (in terms of teacher performance and evaluation) was encouraging further reflection on his part.

Sam is an avid reader and says he buys books frequently. He currently has no professional associations or memberships that he's involved in (other than membership in the teachers' unions National Education Association and its state-level affiliate), nor does he read educators' journals on a regular basis. He does read periodicals like *Time* and *Newsweek*, and the *Smithsonian*, because he says as a humanities teacher he deals with so many ancient cultures. He frequents bookstores like Barnes and Noble and Borders [the latter store is where I ran into him on one snowy February day, and we discovered we
both buy a lot of music — in this case Sam was recommending the new Counting Crows (rock) cd and a cd by Keb' Mo' (blues]). The books that he buys are ones that he might incorporate into his humanities classes — books that deal with history, philosophy, world literatures, and so forth — that may include books he discovers through reviews such as *The New York Times Book Review* or by browsing shelves. "I used to subscribe to the *English Journal*, but I don't anymore. I think it's a great journal, but I don't subscribe to it now, because I just can't find the time to read it. I mean, I'm so involved. I probably should, because I know that I can get a lot of great ideas from there" (Interview 1, 1/30/96).

Sam believes his greatest strength as an English teacher would be, number one, his love of reading, and number two, always looking for any books that he believes are going to be part of the "canon of literature" and not just western literature but world literature. He sees as his job to expose students to a variety of reading (as well as writing) experiences that include reading about cultures that they are unfamiliar with in order to gain better understandings of differences and to find commonalities in terms of human experiences. To this aim he says spends very little time reading "popular" literature. However, during one of our conversations, Sam mentioned the possibility of using Frank Conroy's (1993) *Body & Soul*, a former New York Times Bestseller, in the event he were to teach a junior English class the following fall. When I asked him why this book, he mentioned the idea that a young man is raised by a single parent and grows up in poverty and discovers he's talented musically. This young man eventually is transformed by his gift and his education. Charlie stated that it's the idea that art and education can bring richness and opportunities to one's life that makes this book rich for students. Sam also said he's currently aiming to read some Middle-Eastern literature and would like to know more about South American writers.
In terms of his own goals for his students, Sam said first and foremost he wants his students to enjoy learning and that he tries to make it as enjoyable an experience for them as he can:

C.: The only goal that I have for my students is for them to enjoy learning. I have to make it as enjoyable of a process as possible so that the kids are taking away with them a desire to want to learn more and more on their own.

L.: So how do you make learning enjoyable?
C.: Make it fun and alive.
L.: How does that look?
C.: That looks like, I think, taking part in the learning with the students and going through the process with them -- well, for writing, sharing in the writing process with the students. The thing that I really enjoyed my first year here was teaching a tenth-grade English class because that was my domain. I started at the beginning of the year with journal writing. We kept a writing folder until the end of the class, and I can honestly say those kids did writing every single week -- whether it was journal writing or it was essay writing or it was timed quiz response. They were doing writing, whether it was drawing up a script, whether it was thinking of a speech a character might give by the end of a short story or a novel. We did a lot more writing than we have them do now. I think humanities is -- well, there's so many students -- that it's hard for us all the time to have as many writing possibilities for the students as we would like.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

As mentioned previously, since 1981 Sam has taught in five different schools, something he believes has encouraged his flexibility and adaptability as a teacher and has contributed to his effectiveness. For the first five years of his career he taught in what he describes as "all-white, upper-middle class" parochial schools first in Ohio and next in Florida and then a suburban public school, before moving to his current school district where it was possible for him to pursue a master's degree at a university located in the same city. He first taught middle school drama for one year before transferring to his current school which he believes has been his most challenging and stimulating experience as a teacher to date:

It was difficult, because I had never taught sixth graders before, and I never pictured myself as being a "dad." Particularly, sixth graders need parents. They need that kind of maternal and paternal control in the classroom, and I never saw myself as being that kind of authoritarian in the class. I consider myself to be more laid back, and I was playing a role that wasn't comfortable for me. So I was happy to get out of there and come here.... This is the first school -- high school -- where I think that I'm reaching students from all walks of life. Some students come from very comfortable, privileged homes where there are a lot of books and
study time, and then other students go to homes that don’t afford them this kind of privilege. I have a wide spectrum of students here, and I have to say that the kids as well as the teaching staff, but especially the kids, are what keep me going. I enjoy coming to work every day. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Sam said he believes reform is needed that will support teacher mobility and opportunities for professional growth. He shared his irritation with a system that seems to measure a teacher’s dedication in terms of longevity with one school or within one school system. He believes a reform movement is needed that will allow teachers to be more flexible in terms of their teaching experiences as he believes it’s one key to encourage and facilitate professional development. He mentioned that perhaps some teachers’ narrow perceptions of instruction may be the result of their narrow teaching experiences:

L.: What about the faculty -- are they very new to the school?
C.: We have faculty members who have been here for a very long time. We have faculty members who did their student teaching here and have jobs here now.
L.: And how long have they been working in the same system?
C.: They've been working the system for seven, maybe eight or nine years. But this is all they know, and I think it's a very narrow perception of instruction. I'm not saying they're weak teachers, but I think they are very narrow-minded teachers, because they can only see instruction as one way.
L.: As I applied for jobs in new locations, I wondered every time if I would be viewed as a teacher “running from something” or as a teacher who likes new challenges and aims to grow from these new challenges.
C.: And ultimately, "You can't be dependable, because you only lasted for about four years." Yes, and I have to admit before I got this job that was a concern of a panel that was reviewing my resume, and I think it's becoming more difficult as I get older. I'm expected to stay in one spot. Now that I have so many years, too, it makes it more difficult. The system discourages professionalism. It discourages new experiences. It discourages mobility. I think that is -- when we're talking about school reform -- that's one of the targets that we should hit: Allowing teachers to be more flexible in their experiences.
(Interview 1, 2/1/96)

Pedagogy

7:35 AM. I've arrived before class starts at 7:45. The freshmen have arrived early too -- talking in groups, talking one on one, shouting across the room, and sharing what they brought to present this morning. Sam is busy setting up the room. There is a portable stereo on a table at the front of the room (music for the presentations, I assume). Sam introduces me to his team teacher, who wears a nice silk tie and a gold hoop earring; he's probably around Sam's age. A female freshman sits in front of me and turns to speak with me. She appears very articulate. She tells me that she is very nervous, because her
group hasn't practiced enough. Sam now stands southeast at the entrance door, greeting students as they enter — I hear a running commentary of jokes and inquiry of events in their lives. He seems to be taking attendance as well. I ask her if she herself chose to come to this school; she says yes. I ask her why and she says because it's a very good school. "This school is different from other schools. You've heard of the program 'Zero Tolerance'? Well, police are here for preventative measures not because we have fights and shootings here. We also learn a lot more here."

7:45 AM. The students appear very excited — many are talking about costumes they've made, while some still are practicing. It's a large classroom of over 50 students, because it's double-blocked scheduling -- two "regular" classrooms and two teachers have formed into one.

7:48 AM. Sam's co-teacher calls the official roll: Students say "here."
The girl who is nervous tells me they've now seven in their group (they've just added a member -- an exchange student from Costa Rica). A male student sitting next to me tells me that they've borrowed this particular classroom (normally they're in the one next door), because it's large enough to hold 130 students; they need the room for their presentations. The walls are painted an antique pink and its two doors (one links to the adjoining classroom) are salmon, while the ceiling is light gray as are the support beams. Oak shelves line the south walls -- but they're empty with no books today. The students' desks and tables are arranged "theater style," forming a half circle along the south, west and north walls.

8:00 AM. Two boys bumble through the door, wrestling with a handmade tree of about six feet -- made from a pole, paper mache over cardboard with trunk painted brown and leaves green. Sam now stands at the southwest corner of the room, behind arcs of desks yet still near those empty shelves. I sit at a desk on the periphery, facing east with my back to the west; I look to my right where Sam looks from the tree then to me. He's laughing....

-- from Field Log, 2/8/96

In the five months that I have observed Sam in his classroom and have talked with him, his students, and my informant, I have noted that perhaps a big key to his success is his ability to establish and maintain relationships with his students. This was evident on my first observation of him in his classroom. This observation was in his early morning (7:45 to 9:18) freshman class, Introduction to Humanities. On the day that I was there, the students were performing skits that they had written in response to studies of African folktales that were also pre-empting their reading of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. It was performance-based assessment in the making -- as well as consideration of learning styles and the notion of experiential learning. Components of the students' presentation included griot, actors and script, costumes, music, and movement for a total of 100 points. The students had been given two weeks to conceptualize, write, memorize,
practice, and then perform an African folktale from the country (including its history, village, and culture) of their choice. They had a maximum of 10 minutes and a minimum of five.

In between group performances that morning, Sam returned students’ papers. I asked one female student sitting next to me what was the nature of these particular papers. She shared with me an outline. She said that they are required to outline the chapters of books or texts that they use as it helps them to study for tests. Her paper had "20/20" on it. I noticed that there was a note on it as well that said "complete and useful" but mentioning as well that she needed to be aware of "proper format" of her outline (she had capital letters where she should have written lower-case letters after her Arabic numbers one and two). As each group presented (and was videotaped by either Sam or his team teacher) and then ended, other students in the classroom congratulated them on jobs well done, giving feedback like "You didn't look nervous. That was great."

At 8:55 AM I left before the last presentation. I had congratulated the students near me who had presented. They were polite in response and said they were appreciative of my support and feedback. I discovered early on that Sam had not explained to them the nature of my visit or who I was. The students didn't appear too curious either. It was I who brought up the reason for my visit not the students. They evidently are used to visitors in their classroom (typically freshman college students who are assigned to Sam's classroom as part of their "hours in the field" requirement before being admitted to the college of education). Sam's students were friendly and comfortable without even knowing who I was. Perhaps many hadn't even noticed that I was even there as the class size was so large, consisting of almost 50 students!

In the months ahead, as I continued with my observations of Sam in his classes and as we made our way through several conversations, both formal and informal, his values and style as a teacher became more evident as did his frustrations with his context.
-- frustrations from philosophical and pedagogical differences between Sam and his team teachers as well as between Sam and his perceived value of the "traditional view" of writing instruction known as "academic writing" to his school's English Department. What follows is Sam's perceived values regarding the purpose of writing instruction and his goals for his students and his preferred instructional style, including his perception of his role as a writing teacher and his perception regarding the nature of writing assessment.

Who "I" Is

When I asked Sam what he perceived to be the purpose for studying English -- writing -- in high school, he mentioned the notion of comfort with language use, both oral and written. He said he wished that this notion could guide his instruction and assessment more than it does, but with the department focus in terms of writing instruction this was difficult. In talking with Sam it also is evident that he values the aesthetics of language and believes language -- writing instruction, in particular -- should be used as a tool of personal discovery. Writing is also a valuable tool for the teacher to discover more about his students in terms of their interests and in terms of their needs as learners. Throughout my conversations with Sam, he mentioned the importance of writing with the "I" voice and how this aids teachers in developing and maintaining relationships with their students. It is important also so that teachers can know their students and in turn build upon their interests and experiences, something valuable to culturally-relevant teaching. Sam also talked about his graduate course work in drama education which served to strengthen his belief in the "kinesthetic side" of learning, something that he's not able to explore as much as he'd like since his team teachers don't abide by this same belief in its fruitfulness -- there's a sense that it's not "academic enough."

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L.: *What are some methods you've used with writing instruction and why these?*

C.: Well, I think sometimes my approach to teaching English isn't seen necessarily as a very "scholarly" or academic approach. When last year, for example, when the students were studying *Beowulf* in World Humanities class — it really wasn't my area, I was teaching history in that class, but that's another subject altogether. If you're going to truly team teach, everyone is up there -- they're engaged in discourse whether it's literature, history, art, or music -- it doesn't even have to be the "expert" up there. It can be the team that's up there. I've had to -- well, I've felt like I had to push that perspective.

L.: This "teaming perspective" of shared disciplines rather than isolated responsibilities?

C.: Yes, and going back to *Beowulf*, well, my approach wasn't seen as a very "scholarly" investigation of *Beowulf*. But there had been no personal experience and no empathetic experience for our students.

L.: Your team's beliefs go against the constructivist notion that we learn best by doing -- experiencing firsthand.

C.: I had my students do a two-period drama where --

L.: Yes, you talked about this in our graduate class. Once I found out who you were based on hearing your voice on the telephone I quickly recognized you as the guy who tried out the process drama teaching *Beowulf*. You created a mead hall with your students as warriors.

C.: Yes. By the end of the period, the students were writing kennings, and they were writing metaphors. They were getting so much into it.

L.: What happened to your teammates during this?

C.: Oh, yes, they were watching, and I'm not too sure they appreciated it.

L.: Do they not see that there could be a blend?

C.: I think that they see that there can be a blend, but I think they see me as having too much emphasis on the experiential side of it.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

In talking about his graduate work, he discussed its influence on his pedagogy in terms of his own writing in addition to its influence on his classroom instruction. Again, he mentioned "relearning" the writing process but this time in terms of having "authenticity" built in -- that is, he was writing for a real purpose and about something that he was very interested in learning more about:

L.: *Did you write a thesis for your master's degree?*

C.: No, I did the comprehensive examination. But I can remember some other papers that I did about analysis of process drama. I did a lot of papers on using kinesthetics as a tool for the academic classroom and drama. I can remember those were a lot of fun. It was something that I could invest my energy in -- but the interest was already there. I kept thinking to myself that many students of mine don't have that interest or that drive to write their papers. So how can I expect them in the end to turn out anything that is wonderful? Sometimes when we impose the topic, it's difficult. In graduate school, all those topics were my choosing, so I had ownership from the beginning.

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L.: So has this influenced the way you assign writing now to your students?
C.: Well, I would say that it probably would have a greater influence on me if I were alone in the classroom and in sole charge of the curriculum in my classrooms. I think as an English teacher, first of all, we're doing a disservice to our students when we think that the only kind of writing that we have them do is literary analysis or writing to a piece of literature that we have read. How purposeful is that in the end? I mean, it's going to help them with later papers that they are going to have to write for college, but in the end, how practical is that tool going to be in their lives? It's not going to be all that practical. I can remember when I taught sophomore English my first year here, when I was alone in the classroom. I had my students do a personal research study. Starting off I had them take the Myers-Briggs Inventory, and then I had an "expert" come in and evaluate their responses and give them some direction on some career areas. The kids then did some career exploration, and they were doing journal writing. In the end, what they were writing was a self-analysis of where they were right now -- what they needed to do to achieve their goal, were there any adaptations they needed to make in their current behavior and in their current perspective in order to meet those ends? I thought that this was such a wonderful experience for the kids. Here now they could take these papers that they had written and explored, and there was a lot of need in their papers. Too often in the our classrooms that need is left out of their papers, and there was a lot of "me" invested in those papers. They could use if for college applications: "This is who I am, this is where I see myself being 20 years from now, and this is what I think I need to do to get to that goal." I thought it was a very useful paper.

Interview 2, 2/29/96

In encouraging his students to write, Sam believes they need to see a purpose for doing it. As a writing teacher, he believes it's important for him to develop this sense of purpose along with his students. Sam perceived as an obstacle to encouraging his students to write -- other than a department that downplays personal exploration in writing -- the fact that most students rarely write in their personal lives. He believed access to e-mail and dependency on it will eventually change this:

L.: What makes your students want to write?
C.: First of all, seeing a need to do it. There's a lot to be said about the student being empowered to choose what he or she wants to write about.
L.: Does your writing instruction and assessment encourage your students to write?
C.: I think so. I think that my students know that when I'm critical I'm doing it in a way that is not stigmatizing them as being incapable of writing better.
L.: What is your biggest obstacle in encouraging students to write?
C.: The biggest obstacle is that we don't do enough of it in our personal lives. They say that letter writing is a lost art, and I'm hoping that the whole computer communications is going to change that, such as e-mail. I think this is going to make the written language become much more purposeful than it ever has.
mean we've been living in an oral society. You use your speaking voice, but you
don't write. I think it's the best thing for writing is the computer.
(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

Although his school is online in terms of the internet and students can access a
school e-mail account, very few of them actually surf or write from school. In large part
this is due to the lack of computers available. Currently, the only computers online are in
the school library which means they're not the most accessible, and they're few in
number. Sam also believes teachers need to get current with technology, because it
already is placing demands on their professional knowledge base, and it's an aspect of
their pedagogy that remains untapped:

L.: Yes, and I think the idea of e-mail, too, has created its own style of writing.
C.: And it's going to develop a whole new vocabulary -- communications
vocabulary. We've got to get moving. We teachers have to be on top of things.
L.: So how can teachers help students overcome not wanting to write? Is there
anything we can do to encourage students to want to write?
C.: I would think just giving our students writing experiences that extend themselves
outside of the classroom.
L.: Like you were saying to give them access to technology, for example?
C.: Right. Also, for example, when my students were doing career explorations, they
were forced to write for materials. They couldn't just go to a library and just
check it out. They had to write for materials. They had to show several
evidences of writing letters. When we teach them that the only kind of
writing is writing about literature, what value is that: "Why do I want to learn
how to write about literature? So what."
(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

Sam also stated that with grammar and other language instruction the bulk of the
attention to students' writing has been primarily to the final papers submitted, something
that concerns him. He believed this wasn't beneficial for most students who needed
feedback earlier on and not just at the end of the process. He talked as well about the
importance of grammar and language instruction not being isolated from the context of
writing (drafting, in particular). He also stated that he believed feedback should focus on
one or two areas at a time. He believed the constraints of large class sizes (50 or more
students) was problematic for him and his team teachers in terms of teaching grammar
and language:

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C.: I don't think it's taught well at all. It's taught maybe through a worksheet that's been handed out -- it's isolated from context where it's taught and then is forgotten. It's put away by students and then it's not addressed again.

L.: How do you address problems in Standard English?
C.: A little bit at a time is what we're going to look for as far as Standard English is concerned instead of the "whole field" and all at once. It's just going to be one or two items at a time.

(I Interview 2, 2/29/96)

When defining "good writing," Sam says that the voice of the student is important -- it's assertive, plays with language, and has rhythm, and it's evident that "The student is aware of the 'sound' of the spoken word" (Interview 2, 2/29/97). However, he believes his students would define good writing more concretely in terms of its format:

L.: So how do you think your students would define "good writing"?
C.: That's a good question. You need to ask them (laughs). I would say that they would say good writing is writing that has five paragraphs. The first paragraph is a funnel contribution paragraph that leads to a thesis. The thesis can be a two or three-point thesis and that each point is formed in the body of the essay, and the concluding paragraph is the statement of the thesis in a new way, and then we expand and make it a sort of universal point.

(I Interview 2, 2/29/96)

Sam also talked about the kinds of comments he writes on students' papers so that they might be beneficial:

C.: What kinds of comments you write on a student's paper is definitely important. You think that they might be having some sort of impact on the student's writing behavior, but I sometimes wonder just how effective some of those comments are, because our kids respond to comments in a variety of ways. Some students are looking for very pointed, "Tell me what I did wrong, so I can improve it." Just don't say, "Can you reword this?" or "This sounds awkward." or "Sentence structure is off."

L.: Right. "If I knew what 'awkward' was, I wouldn't have done it." (Laughter.)
C.: "Give me something that tells me how I can improve it." But some students want that, while others just say, "Give me the indicators -- tell me that it sounds awkward, and let me investigate ways to improve it, and don't tell me how to improve it." You know what really helps me is doing the Myers-Briggs as a prewriting activity. It helps me as far as what kinds of comments I should be writing on certain students' papers who have certain profiles.

L.: Do you put their profiles in your gradebook?
C.: That year that I did it -- well, I don't remember if I put them in my gradebook or not, because at the same time, I don't want them to limit my thinking. Last year I was thinking about what I was going to do for doctoral research -- was to study and analyze teacher comments on students' writing -- the effectiveness of those
comments on various students and then bring in the Myers-Briggs thing which I know that some teachers value and others don't.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

During my third interview with Sam, we talked about his perceptions of urban schooling and how urban schooling might differ from schooling in suburban and rural locations. Sam talked about the environment of urban schools, mentioning the physical structures of many buildings as well as the lack of instructional technology often found in suburban and even rural locations. We talked as well about the stereotypes of urban students as being from "financially-poor homes and with parents who do not care about them" and whether or not his school fit these and what, if any, effect these and other stereotypes might have:

L.: Define "urban schooling."
C.: Urban schooling has a lot to do with environment. It has to be a school within the city limit. Urban schooling often means working with kids who do not have in the school the necessary technology that some of the suburban schools have or some of the private schools have. But that's one thing that we're working on achieving. Urban schooling is usually -- the environment is usually an older school. Having said that, sometimes it's a cramped working environment as you saw in our World Humanities and especially in our Intro. to Humanities class. That ninth-grade class is -- well, you did notice that it's large. We still don't have a very good room to work in. It's a cramped, stifled room. Frequently, as urban teachers and students we have to work in conditions that are not conducive to learning. Urban schooling is also working with students from all different kinds of backgrounds. I think a big plus for that is when our kids come from all different backgrounds, cities and even countries. They can bring their experiences to the classroom. It's a matter of whether or not urban schools are tapping into the experiences of the kids there. This is at the richest part of the school.

L.: There are several stereotypes of urban schooling, such as "if you attend an urban school, then you must be poor and your schooling is sub-par." But I'm also wondering, too, if CAHS may be somewhat "elitist" in the sense that many of your students who attend are from higher socioeconomic homes -- that is, many of your students may come from middle-class homes that tend to value and better understand the "politics of school" that are geared really toward middle-class values and cultural understandings.

C.: I would say the stereotype of lower socioeconomic families is probably true of a lot of urban schools. I'm not so sure that it typifies the students at this particular school. We have a lot of students who live in ______. This area is a middle-class to upper-middle class neighborhood. Those students tend to be our white students. Our black students come from the east side or the west side of town. So our students come from all over the place. I would say that, yes, that is a concern of mine as a teacher in an urban setting that some of my students are
going home to environments that are not conducive to studying, not conducive to building self-esteem — environments that pare away any chances of success.

L.: Would you elaborate on this?
C.: I learned last quarter -- I had a student arrive new to school and was welcomed into this class. Now, this student did not show it -- this student was very gentle, very well spoken, and very nicely dressed. I always felt he came from a comfortable home, and I discovered to my dismay that he went home to a one-room flat that he shared with his mother. Garbage bags is where they have all of their clothes, because they don't have dressers. They have a hot plate that they use to heat food. They live out of cans. Basically, that's just an existence. Now how can I send that student home with the expectation that he is supposed to get some work done when I know that there are other students going home to more comfortable environments where they have study areas, where they have private space and quiet times to do that kind of work? A lot of our students are disadvantaged, but I'm not saying that kills any chance of achievement, but it certainly gets in the way of achieving.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

As we talked about the student diversity at his school, Sam talked about the richness available at the school's "fingertips" in terms of learning about other cultures, religions, and so forth. Part of his school's Quality School plan is to recognize student diversity in terms of the academic curricula, but this is left up to individual teachers, and in terms of Sam's case, it's left up to the teams of humanities teachers. We talked as well about Sam's perceived importance in recognizing in the curriculum the cultures of the students and being wary of providing a monocultural context in which the culture of the teacher is the primary culture being acknowledged.

We also talked about the public's perceptions of urban school teachers and students and discussed what, if any, impact this might have on Sam and the students and teachers he works with. Sam confessed to avoiding urban schools in lieu of parochial and suburban rural locations as he was concerned as well with a match between him and his students in terms of meeting their needs and interests:

L.: Many of my preservice teachers at Ohio State have told me that they believe teachers who take jobs in urban settings do so because they weren't able to get jobs elsewhere. Many of them believe that the worst teachers will end up in urban schools. Having taught in urban schools, I disagree. In my experience, some of the most innovative teaching happened in the urban schools where I taught, and I've heard others express this same sentiment. So having said this, have you heard of any stereotypes of teachers who teach in urban settings?
C.: Yes, I've heard that the worst teachers are in urban classrooms and the good teachers are found in suburban schools -- also "those teachers are lazy, those teachers are unmotivated, those teachers tend to be disciplinarians, those teachers are ill-equipped to work anywhere else." I have to say that for the longest time -- this is my fifteenth year of teaching -- that I tried to avoid the urban classroom, and I was so happy to find a job in a private school and then to be working in a suburban school. My first experience teaching in an urban setting was at Mohawk Middle School, and man, it opened my eyes. I would like to see some of these teachers who claim to be so wonderful step into an urban school environment with the same challenges that(147,540),(161,558) we have to face. Let's just see how well they can use the "old formulas" to answer the problems that they have.

L.: What are some of these problems and "old formulas"?

C.: Problems would be students coming to school not having had breakfast, not having had dinner the night before. There are latchkey kids going home where there is no supervision -- sometimes they don't even see their parents at all. Some students are living in very dangerous neighborhoods so when they leave our doors they are returning to an environment that is filled with fear and resentment, and sometimes they come to school with that resentment on their shoulders.

L.: So is poverty central to urban schools?

C.: I don't know. I think our school is an "oasis" as far as urban settings go.

L.: Students in the other schools that I've been visiting for this study believe that the alternative schools are the best schools physically and spiritually.

C.: But yet we work in an environment that is not, as I said, conducive to study. I mean, if you walked into the classroom -- not only the urban overcrowding situation -- but just take a look at the decay of the building.

L.: Actually, I had thought your school to seem pretty well-preserved, especially when compared to others in the district that I've visited.

C.: But we have hall boards with holes in them, stained walls, and study areas that look like they might be on the east side of Chicago.

(Interview 2, 2/29/96)

**Building Relationships**

During the time that I have known Sam, several aspects of his being are keys to his effectiveness -- his ability to adapt and remain flexible; his perceived importance of listening to students and then building upon his students' knowledge; and his recognition that teaching is a process that needs continued checks and renewed commitments. In his ability to adapt, Sam has been able to transcend school settings and types. His flexibility in his classes he attributes in part to the fact the he has had to adapt to different types of schools in various locations. In aiding his adapting and flexibility, he "listens" for his students' needs and interests, and he's patient to "get it right," recognizing that it's a continual journey and not a destiny -- to build relationships with his students and to meet their learning interests and needs. Sam is conscious of his professional development and
searches for ways to encourage his growth and knowledge. He does what he can to revitalize himself professionally. He recognizes teaching as hard work, he admits it, and he gets on with it. He does not lament over this fact but rather accepts it, takes on the challenge, and is stimulated by it.

Another key to Sam's effectiveness is his ability and desire to reflect on things as they are and to think in terms of how they could be. He seems to be innately introspective and intuitive, a reader of people: He is challenged by this, and it's this challenge that keeps him from complacency. His introspection causes him to question his own effectiveness and his bearing on those he works with, both his colleagues and students. He also understands that teaching is best when it's played as a "team sport." He modifies according to his team's perceptions and needs, though he can be frustrated when he realizes that he's often the "odd man out."

During our first interview, I asked Sam if he believed himself to be an "expert" in the teaching and assessing of writing in urban schools as he had been nominated as being "effective." He didn't hesitate to disagree with such a label. "I think that whole idea about expert -- it's a word that really annoys and offends me, because I don't think English is a discipline that you can necessarily be an expert in. You may have had a lot of experience, but as far as being an expert, it's not like being able to craft pottery on a potter's wheel or being an expert electrician where you have to work all sorts of electrical problems. It's far more complicated than that" (Interview 1, 2/29/96). I then asked Sam to tell me what he most valued in himself and then had him describe himself in a variety of ways. In noting what he valued most in himself, he said dedication. Throughout my conversations with Sam, his students, and the informant who nominated him, this commitment has been evident -- his perceived need to be accountable to his students and to respect them and their needs in this way.
Sam believes his primary role as writing teacher is to build the self-esteem in his students, and he believes in facilitating their growth. He mentioned former teachers of his — one teacher who shattered his confidence as a writer and another who "challenged him to think a little harder." Again, he mentioned the importance of modeling or "practicing what you preach" as well as maintaining dialogue with his student writers.

C.: The worst teacher I ever had — I was in an accelerated class in the sixth grade. She had a lot of problems with my -- well, I never thought I was good enough. I can remember working very hard, and I can remember doing a piece of writing that I was very proud of that was a personal narrative that was supposed to use suspense. I can remember reading it in front of the class and just enjoying the moment, then passing by her gradebook and watching her put a D by my name (laughs). I can say that this teacher didn't make me feel very good about myself ever in that classroom. She wasn't there to build me as a person in the sixth grade. Maybe she felt that that was what she was doing, but I didn't interpret it this way.

L.: Some people might say, "Sam, that's what parents are for."
C.: No, we have to make our students feel good about being in that classroom.
L.: So tell me about the best teacher you've ever had.
C.: A wonderful professor that I had was in a medieval literature course where I read Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. This was a teacher who was such a relaxed, intellectual, funny, charismatic person who was just so open to adventure and ideas that she was able to stimulate me as I'm sure she did other students in the class. She encouraged me to think a little harder about issues and don't wait for answers but to research for answers.
L.: So the "ideal" writing teacher?
C.: I think the ideal writing teacher has to do something like that. But, I don't think there's any one formula for the "ideal."

When I interviewed my informant who nominated Sam, she confirmed his abilities in building relationships with his students. My informant was anxious to share her experiences as a staff development specialist observing Sam in his classroom and was anxious to share her own "student's" perception of Sam teaching in his classroom (see

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Appendix H). My informant for Sam not only works in the district's staff development office, but she also coordinates college students' (preservice teachers') placements and conducts a seminar for these same students who are engaged in their university's freshman early field experience program. One of her students was placed in Sam's classroom during the time of our interview:

L.: *So this is Sam's student observer's report?*
F.: Yes. This is really good. I was just skimming it. "CI" stands for critical incident. I'm glad I got it back, because I mean to copy it.

L.: *Do the teachers typically see their student observer's written reports?*
F.: No, but I asked her in class about sharing this one. I wrote on her report "Are you going to share this with Sam?" She acted like she might be a little embarrassed to do this. I told her to think about it and that maybe she might want to give it to him after the quarter is over -- after her evaluation.

L.: *So why did you recommend Sam?*
F.: I think I recommended Sam because he has a lot of qualities that Susan talks about in this paper -- they are ones that I've recognized in him when I've had a chance to observe his classes and have observed just in his personality. I got to know Sam first as a friend through other friends and then found out he was a drama teacher at a middle school.... I heard in friendly conversations with him about the kinds of stuff he was doing with the kids and asked if I could stop in and watch for a while.... If you know anything about this school, then you know it's a core urban middle school.... It's typically problematic, so if you can hold those students spellbound on a Friday at 3 o'clock, then you're doing something very right, and these kids were very into it. They were acting, and they were repeating lines, and they were very much on task. They were having fun, and they were learning. That was the first time I happened to see Sam interact with kids, and he was much of the things Susan says about him in her paper. (Interview 5/10/96)

I soon discovered that Sam's observer, Susan, was later to become, two quarters later, my student when she enrolled in a course that I was teaching on young adult literature for preservice teachers. I soon discovered she wasn't the first of my students who shared in my classes classroom experiences with this "really energetic and fun teacher" at this particular high school: She actually became the fourth preservice education major that I have known after meeting Sam through this study. In Susan's critical incident report (see Appendix H) dated April 25, 1996, she was to discuss an event that "led you to be surprised, startled, pleased, concerned or upset, or confused."

Susan chose "pleased" and begins her paper "A teacher's behavior means everything to a
student. The teacher may not know it, but the student watches the teacher with very
careful eyes. Anything that a teacher may say or do in a classroom atmosphere is very
critical to the formation of a student's own behavior and how the student respects the
teacher." She continues her observations of Sam's classroom behavior, commenting on
both his genuine interest and respect for his students:

This past week, I watched Mr. ___'s behavior in the classroom, both before and
after class. Before class, he tries to make himself available to the students.
Although at times, he has a lot of running around to do, he somehow makes time
to answer questions that the students may have. However, he not only concerned
himself with academic questions, he also showed a genuine interest in the
students' lives away from the classroom. I watched as he looked at pictures that a
student brought with her to school. He sat down, asked questions, and listened to
her responses. This may sound a bit unimportant to the profession of teaching,
but I don't think it is at all. In fact, I believe that doing something as small as
looking at pictures, even for a few minutes, means a great deal to a student. Not
only is he showing interest in that student's life away from the classroom, but
now, that student also feels that this teacher really cares and thus takes whatever
he says or does very seriously. In simpler terms, they respect each other.

At the close of my interview with my informant for Sam, I mentioned that I
noticed that all of the teachers in this study crave change and actively seek it. As a result,
we began a discussion as well on the impact of the personal on the professional life. My
informant stated that she believes the personal life has an impact in that it provides for
additional stimulus in the classroom:

F.: Yes, I think that's another characteristic. You're absolutely right. They're risk-
takers, they're big change-oriented, and they're not at all -- well, they thrive on it
rather than are threatened by it. We've talked so much about the professional side,
but there's that personal side and that gets into it. People who thrive on change,
people who have a lot of different experiences all the time and look for that --
these teachers tend to travel a lot. They like to travel. They read a lot. They're
looking all the time for something new or different to do or to think about. Like
you said, they'll look for a change and literally, physically, the place where they
have to go to work every day.

L.: But I wonder, too, can you be as good a teacher, for example, if you don't have a
lot of interests or if you don't dabble in different activities?

F.: I don't know. I don't know how much the personal overlaps into the professional.
That's also a good question. It's hard for me to think that it doesn't help only
because I've seen so many of what I call good teachers and good presenters who
do a marvelous job of intermingling their personal lives to the point where it's
appropriate. I mean, they pull and pull, and they share that with their kids. They
become human beings to them. The kids know that Sam also does art and what
courses he is taking at the university or even the type of toothpaste that he uses or what makes him laugh or whatever. So the more stimulus you have about your personal life to share, the more the kids are like, "Wow, you do that? You have 'three motorcycles'?" (Laughter.)

L.: One of Sam's students, obviously very impressed, asked me, "Did you know that he listens to the Smashing Pumpkins?" I said, "No, but that's good data for this study." (Laughter.)

F.: Or how about "Did you know that he shops at the Gap?" Or what is it, the "Structure?" You know, like that's supposed to tell us something. (Laughter.) (Interview 5/10/96)

His Web

Obstacles as Challenges

When I asked Sam to describe himself politically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and then to reflect on which of these helped or hindered his abilities as a teacher in his school district, he generated adjectives that seemed to confirm my findings by this study's end. All point to his need to learn and to apply what he learns, his need to challenge himself intellectually and to develop in his understandings, his interpersonal talents, and his practice of reflection and reflexivity and in doing this to challenge status quo instruction:

L.: Generate a list of adjectives that describe you politically.
C.: Democratic, skeptical, cynical, questioning, fascinated.

L.: Generate a list of adjectives that describe you intellectually.
C.: Questioning, again. Explorative, unknowledgable, scientific at times (laughs), intuitive.

L.: Emotionally?
C.: Stable, crazy (laughs), humble, proud. You know, I'm seeing all these polarities in my emotional being (laughs). Private. Personable.

L.: Spiritually?
C.: Introspective, introverted (laughs), hopeful, unencumbered by definitions.

L.: Thinking back to the list of adjectives that you've just generated, do you believe certain qualities have enhanced or even inhibited your effectiveness as a teacher in urban schools?
C.: I think that I'm knowledgable. I'm questioning. Those are aspects of my personality, including humility, that I think are assets. Things that might get in my way of becoming an effective teacher would probably be -- I didn't say this before -- but it might be stubbornness (laughter).

(Interview 1, 2/1/96)

During our fourth interview, I asked Sam to relate his personal being -- philosophy or outlook on life -- to a character or voice in literature, drama, or even a
song. Immediately, he mentioned the Pulitzer-Prize winning play *Buried Child* by Sam Shepherd (1979) and alluded to a soliloquy in which Vince, the son of Iowa farmers, speaks of his desire to run from obstacles in his life but then doesn't and confronts them head on instead. Sam said that he had used this piece when trying out for a part in a play several years ago and that it came quickly to mind, especially in light of his reading recently in *The New York Times* of a current revival of Shepherd's plays in the city. I asked Sam if he saw himself frustrated like Vince, and he replied no but to the contrary. "I don't see myself so much as running away from anything necessarily, but I see myself as looking at obstacles in life as an adventure, something to overcome. When I think of life in terms of that, obstacles can be beautiful" (Interview 4, 3/29/96).

During our fifth and final interview, I asked Sam to tell me why he agreed to take part in this study and to give me feedback on what, if anything, he derived from his participation. In true "Sam form," he told me that he was looking for some conversation that would allow him to do some soul searching and make some discoveries in terms of some future decisions, one being whether or not he would transfer to another school in the district the following school year. Because of his current frustrations with the perceptions of writing instruction at his school, he also saw participation in this study as a way to validate what he perceived as important as a teacher of writing and to see if what he deemed important might be shared by the others participating in this study as he was a fairly new teacher to the district and has had few opportunities to speak with other English teachers outside his building:

> Because in a way it's validating that maybe some things that I cared about as a teacher are important to others, and I wanted to do a bit of soul searching and see what I could discover further about who I am as a teacher and the effects that I may have. I suppose I felt a little lost in the nature of our program and knew that I needed to talk about what was going on and what possibly could be. (Interview 5, 9/11/96)
Inspiration and Imagination

Also during our final interview, I wanted to confirm my findings of Sam in terms of what he valued as an individual writing teacher and in terms of viewing him in light of the two other teachers in this study. Not only is he a teacher interested and known for his effectiveness as a writing teacher, but he dabbles as well in the visual arts and even worked briefly in the early 1980s as a graphic designer while teaching school as well. I asked Sam to sketch a thematic web of his thinking in terms of "what I value" as a teacher of writing (see Figure 4.1). I believed that rich results might occur to validate my own perceptions of him as a writing teacher. His pen went quickly to paper, and he shared his web with me in less than five minutes.

In viewing his web, it is evident that Sam perceives central to the teaching of writing is the valuing of imagination and inspiration. He builds on students' personal experiences, and he believes in shared experiences which also can be rich sources of inspiration. It is this belief in knowing his students and building relationships with them that currently is frustrated by his team teachers' perceptions of having students write using a third-person perspective. As mentioned previously, Sam believes in valuing notions of "reader response" applied to students' writing. Evidenced as well in his web, the writing act is viewed as a process that is both exploratory and developmental, requiring flexibility and "specialized foci" that is dependent on individual writers' needs as well as interests. Additionally, he uses reading and the arts to inspire writing, encouraging vicarious and firsthand engagements. In terms of reading to write, he has students build on past and present learning experiences; in terms of the arts, this may include film and other popular culture or creation and performance which can model
Figure 4.1: Thematic Web of Charlie's Thinking
various literary devices for writers' use or inspire students in their own creations. Out of these engagements, the writer's voice is developed from both familiar and new experiences.

Conversations with Bette

An "Angel"

I made it to the school by 7:50 AM. I told the office secretary that I was waiting for Dr. Bette for an interview. She mentioned that she'd just seen her in the copy room and that I might find her still there. I ventured behind the front desk and headed down the end of a short hall, past a faculty bathroom and lounge to the copy room. Bette was busy with her back to the door of the small room with file cabinets against one wall, reams of paper on shelves against another, and a monster of a copy machine that reached from one end of the room to the next. She was mass producing copies of a short story she planned to have her advanced placement English class read that morning, something about an elephant and set in India written by an Indian author. I said, "Good morning!" Obviously startling her, she asked me why I was there: I reminded her of our interview. We agreed that I would call the night before the next interview and/or classroom observation for her "safety"! Bette was very amenable and suggested we head to the conference room down the hall from the main office to start the interview.

About 15 minutes into the interview, we were "displaced" by a woman who had the conference room reserved for that morning. From there we ventured to the teacher's lounge next door where Bette's student teacher (and my former writing methods student) was seated, trying to stave off a migraine attack while completing lesson plans and anticipating grading papers at the same time. There was another teacher present and soon another, but Bette didn't mind and said her answers would be the same regardless if these teachers were present or not! Bette seems to be a very forthright person who is quick to question what isn't clear to her. She is warm and friendly -- very professional in appearance. She's petite, a blond with light blue eyes, and has a voice, with a lyrical quality and pitch, made for both smooth jazz radio or upbeat pop. She is very serious and obviously committed to doing the best job possible for whomever and wherever she teaches.

During this first visit to the school, I noticed a "book club" meeting announcement. Both teachers and other staff participate in the book club -- Bette included. The two novels listed for the next meeting were by Gabriel Marquez and Isabel Allende. Bette explained during Interview I that the book club was an attempt to explore further those cultures and "lifeways" that the members are not so familiar with -- an attempt to not only educate oneself but to encourage a better understanding in others in light of each others' differences.

I found this interview with Bette to be one of the easiest of all other firsts. She is very articulate and deviated little from the questions I asked (which made it easier to transcribe!) -- she was concise and to the point. She is highly reflective, and I found it difficult to stump her with my questions. She is a student who never quits learning, and she seems to be tireless based on her responses to my questions and based on her shared illustrations of her answers to my questions. She says when she "grows up" she wants to be a college professor (she says she
wants to be what I'm doing now). I can't help but feel inadequate thinking I
haven't taught secondary school as long as she has. When I get the feeling that
she's thinking in response to me, "She's living the life that I want to live some
day," I wonder if she realizes that I'm thinking, "I want to be like her some day."
— from Field Log, 1/30/96

I was especially anxious to meet Bette — especially after I heard that she had a
doctorate in English education and focused her dissertation on the work of Mina
Shaughnessy (1977) and the district's teachers and their thinking regarding writing
instruction. Bette had been nominated for this study by three of my five informants. I
called Bette in December of 1995 before the January that I was to begin this study. I
explained briefly the nature of my study, and without any hesitation she said yes and that
she would be delighted to help a doctoral student conduct her dissertation as she had been
given plenty of time by participants of her dissertation study. The day we first met in
person I mentioned to Bette, as I did to all the teachers in this study, that I'd like to offer
some form of reciprocity in return for her time commitment. Bette's request to this was,
"I'd love to visit your classroom." I said, "I'd love to have you there." Bette visited my
classroom two quarters in a row in the form of a panel leader and discussant. She
brought with her two of her good friends who also happened to be her colleagues
(Interesting note here: Both these other teachers were nominated by some of my
informants to be a part of this study as well!). Prior to the teachers' visit, the students in
my writing methods class had sat before a panel of student teachers who were placed that
quarter in the city's middle and high schools for their practica. About midway through
their student teaching, these student teachers had painted for the most part a very dim
picture of the "teacher's life" in urban schools. The one exception to this student teacher
panel of negativity was "Nicole" who happened to be a former student of mine and who
currently was Bette's student teacher.

I tried to "salvage" my students' thinking by attempting to get them to realize that
these student teachers were at the midpoint of their student teaching experiences, and
many of them were experiencing for the first time in their lives a sense of discomfort that dashes of "real world" experiences can give "novice travellers." (I relayed as well to my students various research studies that showed student teachers' attitudes peaking at the second or third week of their experiences and then going "downhill" as they realize that it is a very tough and challenging job, before they again rise above the midpoint line.) But to no avail, my students had sunk in their sentiments and were very concerned. I found their negative stereotypes of urban schooling to be perpetuated further by the "aggrandized war stories" of these student teachers who I believed desired to instill some fear and sympathy from my students who were actively listening.

Bette and her additional party of two were saviors indeed. Talking to her on the phone before their visit, I explained to her what had happened in my class. With outrage and a good deal of moxie, these three teachers came to my class determined to tell and show my students that it's not a matter of survival or a lack of options, but it's a matter of choice and commitment and that their over 20 years in the classroom was a conscious effort and testament that their careers as urban school teachers were rich ones. Based on the student teachers' commentary, the students in my class and I compiled a "winter quarter agenda" for the panel of teachers to address (see Appendix I). I gave it to the three teachers in advance, so they could anticipate my own students' concerns based largely on the student teachers' stories. Needless to say, my students were enchanted, and we found ourselves the following week after the teacher panel listing far more "gold stars" than "black holes" regarding the nature of teaching and especially the nature of urban schooling. One student wrote in his end of quarter assignment that "three angels appeared and erased many of my fears." Another student wrote of three themes in these teachers' thinking: "(1) Find a little something in each student; (2) be aware that genre mixing and blending -- especially in terms of the 'traditional canon' that still fills the textbooks -- brings more meaning and creates more interest to kids whose mindsets are
focused on contemporary and more progressive events and who may not relate to cultural orientations of these authors and artists; and (3) classroom discipline is eliminated when you make a classroom comfortable, a place where students want to be." And so began, my coming to know Bette.

**Learning Along the Way**

"First Friends" and Family

An original baby boomer, Bette was born in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1947, where her Navy officer father was stationed at the time. The family lived in Washington, DC, in Navy housing until she was in third grade when they moved to a town in Ohio of about 28,000 which she describes as having "all the good qualities and the bad" of small towns. While living in DC as a little girl, Bette said she was exposed to a multicultural world which she believes stimulated a lot of her thinking today and as a result hadn't any real problems adjusting to teaching in the inner city. She lived in this same town until entering a large urban university which is in the same metropolitan area that she's lived in ever since. Bette said books were her first friends, and they continue to inspire her today as she reads to share and engage in conversations with others, and she reads to understand others' ways of thinking and cultures outside her own. Being an only child, she had "lots of cousins who weren't my age," and she had a great deal of support from her parents and her mother in particular in terms of reading whatever books she chose to read. She also believes these were factors that contributed to her becoming English teacher:

So, in fact, that probably contributed to my being an English teacher, because I read constantly. I had imaginary friends. I entertained myself. My fantasy life was good (laughs). And my parents never censored anything that I read. They never tried to interfere. My mother even got into a fight with the public librarian one time, because the librarian said, "Your daughter is trying to read something that is beyond her years," and my mother said, "You let her do it. It's fine with me." I can't remember what book it was, but it wasn't anything nasty. It was just a little more mature, so my mother checked it out for me. I had a lot of support from my family to do what I wanted in this way. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)
During the course of our first interview, Bette also talked about being a member of more than one book club and how she believed these provided professional as well as personal enrichment opportunities. One of the book clubs had begun as of that school year and consisted of a mixture of teachers, custodians and secretaries. The other was a group of women who originally came together through a grant provided by the school district. Now that the money has dried up, the group continued to meet but with new and more varied members, some outside of teaching but still all women. Originally when this latter club formed, it consisted of women reading primarily women's fiction and primarily either third world or African American authors. "Something to kind of catch ourselves up to something beside the regular canon" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). This group consisted of about 15 English teachers and a couple of professors from a local liberal arts college who happened to be friends of some of the group members who provided a nice "articulation of those two levels that was sort of accidental" according to Bette. Formed three years ago, this group continues to meet once a month:

We meet at somebody's house. We eat and gossip, but we really focus on the books. The books are not necessarily books that we'd teach in the classroom but they are for "our level." We set aside time at the end of these things, as we are professionals, to hash over 'Hey, have you tried this?' or 'Have you done this?' and we share a lot of teaching ideas at the end of it too" (Interview 1, 1/30/96).

Bette is also a classically-trained pianist; she studied formally for 10 years and has performed in concerts as well as has done accompaniments. She says she relaxes to Rachmaninoff and gets a lift from artists who write and sing like Tracy Chapman. During one of my visits to her classroom, she was playing "Bach by the Ocean" to encourage the "rust out of her students' brains" as they began to write that morning. Bette said another reading passion of hers includes accounts of ancient Greece and Rome, and she splurges for "coffee table books" on these subjects. Bette also belongs to the National Council of Teachers of English and says she reads the English Journal and
Notes Plus on a fairly regular basis. She said that she also has attempted to write for them here and there and that she's been to a few conferences. "Recently I've been contemplating putting a paper together, but I haven't gotten my act together on that. I should try to do that. I guess I spend an awfully lot of time preparing for my classes. I don't spend a lot of time in professional organizations, but like I told you, even the women's reading group is enrichment" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). Her other memberships include the teachers' unions -- the National Education Association and its state-level affiliate.

In terms of her professional involvements outside of teaching, during one of her sabbaticals from this school district, Bette worked for a local newspaper in a suburban community east of the city where she also resides and since has been a guest columnist a few times, writing what she refers to as "humorist, sarcastic editorials." She also has written professional articles, personal essays that reflect a "wry" commentary on life, reports on behalf of committees for schools, and "then in my neighborhood, if anybody needs anything that is written for the city council, they run right over to me" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). She also continues strong correspondence with friends that she's written to over the years and says "we haven't given this up to the telephone" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). She is also peace writer for Amnesty International, writing protest letters against torture and political imprisonment to heads of state. "I find this a real effective use of writing that saves a lot of people's lives" (Interview 1, 1/30/96).

Bette's husband is a certified social studies teacher. She says he has always wanted to teach, but he has ended up working for the government employed by Housing and Urban Development (HUD). "He still dreams of being a teacher. He volunteer coaches after work" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). They have one child, an 18-year-old son who is a college freshman this year, majoring in theater. Bette jokingly commented, "He's in the humanities. Yes, I'm so happy he doesn't want to go out and make Napalm or
anything like that " (Interview 1, 1/30/96). Bette says she's gained insights to teaching having a child of her own. "I've been teaching sometimes at the same level that he's at, so I've gained different insights into how that works from working with a child at home who claimed he hated English but actually was pretty good at it. But I mean helping your own child is a whole different ballgame than helping your students" (Interview 1, 1/30/96).

In the Beginning...

I chose to garner Bette's participation study, because I knew she had a Ph. D. and knew it had something to do with Mina Shaughnessy's (1977) notions of the basic writer. Bette is 49 years old and has been teaching junior and senior English classes at her current high school for the past four years and has taught a total of 23 years for the district. Bette is marked by her quick wit, intelligence, and warmth -- a lethal combination for any student wishing to oppose teacher. What is most apparent about Bette as a teacher is her desire to remain enthusiastic, something she believes is motivated by change and reinvention. Throughout my conversations with Bette, I found myself saying, "You ought to write about that -- publish what you're sharing with me." Her response was tempered with "I've thought about that" and "I need to find the time." It was truly our conversations and accusations of "you ought to publish that" that bore the "T-Project" (see Chapter 1 "Reciprocity").

In terms of her secondary schooling experiences, Bette said she graduated from a class of about 350 students. Her high school drew students from a large rural area and from several small towns. Her teachers were the same ones her parents had and were close to retirement when she reached high school. Bette said she felt very prepared upon entering college as an undergraduate. "I had four years of Latin, so when I came out of high school I gave my teacher some credit. I proficienced four levels.... That means that I had a good teacher, because you usually don't get through that" (Interview 1, 1/30/96).
Bette also praised her English teachers who were tough. "I had one teacher who taught me -- her whole thing was how to teach writing. I never had a specific class on that in college" (Interview 1, 1/30/96):

L.: *What kind of writing did this teacher have you generate?*
C.: Different genres. How to go about it. This was back in the '60s. She did peer revision and peer editing, and she also was the newspaper adviser, so she would have us look at each other's writing. Very stringent about exactness and style and appropriateness of mode for your purpose.

Like Sam, Bette's first major as a college freshman was not education, but she rather "found herself" in the needs of others. She soon became an English teacher by proxy when her fellow students discovered she had a talent for prose. She eventually switched from her "pre-med. and zoology" major:

Nothing like taking a 180-degree turn (laughter). People were bringing me their English themes to my dorm floor and saying, "Would you help me with this? I don't know what I'm doing." I was actually able to get them better grades. It was really obvious that I was good at that and not so good at chemistry (laughter). I really went with my strengths, I guess. And I've always been a person who likes to impart information. I probably would have been a teacher in some way no matter what I did. I just went with my strengths and realized that I loved English classes and that I could just keep taking them and taking them. I guess I fell into it by process of default -- default of the fact that the "hard" sciences were not as easy for me as I thought (laughter). (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Bette holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the same university where she also completed her Ph. D. in English Education, graduating in 1982. As an undergraduate, she majored in English and minored in Latin. For her master's degree, she did some curriculum work in English and took some coursework in psychology. Her doctoral program emphasis was in composition and her study was sponsored by the school district that employs her. Her study sought to determine teachers' attitudes toward principles of Mina Shaughnessy's (1977) theory of basic writers as chronicled in the seminal *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Writing.* Her dissertation sparked dissertation studies of other teachers in the district's schools,
namely administrators as in the case of one of my informants who "piggybacked" the findings of Bette's study in terms of writing process instruction at the secondary level.

Bette said she last took graduate courses for credit in the mid-1970s which was also when she took a sabbatical to work as a student teacher supervisor for the university. She took the amount of years that were allowed after the candidacy examination to complete her dissertation. "A lot of years elapsed in between and in '80 I had this little epiphany. I'd had some surgery, and I was lying in the hospital and said, 'I'm going to finish my Ph. D.' So I started on my dissertation" (Interview 1, 1/30/96):

My dissertation focused on Mina Shaughnessy. _____ was my adviser. He's since retired. He was kind of philosophizing and was kind of on the "cutting edge" of new thinking. He was fascinated with Shaughnessy's theory of composition. That's "theory" in quotations, because in strict scientific sense, it's hard to get theory accomplished. My task was to go through Shaughnessy's work and analyze the strands of her theory and to try to articulate that and then develop an instrument that assessed all the district's high school teachers to see to what degree they were on the mark in terms of cutting-edge theory of composition instruction. And so my study was analytical in terms of going through her material and coming up with my own "five-point plan" of what her theory was all about. I did about 10 subjective research interviews and then the instrument was administered all through the schools and then had to be statistically analyzed. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

Her study's findings concluded that not all teachers had bought into the "writing process" yet, something Bette attributed to the time period as the movement was just taking place in the schools. "Right after that, the district really got busy and bought into it wholesale" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). Essentially, the results of Bette's study encouraged intensive staff development in the early 1980s for teachers to be "trained" in the writing process. According to Bette, staff development for secondary teachers hasn't been as regular or intense since then in part due to the fact that federal grant monies were available at the time in light of education reports that alluded to "why Johnny can't write."

Since completing her Ph. D., her coursework has consisted mainly of workshops offered through the school system. During the time of this study, Bette had been involved as well with summer workshops offered through a local liberal arts college in
which teachers accepted into the program participated in thematically-arranged literature readings funded (tuition paid) by a grant received by the college. During the course of this study, the school district happened to offer an after-school inservice workshop that was an outgrowth of these workshops. Bette was one of the teachers who facilitated this workshop which I attended along with about 15 secondary school teachers in the district. By chance, Sam also attended. When he saw me, he was suspicious that I was following him! I eventually introduced him to Bette which was the first time that they’d met.

During the course of this study, Bette also was attending workshops on "brain-based learning theories" and shared with me how she might apply this and did apply this to her current writing instruction in the classroom.

Outside of her current high school, Bette has had a variety of teaching experiences in other buildings and at other grade levels in her tenure with the district. She has taught English and Latin at four other high schools in the district and has taught at one middle school. All of these have been planned moves. "This is just me -- you wouldn't find everybody doing this. My closet friend has been at the same school for almost 30 years and loves it and would never move. About every four years, I have to reinvent myself, and I will uproot myself for one reason or another" (Interview 1, 1/30/96). In her moves she has left briefly public school teaching for two reasons -- for maternity leave and for sabbaticals, for example, in which she taught half-time a course in the freshman basic English program at the university she graduated from and taught half-time for her school district. She also has taught in an integrated studies program at the same liberal arts college she has facilitated seminars. This teaching experience also overlapped with teaching part time for her school district. As mentioned previously, while completing her doctoral course work, she also supervised student teachers in the early 1970s.

Bette's current high school is considered "traditional" although the administrators would like to see a science and mathematics focus become a sort of "magnet" to attract
students. The school is located in the northwestern part of the city and is known primarily for its good sports teams, especially in terms of its girls' athletics. During the winter quarter, the girls' basketball team won first place in the Division I State Championships. Bette and I had scheduled an interview for the following day (after the final play-off), but we had to cancel when school was let out early due to the win the night previously. A pep rally occurred with classes shortened for the afternoon in order to celebrate.

Approximately 1,100 students attend her high school. There are roughly 73 teachers on its faculty which Bette describes as "aging" and who maintain a variety of motivational and commitment levels:

We don't have a lot of brand new, younger teachers. Maybe a third of the faculty are thinking actively about their retirement within the next five years or so. So you've got people who are really just trying to survive their way on out and are not real prone to innovation and not real interested in changing, and they have their reasons. I would say that there's maybe a core -- maybe 10 percent -- who can't stand the students. They're just looking out and just have had it and are very angry and very hostile. You've got maybe another 10 percent on the other end who just love their jobs here and just think it's wonderful. They really enjoy working with the kids. The vast majority are in the middle. I think there are quite a few people here who are very good at their content area. But as far as teaching techniques, there's simply a lot more static methods being used here -- a lot more "rip and run handouts" and "read and regurgitate it." That's the old model. I don't know that I blame those people. Nobody has come along and has said, "Hey, there's a different way to do it." But I think our English Department, to defend it, has really bought into the writing process fairly well, and you can call that innovative. They've absorbed that and sort of bleed it. (Interview 3, 3/8/96)

Interestingly enough, Bette started her teaching career at this same high school in 1970. She said the following school year of 1971-1972 was the year of the first black student enrolled at the school who also happened to be in one of her English classes.

"The schools were highly segregated at the time. _____ was all black. This school was all white, even though the district was contiguous. And there were some riot times" (Interview 4, 3/39/96). She said students have changed in ways other than just racial
composition, but wasn't sure if it was the atmosphere of school systems or a "nationwide expectation" that created student work style changes:

In terms of how else it's changed, of course, kids dress differently, and they look differently. They speak differently. I don't know that their hearts are any different. Their work ethic has changed. You used to be able to assign tons and tons of homework and count on it being done. Whether the atmosphere isn't there or the nationwide expectation is that you just don't work at home. I don't know. They do have jobs. When I first started teaching, just a handful of students worked outside of schoolwork, and now I would say that the majority of them do." (Interview 4, 3/29/96)

She said the principal hired her with the promise that she would teach diagramming of sentences. "He felt that was the 'key to western civilization' (laughs). He really was very concerned. He made me swear that I'd do it, and I don't think I ever did it (laughs). He was always a little suspicious of me, because I guess I was just one little step away from little 'Miss Hippy" (Interview 4, 3/29/96).

In my creative writing class, I turned the lights off one day, and we lit a candle. I had a student who was a brilliant flutist, so I had her improvise. The idea was 20 minutes of that and then 20 minutes of freewriting. I got some really wonderful products out of that kind of situation. And Loretta ______, the nosey librarian, walked by, looked in, and saw the candle in the darkness and heard weird music and went directly to the principal. "Do not pass go," she said, "This young woman is practicing witchcraft." The bad part is that he called me in and said, "Is there any truth to this? You must be more conservative. You're responsible to the community and your students." There's no punchline to that except that I'm surprised I'm in my twenty-third year and have made it (laughs)." (Interview 4, 3/29/96)

In terms of the school's current population, roughly 51 percent of its students are black, and roughly 48 percent are white with about 1 percent being Asian American. The school's notoriety not only comes from its athletics but comes from its having the worse attendance in the district, though it's the second largest school. Roughly one out of every five students does not show on a given day. During the two grading periods I was collecting data at Cindy's school, I noticed the hallways during classes were far busier than the hallways of the other schools that I was visiting. Bette said this might be attributed in part to the fact that many of Brookhaven's students attend the career-vocational schools during parts of the school day, so students were coming and going
during both morning and afternoon classes. She said, too, with the "Zero Tolerance" policy enacted in the schools in which a police person was stationed at each school that the hallways had become much quieter as of that year as students were less likely to roam, and as a result hallway fights were fewer.

Beginning in January and ending in March, Bette had a student teacher assigned to her classroom. "Nicole" was a former student of mine and had completed, just the autumn quarter before, a writing methods course that I was teaching for preservice English majors. Because of her student teacher's presence, Bette's class load appeared more flexible, so the bulk of our interviews occurred during the school day during her planning periods and at one point during a class that Nicole was teaching. Since Bette was the English Department chair, her classroom consisted as well of a few Macintosh computers (a mini writing lab, so to speak) situated at the back of her classroom for departmental use. Also located in her room was a side office that she and the other English teachers were developing into a "professional library" of sorts in which they were placing various books, including examination copies received and pedagogical texts, to be used by all teachers.

Bette's course load consisted of one section of senior world literature challenge, an honors class; advanced placement language and composition for seniors; and three sections of American literature for juniors. She said she liked having three preparations, though it created more work in terms of planning, but it left her less bored by otherwise inevitable increased repetition in her school day. Her high school has a nine-period day: Her other three periods were consumed by a first-hour conference period; a second-period preparation period; and a fifth-hour study hall that typically met in the school auditorium.
Closing the Gaps

I asked Bette if she thought her students were coming in with certain disadvantages — if urban students have different needs than their suburban or rural counterparts. I mentioned that many people might look at urban students from a "deficit perspective":

C.: The baseline is that all children have certain needs that are constant. They need affection. They need respect. They need contact with other human beings. They need good modeling. You may have hit on something there that isn't always as strong in some of their backgrounds. If there is such a thing as "cultural oppression" or sort of a "disadvantaged" cultural background, then, yes, some of them are coming in deficient. I really hate this idea -- this is a very touchy subject, because I hate admitting they're coming in with a "deck loaded" against them in any organic way that can't be overcome. But the more we know about "brain theory," it sounds like there are windows and awarenesses of different kinds of skills and if those aren't rehearsed and practiced and modeled very early, those windows do shut down.

Cindy also said that she recognized education to be "political" and that it was her job to encourage students to access the "politics of schooling," although she's careful not to imply superiority of one culture's understandings over another but instead encourages her students to look critically at all cultural understandings. She also referred to students in her classes who have bought into the notion of academic success but face peer pressure to accept otherwise:

L.: A lot of people would agree that education is a political act.
C.: Sure it is.
L.: That we're trying to get these kids to do something that may be unnatural to their own natural environment -- in the way that they act, in the way that they think, and in the way that they speak. In the academic environment, what's natural to some of them can appear dysfunctional to others who operate in this academic environment. You said one of your goals is help students develop their communication skills.
C.: Well, they can speak just fine to the people within their limited environments and get through and don't have to do that in any standard way. As far as education is a political act, there's no question about it. What you teach and what you choose not to teach is going to have an enormous impact -- and so is the way you teach it and the way you don't teach it. We have been European-based and all that's true. We have been terribly Eurocentric, and we're paying for it, because we have a whole bunch of people who don't necessarily value that or maybe that hasn't been the right way for the human race to go. Who knows.
L.: Some people believe the problem with urban schooling is that we're teaching a value or belief system that can be diametrically opposed to our clientele -- that we're superimposing a different set of values.

C.: There's a "grand canyon" between some of the children that I teach and the people I live with in my suburban environment. It's like this huge gap that is sometimes overwhelming. Some of it has to do with experience -- limited experience -- not being able to go places, to see things, and not having a stretch of the imagination in there that their limited world is not the whole world and that they cannot function successfully in a larger world using just the skills of their neighborhood. They can function in their neighborhoods just fine. We talked about maybe trying to impose skills that don't do them any good -- well, there's something called "street culture." I have a student in that AP class who is very intelligent and wants to make something of himself. He's bought into the whole "a good person deserves to have a good life." He lives in a really rough environment where he's picked on constantly for being a good student. His peers make fun of him, drag him down, and really are merciless with him for just trying. They call him a "white wannabe," because he is trying to buy into the school system. You have to look at it, because it is political. The power in this country is largely held by people who speak Standard English and who are of an Anglo-Saxon background or who are from the white middle-class culture. It's just a fact. That may change with the millennium. But for now, "them's the facts, ma'am." You're handicapping them by not encouraging them to have the skills to function in that world also.

(Interview 4, 3/29/96)

During our third interview, Bette and I spoke about her perceptions of teaching in an urban school district and the public's perception of urban schooling. Bette believes the urban school is a reflection of the urban communities in which it resides and believes the public's perceptions of the problems with urban schools includes schools with violence as well as racial tensions and students who reside in poverty:

C.: There's a sense of "hugeness" -- some complexity. There's a diverse population. It's not going to be a homogeneous population. There's a number of ethnic and racial differences amongst the students and faculty, and it's not going to be dealing with children but also with all the community issues that come up in the city which may involve employment issues, housing issues, health issues, violence issues -- all the things that come up when people are packed in tight together as opposed to rural or suburban where people may be a little more spread out. I'm advocating that old "rat theory." You put rats in a cage, and if there are too many of them, they'll start to fight each other. Observations have been made about space and crowding and over population. I really think of urban schooling as the kind of education that is going on in this country that deals with children who are in very densely-populated areas.

L.: What are some of the stereotypes of urban schooling?

C.: There's fear. In urban, in particular, there's going to be fear of violence. There's going to be racial issues. There's going to be economic prejudices -- the fear of
people who are poor. I think there's going to be uncertainty, a reluctancy, to serve as a social worker. I think there's the perception that as a teacher you're going to have to deal with an awful lot of dysfunctional problems.

She mentioned as well a conversation she had with her student teacher Nicole. Evidently another student teacher placed at Brookhaven had shared her perceptions of urban teaching, comparing it with a suburban locale. Bette noted that this young woman wanted to "escape problems," believing she wouldn't face the same challenges as in the urban setting. So I asked Bette which "problems were worse" -- urban or suburban:

C.: That's totally relevant to the child. The level of your problem is to the degree in which it engages your life and doesn't let you live your life, so I wouldn't say one location over the other.

L.: My preservice teachers at OSU would say that urban has more problems and suburban problems are much "simpler."

C.: Much simpler? Well, you know. I can come up with all kinds of examples. You're going to have parents who possibly have money and who possibly don't, but they may be leaving their children alone. They may be abandoning their children in other ways. I think there's a sense that urban parents have abandoned their children, but when somebody goes on a cruise and leaves their kids a couple of hundred bucks to care for the household when he or she is only 14 -- that's also a sense of abandonment.

L.: Some of my preservice teachers have said they think if you're schooling your children in urban areas you're likely to be poverty-ridden. Is this true?

C.: Yes, I'm sure it is to an extent. I think people think because there's so much hype about the cities falling apart and all that, they look at people who live there as just the dregs -- not just poor but there's a very prejudicial attitude against poverty. We have people on our staff who work with kids every day who resent the fact that half our population has free and reduced lunch. Now that's not the kids' fault whatever their parents' situations are. They may sometimes take advantage of something. We'll see them with Nike shoes that will have cost $150.00, and then they have free and reduced lunch. It produces a little resentment among the faculty here let alone the perceptions outside the school. My suburban neighbor has said, "Oh, you poor thing, how do you do it? How can you teach in such rough schools?" (Laughter.) "I'm doing fine. So my kids don't get to take vacations to Florida every year, and they've never been on an airplane or have been to Europe or whatever, but they seem to be normal people for the most part." She's being extra sensitive from the outside, and I don't know that she's wrong. I also think maybe it's an unspoken thing -- people say "urban" for "black" or "nonwhite" populations.

L.: A stereotype that I'm familiar with is if you're poor you don't care about your children's schooling.

C.: It is a stereotype. It's also a factor that in some cases is true, and as a teacher you have to deal with it. But you have to watch that you don't spread that label on everybody. The best kid we had in school last year -- our number one, our valedictorian graduate -- has a father who won't get out of jail for another 20 years. She has six siblings, and her family is on welfare. She had free and reduced lunch, and the girl earned a scholarship to Ohio State -- not a minority
scholarship, but a straight-up presidential scholarship. She has maintained a 4.0
her first two quarters. I guess if you stereotyped her along the way and said,
"Therefore, this kid is 'trash' " -- that these conditions lead to "trashy" kids -- then
you'd be wrong. It doesn't always lead to that.
(Interview 3, 3/8/96)

I told Bette that one of the things I noticed about her was that she had such a large
capacity for caring for her students. Her students that I talked to expressed this as well. I
asked her how she had come to be so caring, especially after all these years teaching
school when many teachers become worn out or cynical. She said that if she didn't care
about the people she was servicing there'd be no point in doing her job:

I don't like them all individually. There are individuals that I have a difficult time
liking. I can think of one last year who was the bane of my existance. I had this
kid in my ninth-period class. He was a gang-related fellow. When he'd walk into
the room all the girls would pay attention to him. All the guys would pay
attention to him, and he would do whatever he pleased and ruined my class. I
tried every trick I had, and I thought I had a bag full of tricks to get this guy on
my side. It never worked. I failed with him utterly, I thought. He had to be
removed from my class because he had failed, and he was being such a disrupter
that they just took him out and put him in study hall, and I thought we were
enemies. He was one of the people I worried about striking me, because he was
so angry at me a time or two, because I wanted him to learn something. He said
that I had no business trying to make him do that. The other day, I ran into him at
the _____ where they have a school for people who couldn't function in the
regular high school. Here he came down the hall. He's got his dredlocks all
shaved off. He's all cleaned up. Got his school books in hand and he comes
down the hall. I see him and think of ducking into a room. Instead, he comes up
to me and gives me a hug. He says, "Ms. _____, how are you?" He acted like we
were the best of friends. His perception of our relationship was a good one, and I
had no idea. I asked him why he was there, and he said, "I'm working real hard
on English, and I remember a couple of things you said. I'm determined to get my
credit this year, and I'll make you proud of me." (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

Bette said that she didn't know if she really ever did anything right with this
student. As a matter of fact, she believed that she did everything wrong. She said she
stood there and talked to him for about 15 minutes and told him what a bright guy she
really had thought he was but that he had been obstinate and was bucking the system and
that if he could only get the "light bulb" like he was doing now he could go great places:

He said, "Yeah, I see that. I want to get a job and clean up my act and be a
regular person." And so that was a teaching moment in a way. But he'd never let
me do that before. But if he had decided that I hated him and never wanted
anything to do with him, I would have lost that opportunity. I'm caring because
it's just a terminal condition in my family. I feel for these kids. Many of them have a lot of baggage which is not an excuse for poor behavior, but it makes you understand why it occurs sometimes. They are so vulnerable. It helps that I have a child, but I was like this before I ever had a child. They want so badly to be grown, and they manage it so badly. They just need somebody to show that they're proud of them and that they need to work for something. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

Bette said to expend energy in a "vacuum" with no return wouldn't be possible for her. She also believed that in the case of some students the teacher might be one of the only sources of positive return for them. She also referred to an earlier conversation we had about criticisms aimed at secondary-trained teachers as not being child-centered like their elementary-trained counterparts. She believed this to be true for some teachers but definitely not for her:

Back to my theory about teaching the subject or teaching the child: If you teach your subject, your children are secondary. You don't care about them. You're just busy teaching English, math or whatever. You have to teach your children, and if you really get involved with them, you can't help but see them as human beings, and you're going to care once you see somebody as a human being. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

I mentioned to Bette that I noticed that she lived in a suburb rather than in the city itself. I asked her if she thought this was problematic in that she taught in the city's schools. She said she could just as easily enroll her own son in a school in this district but that she would have to take that on a case by case basis and had even mentioned to her son that he might want to attend the fine and performing arts magnet high school, but he decided to stay in his home school, because he had already made his friends. She said what was most important to her was the school had a faculty with some creativity and imagination and not just any school has that including suburban schools as well. She also mentioned that her son always has attended along with her and her husband the sporting events at the schools in which she's taught. She mentioned that when they were newly married they found a house in their price range in a small town, now considered a suburb, where they lived for 10 years prior to her son's birth. Once he came along, she and her
husband realized by the time her son was in the fifth grade that the neighborhood was really racist and "very unfriendly to the black students":

My son got in a fight one time, because he was defending a black friend. There was just a smattering of black kids there. He got in a fight, because somebody had used the "n" word to his friend. We have always surrounded ourselves with a mixed environment and sometimes more African-American environment than white. So I felt he was getting that acceptance from us and that I didn't have to make a point of artificially moving to _____ if I didn't have any reason to do it. There are schools in this district I would not want him to go to. I'd say it's on a case-by-case basis. There's some schools where the discipline policies and the learning policies are horrible. We moved from _____ to _____ partly because we didn't approve of the attitude in the _____ schools which was extremely rule oriented. "Sit down. Shut up. Don't be creative. Let's don't have anybody rocking the boat. Let's don't have movement." I thought he was stifled. Probably any school in this district would give him less of that than that particular school. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

Bette said they moved to their current residence, in part, also because her sister-in-law lived there and her husband found a house where "half the clan" lived close by and, too, the fact that some diversity was present:

We also chose our neighborhood, not that you asked this, but we were conscious of these things. Maybe I have white liberal guilt or something, but we purposely chose a mixed neighborhood. It's not always easy to find in a middle to upper-middle class neighborhood, but we have a number of foreign-born families. We also have a number of black families. The majority are white families, but our kids are growing up together. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

As Bette talked about teaching in urban schools, I noted that she highlighted her conversation with the importance of teaching in a "culturally relevant" way. She aims to understand her students an build upon what they already know. She is aided in doing this by reading to experience outside her own culture and understandings. She has shared with me her interest in building her knowledge of the African-American literature canon and has said she's been increasing her knowledge of Asian cultures as well and has shared many book titles with me during this time that I have known her -- titles that she might or might not teach in her classrooms and titles that pertain to a variety of cultural orientations and experiences. I was pleasantly surprised in April during the time I was collecting data for this study. I was working in the computer laboratory at the university
where I am employed. While waiting to print my document, I noticed an orange paper next to my keyboard but nobody in the vicinity who seemed to have misplaced it. To my surprise it was a reading list for Bette's high school's book club for the 1996-1997. I saw Bette's name with her home site scheduled for October 31. Readings arranged by themes, I noted that the theme on Bette's day was racial issues. Books to be read were *Life on the Color Line* by Greg Williams, a "white" Ohio State professor's account of growing up black in middle America, paired with *The Feast of All Saints* by Anne Rice, the latter about biracial women in New Orleans during slavery.

In terms of meeting her students needs, she is also conscious of tapping into what is known about learning styles, and most recently, due to some inservice workshops in which she's been enrolled, she is interested in accessing "all areas of the brain." Our conversation during our third interview focused in part what she was deriving from these workshops and how she was applying the ideas already in her classes. She talked about notions of right and left-brained emphases and "mind mapping" in order make clear and connect ideas and the retaining of new information learned. She also mentioned that education has encouraged many of us to teach in a left-brained way which is to concentrate more on the particular as opposed to the whole picture -- "memorize a little grammar and here are the 'features of poetry' " (Interview 3, 3/8/96). In teaching left-brained, teachers tend to break things down for the students. Bette believes a lot of English teachers teach in this way: "They want to break everything down for the student, because the student doesn't really see the whole picture -- doesn't 'get' the poem, doesn't 'get' the book, doesn't 'get' what he's writing about" (Interview 3, 3/8/96).

She said that she had shared with her students the notion of "zig zag reading" to be more efficient with reading time. "It's perfectly allowable to scan it and then go back and stick your finger and just run it centrally down the page one more time, and a few
more things jump out and click into place. It doesn't hurt to review. Of course, if it's something you need to memorize, go back and do it later" (Interview 3, 3/8/96):

I've tried something called "mind mapping" which is really something that teachers have been doing for a long time -- it's called "webbing." It's the notion that if you can access the right brain, you'll be more free thinking if you allow yourself to go over a body of material and then mind map what you've learned. You just put your central concepts in the middle of the paper.... I went back and taught this to one of my English classes right away, because they had to use a process because they were reading Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. So I asked them to mind map the whole book. They just thought I was crazy at first, an they kind of laughed. But I said, "No, you know more than what you think. This will help you to choose your 'seeds' to develop for your paper." So they did individual mind maps, and a couple of them couldn't quite grasp the concept and didn't give enough details and a couple of them just took to it like "ducks to water." They were just all over the place. They said, "Boy, this really frees up your brain. You can go in any direction you want." Then it was obvious from looking at these little "spokes of the wheel," what stood out as the best detailed seeds and that ended up being major conflicts and important people and places. Then I asked them to mind map on an individual topic -- they chose their topic. I told them to try this in other classes like science and social studies and see what you get. It was just a little presentation, but I did tie it in directly to their assignment. Everybody seems to be more organized in their rough drafts already. Their rough drafts are not the 'gobbledy-gook' as usual. (Interview 1, 3/8/96)

I asked Bette if this was something that she believed the rest of the faculty in her school would deem worthwhile to know more about and to use. She said that there is a "core of us who'd like to undergo reform and change in some positive way, and we're not really sure what direction we'd like to go" (Interview 3, 3/8/96). However, she noted that there were a number of teachers who are probably just "riding it out. They want to retire. They want to get out of here. They've seen many changes, and they're really resistant to change -- they're very suspicious" (Interview 3, 3/8/96). On the other hand, Bette said she thrives on variety and change:

I'm not condemning them -- they do just fine, but they're not real innovative. For example, they plan on having the same grade and the same class every year, because they want it that way. In fact, maybe five classes of the six would be the same grade and course which would drive me insane. I couldn't stand for that. I've never had fewer than three prep.s and that's okay, because I get my brain moving. But they would accept the information and would not be resistant to the information, and it might be that they just recognize that they need to treat some
people a little differently based on learning styles. I think we've all had learning styles workshops by now, but I don't think that has made a huge amount of difference. (Interview 3, 3/8/96)

I asked Bette why some teachers are resistant to change more so than others. Bette said she believed a lot of this had to do with ineffective leadership. We also talked about teachers who've seen reforms come and go who've experienced lack of support and commitment too often and are now resistant:

When an environment is perceived as being so dysfunctional that you can't get your basic goal accomplished, and if you don't see any growth or you're not receiving any satisfaction from your performance, and you can see some of the factors that are wrong, then you want to alter those, and you want to stimulate or create a new environment. I'd say that maybe 20 to 30 percent of the faculty would really like to reform in some way that would make sense. But we have some leadership issues. Now I'm not trying to hammer anybody, but we have some "leadership" that is a little scatter-brained. Our "leadership" isn't really interested -- he would have to be dragged down, kicking and screaming. (Interview 3, 3/8/96)

Bette also said the reform for reform's sake is not good. She stated that administrators in the district's central office have said they want all schools to have a plan. So far her school has pondered some alternatives but has no definite solution, although it looks like a grant from the National Science Foundation may influence a possible "magnet" that she isn't too thrilled about:

We're very much under pressure to reform, but nobody knows what that might look like. Some of us want to alter the schedule of the day and thinking teaching in "blocks of time" might be wonderful. From the workshop that I just took (on brained-based learning theories), I don't think it's going to be helpful to double the time that somebody is in the classroom, because if they're not in learning time -- if they're not in "Beta" mode (laughs) and without a break -- you're really not going to achieve a whole lot more. Going to a two-hour block will only work with a teacher who is able to shift modes, and I don't know how many people can sustain that. Another alternative they've considered would be having a central theme approach in the building, and then all of the core classes would teach around that. But it looks like we might change for no significant reason other than the National Science Foundation has offered some money for some computers. We are drifting towards a technology-based math-science high school. That doesn't make me thrilled, because I'm more humanities-based. But I would be happy if our faculty at least said, "This is really what we want to do." (Interview 3, 3/8/96)
It was here that Bette re-addressed the notion of why some people change and why others don't. She mentioned as well that teachers give up their own "power" by not changing at least in their own immediate contexts:

Teachers get cynical. They're like, "Oh, yeah, another reform." But teachers forget that they have the power to invent within themselves. We are so used to a structure where power comes from the top that we forget we have to have "hutzpah." So you're in the classroom, and that's what you have to do to get on with it. But, we forget, and we feel that we don't have the authority or the power to do that. (Interview 3, 3/8/96)

As far as leadership and reform issues in the school, Bette sees it as a problem of "spirit" rather than a problem caused by the constructs of the typical school day: "You don't have to necessarily reorganize the way the day appears. You have to reorganize the spirit with which the building approaches it, and you have to try to infect everybody with that. It's that spirit" (Interview 3, 3/8/96). She mentioned as well some "reforms," such as those in reading and writing instruction really have taken hold. However, "inclusion" is one reform that has been a point of debate in terms of certain groups of kids which she's not sure are having their needs met.

I asked Bette if there was anything she was cynical about. She said definitely not the students. "I'm not cynical about the kids. They're as bright as they've ever been. They come in with more baggage than they ever did, but they're no different and no worse. They're complicated human beings, because they have more 'layers' on them than we don't know what to do" (Interview 3, 3/8/96). She said that the "downtown" administration -- those not working on the frontlines with the students -- is the most irritating aspect of the job:

I'm very cynical about "downtown" administration. I'm very irritated with the fact that I don't think the children are the welfare children that they think they are. I honestly think that some of them who are not in the school buildings -- I mean, "non-front line," nonbuilding associated people who run larger programs than they're responsible for -- do not have a clue what we do on a daily basis, and I resent it. I really think they're completely out of tune with what we're facing otherwise they would not want to cut teachers in the buildings and would not want to cut money from certain programs. They would cut the "deadwood" at their own level, or they'd make themselves more efficient. When we had this
substitute problem — when there were 100 classrooms in the system that were going uncovered during the day — that's very frightening from a legal standpoint and everything else. There was not a single person from downtown who volunteered to come out and substitute — to come out and just cover a class. Wouldn't that have been a marvelous experience for them? There would have been no money involved. They're still earning their money for the day — but to come out in the classroom and to see what it's like. It would have been a training session all by itself. Nothing like that ever happened. (Interview 3, 3/8/96)

Strong Women

"Hard not to love Shug, I say. She know how to love somebody back" (p. 289).

During our fourth interview, I asked Bette to reflect on characters in literature, drama or song that might give me a better picture of who she is as both a teacher and a whole person. Without hesitation she threw out a string of characters and reasons for choosing them. She told me that she has long been thinking about this for awhile — of identifying herself with the deeds and/or challenges of others. All four of the characters she shared with me were women and strong, independent women at that. She mentioned Jo from Louisa May Alcott's Little Women. "I'm kind of a rebel, a little bit of a tomboy. I like to write, and I can't settle for restrictions." She mentioned King Arthur's sister from The Mists of Avalon, saying she'd like to have her "psychic and far seeing abilities." Sula Peace from Toni Morrison's Sula was another Bette character said she related to based on "She lives how she sees fit." And finally, she ended with Shug Avery from Alice Walker's The Color Purple which especially aroused my curiosity. When I asked her why Shug Avery, Bette replied, "She's not as judgmental about things as some":

The reason I'm drawn to Shug is that she doesn't allow any boundaries in her life. She won't permit people to box her in — to associate her with a certain class or race or gender or anything else. She does what she wants. That's why she has the lesbian relationship with Celie. It has nothing to do with her necessarily being a lesbian — she just feels love — and she's not going to let anybody tell her whom she can feel love for. It might be a married man — Celie's husband — it might be Celie. It might be her own self. She's accepted herself as a free human being, and I love that idea. I don't quite have the guts to carry it off (laughs) completely, but I'm about 80 percent there (laughs). She just seems like a strong, powerful person who defines herself, and I'm trying to define myself continually, so it makes great sense. (Interview 4, 3/29/96)
Bette and I later begin talking about "this stage in her life" and how she's told me in the past that she's drawn to good company -- especially good, strong women who she's been able to learn from. She mentioned our teacher book project, contending that "this project feeds into that and meeting you feeds into that" (Interview 5, 9/14/96). Bette shared her need to develop relationships with strong women, stating that she's neglected this aspect of her life in previous years. Through participation in both this study and the book project, she has found herself revitalized:

... at this stage in my life, I mean, I'm going to be 50 next year which sounds like I'm one foot in the grave, but I feel more vital than ever.... I'm into an intellectual phase that's stronger than ever in my life and also into a phase of making strong, bonding friendships with women whom I have neglected all my life.... And now I'm meeting, in the course of this project (T-Project) and in the course of some professional activities and just by luck, some powerful, strong, vital women who define themselves and don't let other people define them, and that's what I think I am and what I want to continue to be. And they're seeing something worthwhile in me too, and it's revitalizing me. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

**Pedagogy**

9:59 AM. Bette has given her AP English students a handout -- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante. (She tells me later that, while reading James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Chapter 2 in which the priest is lecturing on hell, she thought to "throw in" the "Divine Comedy" as there might be a connection.) Bette asks if anybody watched Ted Danson in *Gulliver's Travels* last night. She draws an analogy to the "Divine Comedy" to this mini-series -- social satire of people on earth and religious satire....

10:02 AM. Bette's room has about eight Macintoshes at the back -- a sign hangs on the north wall "The Writing Center." One student, evidently from another teacher's class, types while AP English occurs. Bette's room is long. The "real" classroom with desks is in the southern portion. On the west side of the room, there are two small adjoining rooms -- one closet-like is her office (she is the department head) and the other with a large picture window looks like it was former "observation room," perhaps meant for faculty to observe students in a lab setting or perhaps for a broadcast class as I noted "equipment" outlets inside that could have been in use. I note, all of a sudden, a sign on the door that says "This room is for radio club members only. Unauthorized people, please keep out." (Bette tells me later that it is also a repository for English teachers who've contributed "professional books" for each others' use.) On the chalkboard is written: "The significance of people is not what they attain, but rather what they long to attain." -- Kahlil Gibran.

10:12 AM. Bette draws into the conversation the New Testament -- Jesus using parables to teach but many didn't understand his message. They discuss "Gulliver's" in this way as during its time it was "too far out" to teach a larger meaning to most people....
10:14 AM. The conversation is still on religion (Joyce's Chapter 2) -- the last month and world views and also how a person's "face" can affect the message. Bette points out the notion of "separate the message from the person -- so if people 'pervert' the teachings of Jesus, don't blame Jesus." She shares the teachings of Mohammad as an example as well. The students appear very comfortable discussing their concerns, doubts, world views, and curiosity. Bette acknowledges their beliefs and "uncertainties" by saying "It's a part of life's process to question...." They begin to talk about the "hero's journey" -- she mentions "hero" can be a female too! "Let's don't forget gender -- a hero can go both ways."

-- from Field Log, 2/8/96

10:10 AM. In classroom circles of about five, the AP English students are still using their peer review sheet (exercise in developing "visual acuity") and are working away! I smell coffee. It smells of vanilla hazelnut, but I see only a can of Folgers decaf. I note a "coffee cart" on wheels at a front corner of the room (by Bette's desk) replete with coffee maker, sugar, powdered cream, and disposable cups. I asked a student sitting near me about this. He says, "Everyone brings 'it.' " Bette passes out a handout of "A Modest Proposal" and collects students' papers simultaneously....

10:26 AM. I just told Bette that I played my new cd "Greatest Baroque Hits" over the weekend while working. I was productive, perhaps, as a result. I told her that I looked for "Bach by the Ocean." She said a female student told her that it drove her crazy to hear the lapping waves. Bette told her that she may want to avoid living by the ocean!

-- from Field Log, 3/20/96

Paired Experiences

In terms of Bette's teaching and assessing of writing, her classroom pedagogy is highlighted by her perceived value in paired reading experiences for her students and opportunities to write about these. In particular, she mentioned the notions of archetypal analysis and universal experiences that can be taught to close various gaps between students, between students and schooling, and in creating better understandings in terms of a society constantly changing and filled with ever-increasing diversity. She often teaches a thematic core. "I try to pick themes that will be interesting. I also try to show them that there is a universal connection with them and that activity and the rest of humankind" (Interview 2, 2/23/96).

Bette said she also tries to provide "visual structures," or sketches that model writing, for her students to make the "formal" writing act less abstract:
Well, yes, sometimes. It's very corny and elemental. For example, I might draw a path -- a real corny cat. Even a paragraph has its own sense of that. So I draw the cat, and they laugh, and they know they can draw better than I can. You know, the head that points the whole critter where it's going to go. It keeps the balance. It has the eyesight. It lets you know what's coming. It can identify what's going on. The body is at least three times as large. We put stripes on the cat -- I might indicate at least three supporting pieces. What would the head be without the support of the body? The tail is for balance. You have to have some sort of closure. I make a little improper reference to going to the bathroom. They love it. You can also say if you have a cat without a tail, it's probably going to fall over. It wouldn't have orderliness and when the cat walked away you wouldn't see what was at the end. If the citizens knew that I put this and all that inflammatory thing they'd probably die, but I want them thinking and some of the more interesting things to think about are not in the textbook. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

The pairing of texts is an obvious aspect of Bette's pedagogy. She said that the textbooks provided for the district do little to address diversity, so she supplements with other materials. She does a lot of photocopying. "Because how would you find a textbook that covers everything you would want to cover?" (Interview 3, 3/29/96). She said that she's been on a textbook selection committee twice and as a result had samples sent to her from Middle Eastern literature and Asian literature and has been drawing, in particular, on these books for years. "And besides, sometimes the kids suspect that whatever is in the textbook must not be any good (laughs). So sometimes you have an advantage. If you give them a handout, it's like 'Oh, wait, this is okay' (laughs)" (Interview 3/3/29/96).

I pick and choose based on what I'd like (laughs). I figure if I like it, it'll affect them (laughs). As far as planning, I get sort of a generalized idea of pairing. I'll put a pairing together -- I'll have at least a couple of pieces of literature in mind that I want to put side by side. I try, and I think of the writing projects that come to me as a whole. I guess it's obvious that I'm coming from the "right brain" (laughs). In other words, I'll have this big idea first, and then I'll figure out the pieces that'll go in to fit that. I'll always make sure that every pairing that we have that writing process happens. If I have in-class writing, it is a collaborative with group work involved in it somehow, but the student has some ownership in formulating it in class the the topics chosen. There'll be an oral discussion component. There'll be some student readers. I think of it sort of in the old unit sense -- that my unit will include all those things, and we'll always have a thematic core. I try to segueway it to let them flow. (Interview 4, 3/29/96)

Bette gave as an example of a thematic core relationships between men and women. "I try to pick themes that will be interesting. A lot of people say, 'he said, she
said,' and that's all the talk. So I try to show them that there is a universal connection with them and that activity and the rest of humankind" (Interview 4, 3/29/96). Bette believes short stories are especially good for pairing as they're quick and short in reinforcing the concept and it's easier to "go around the world multicultural" with short stories. She said she also likes to show opposites of how things can turn out. "So if you have a couple who hate each other in a marriage that turns out badly and then you build a sense of forgiveness and restoration in marriage" (Interview 4, 3/29/96).

Bette said that most of the stories that she uses are not in the textbook but that she must supplement everything. Currently, she said they're doing an African American focus and has seguewayed with a story by the contemporary author Rose Willie. "Even though it's African American history month, I don't just teach to that month. But, it's like 'feature it,' because the kids like that" (Interview 4, 3/29/96). Bette believes pairing is the best way for students to experience the world multicultural and to create understanding by having students see universalisms in people's motives and behaviors. "For one thing it legitimizes your culture. They'll say, 'Oh, I didn't realize 'we' wrote about things like that.' It legitimizes your understanding of another culture, because you think 'They think the same way we do about this issue' " (Interview 4, 3/29/96).

Bette says she's also come to the conclusion that using this method allows her to use the district's text, but it also allows her to satisfy many different students. "It also gives you a richer depth. I've come to the conclusion that teaching indepth on a smaller number of subjects is better than shallow on a wide array of subjects" (Interview 4, 3/29/96):

I'm backed up here by some recent research, but I just can't name anybody right now, but you probably can (laughs). To go indepth allows students greater grasp of something that they can take away with them. It's going to be more productive with greater insight and reflection on it rather than a smattering of a little of that and a little of this. I'm content to pick out a few and go really deep. (Interview 4, 3/29/96)
Bette uses a variety of types of writing and methods. For example, she has them write dialogue in which they write face to face and then will have them punctuate it correctly. She's also had students do collective stories where a person starts and then it's passed along to the next persons. "By the time they're done, you have 20 little stories, and you're trying to build for coherence. There are all kinds of elements you can teach. They love it. I've never had a class that didn't enjoy that activity" (Interview 2, 2/23/96).

She also likes them to draft and not necessarily begin at the beginning:

So many people have trouble starting, so I tell them to write the end if they know how they want it to come out. You can take pieces and put them together like a puzzle, or you know your support such as with an academic paper. You know the argument that you're going to make, so put some of those down. Get a piece down and then go back and make your thesis after you've figured out how to support it. Sometimes I have them draw. I have them do a visual conceptualization of how their paper should look. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

She also likes the journal approach in which students write down anything for 20 minutes. Sometimes there will be big news issues and she'll have them react to it or she'll explain it to them and ask what they think about it. "But I always try to incorporate along with their just spinning their wheels and writing whatever they're thinking. I try to get them to think logically about an issue. There's always a 'hidden' agenda whenever I have them write" (Interview 2, 2/23/96). She said some writing is called "good for you" writing in which writing is used to free themselves a little and thus is used for pleasure or is therapeutic. "I had a very angry child one day, and I told him to write a 'hate letter.' 'Just write a hate letter and get it over.' But I said hand it to me. Don't give it to the person (laughs)" (Interview 2, 2/23/96).

Bette says the biggest obstacle in getting students to write is getting them to see that they have something to write about and hopefully to believe in it. Overcoming this, means to just get them started. "They often have this sense of this monumental task. It's sort of overcoming inertia. If you can work it down into a piecemeal task, you might get
them to do a little bit better. The other obstacle is that it takes time" (Interview 2, 2/23/96). Bette also said that her worst teacher did not allow "messes," and her best teachers really liked their students. Bette says she also believes the purpose for studying English in high school is to work on communication skills:

They're going to be forced to communicate their thoughts or their objections or their analyses or whatever on the job if they want to be well-employed and just accepted -- you have to be able to speak your thoughts. There just aren't pat answers for everything, you have to be able to know problem solving. I see writing across the curriculum as vital. Everybody needs to be able to write in everything. Even the Maytag repairman still has to write up his report to somebody. As far as reading, you can't remain a civilized culture if you do not challenge ourselves to higher-order thinking and a good deal of that is evidenced in literature. Also the notion of getting something vicariously -- the Greek notion of catharsis, that you could cleanse yourself with somebody's else's experience I think is really important. (Interview 2, 2/23/96).

Bette says it's her goal for her students to be life-long learners and to be "whole brained" and see themselves as potential problem-solvers. "I've just been through a workshop on this, so I'm really hot on 'brain theory.' I would like them to be able to access their right as well as their left brain -- to be more creative and problem-solving for the future.... They do not just have to swallow the world the way it is, but they think that they can do something to change things" (Interview 2, 2/23/96).

Bette believes her greatest strength as an English teacher is her writing instruction: "I would say my writing instruction is my strongest area. I like to write myself. It seems to come naturally to me, but I have been able to figure out ways to get poor writers to start writing" (Interview 2, 2/23/96). She also believes her secondary strengths are her abilities to synthesize and to pull together pieces from all sorts of media, including songs, poetry, short stories, plays, newspaper articles, and even personal experiences -- "anything that plugs into a central theme." She says she also likes to teach archetypally and started doing this about 20 years ago:

I came across this idea very early in my career, and I find it helps students understand the underlying ideas. Really, you can use almost anything -- a piece of art, any human creation can be boiled down to a basic concept that inspired it or that it represents. If they can see that, it gives them an organization to write
about it, conceptualize it.... I'd say that I'm good at short piece instruction. In other words, the short story -- the "quick and snappy" book -- and I can tie it in. I think I'm very good at helping kids to see connections along interdisciplinary areas too. I try to bring in music, art, mathematics, and science -- anything that I can interdisciplinarily to reinforce their learning. I can work collaboratively with other people on serious things or whatever. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

Visual Acuity

She also said her dissertation was the greatest influence on how to teach and assess writing. Bette mentioned the notion of error as being "visual acuity" not strengthened. "You must train your eyes to look for something, and you have to have some informed knowledge to be able to do that" (Interview 4, 3/29/96). Shaughnessy's (1977) notion that most errors are logical and follow a set pattern that you've "learned." "It might be wrong, but it is informed by the community or the climate or whatever the person comes from" (Interview 4, 3/29/96).

Mina Shaughnessy, of course, had the notion in "Errors and Expectations" that errors are learned and that they are logical. If the child is speaking, however far away from Standardized English, has learned that pattern -- which is a very logical pattern to that child. You can help the child "unlearn" in order to impose a new standard, but an error made multiple times is still only one error. That might sound like a little thing, but I had never really thought about that before. If they have an error that appears 10 times in the paper, it's really only one error. If you could eliminate the error, you have eliminated a good deal of the problem with the paper. I learned to focus on two or three things maybe per assignment. I'm not trying to teach everything in every paper, and I'm not trying to correct everything in every paper. I learned how to handle my paperload better. I'm only teaching for a specific purpose on each assigned paper: "Now this is what you're going to be evaluated on, so work very hard on this area. Next time it might be something else." I need to be flexible. I'm not trying to go everything at once. I never grade them with a red pen -- it can appear "bloody" on their paper. I use green or some other color (laughs). (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

Bette said she also uses "peer editing" which she believes helps students develop their "visual acuity": "So helping myself with the paperload, helping myself really embed the writing process, and the notion of peer evaluation and to get kids' visual acuity to develop like craftsmen looking at other people's papers -- I incorporate all of that directly" (Interview 2, 2/23/96). Bette also said grammar is most definitely a part of her
Especially at the end of a big paper, I like to pull out error samples. It's very important to get them from everybody and then take the time to type them up exactly as you see them expressed. Pick out the ones that are issues that you want to teach about -- right now, noun-pronoun agreement is driving me crazy, and I'm still trying for subject-verb agreement with some of them. So I'll pick out samples from everybody. It might just be style: It doesn't have to be an error, but it might be a stylistic matter. Then print the sheet and hand it around. We all look at it. There's no name attached to each error, but ironically, a kid will go, "I can't believe I did that." They'll announce it to others. There's something about ownership of your error and seeing that everybody else makes them too and that they're common and that they all follow certain patterns and that there were problems on this particular assignment and that they can be addressed and can be fixed. I think it's very useful, but it takes a lot of time. It's very time consuming and labor intensive for the teacher, but I think it does more good than if I do 10 grammar lessons. And then I'll give them a little mini lesson. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

She said that as far as assessment that she has always been a holistic assessor but she breaks "it" down into format and content. "So how you say something is different from what you say. You can do very well in what you say, but your weakness may be in organizing it or it might be the other way around. You sometimes get that absolutely nothing is infatuate, but it still isn't said well. So it's kind of an average of those two, but they give the student a sense of when you read it how you will evaluate it" (Interview 2, 2/23/96). Bette says she believes the purpose of assessment should be a means of monitoring progress and providing encouragement, however, assessment has traditionally been a punishment. As far as writing instruction, she believes that students need to be able to build clear sentences and to develop clarity, precision and their analytical skills:

"You did this wrong, now you've had it and that chance is over with, and you're done for." Assessment should be a means of monitoring progress and a means of encouragement so that the student can prepare himself to do his form of work. It's kind of a personal debt. I don't like that competitive "I have to write better than anybody else in the class" if that's not their talent. It really shouldn't be for making somebody feel bad about what they can't do. It should be an encouragement for doing better work. Writing instruction? Students often think that if they can speak English and barely can get down a sentence then they know how to write.... Because good writing tends to clarify and pull into a small world a whole realm of ideas -- it's a skill. I make my kids recite this as a class, "Words do not control you. You control words." I have them recite this like three times
in a row. It's a way of manipulating ideas and a way of accessing your brain and passing it along to somebody else.... What good does it do to be brilliant if you cannot make your thoughts known? Look at Stephen Hawking -- typing those letters one finger at a time, but I'm sure those sentences are clear. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

Bette said she likes to use the Socratic method and that a former professor of hers was her greatest influence in using this as he used it so successfully in his classes. The notion that Socrates said that it's "more important to develop a good question than a good answer -- that notion is 'give and take questioning' and that allows the students to value their own opinions as they develop and not just give regurgitation.... If it is handled well, it gives the young person the feeling of being more of an adult and more of a thinker" (Interview 2, 2/23/96).

Bette said that some of the things that she's done to facilitate her students' success include teaching in a variety of locations and levels, including college on two or three occasions. She believes these "alternative" perspectives have broadened her conceptualization of what's important in writing instruction. She says that she also tries to put emphasis on the different modes of writing, so her students are able to shift their purposes in writing. She also tries to have them look at cause and effect relationships. "I also try to give them exercises that will enable them to practice the brain skills that they're going to be using in all their classes in college and not just in their English classes" (Interview 4, 3/29/96):

The thing to be able to do is to express their ideas with clarity, so I try to give them exercises and opportunities to clarify their thinking. Also thinking in debate practice because they need to know how to argue an issue and take a stand and to understand the difference between just plain brawling and arguing with support, having a backup to what you say and even using the "scientific method." I also try to enlarge their vocabulary. I don't think you can function as well if you don't have a highly varied vocabulary. I don't make them memorize lists. I try to have them as individuals to use new words that they think are going to be useful to them. I try to emulate good vocabulary so that they constantly want to know, "What does that mean?" I'll sometimes put quotes on the board from learned people so that they'll be stimulated by it. They will sometimes write those down. Everything I do is to improve their academic skill. I teach grammar in context.
with a whole piece of writing in terms of trying to correct their errors so that they
do not make the kinds of errors that are going to drag them own. (Interview 4,
3/29/96)

I asked Bette if she modeled herself after her own best teachers. She said that
some secondary folks might see her perceived role as the "social work mentality." "I go
more for the student as the clue to the center of the classroom. I'll do it at the expense of
academics. I'd much rather have the interaction — the oral and the group interaction are
important. But that's also whole language and that's social communication. I believe I
can justify that." (Interview 2, 2/23/96). In terms of her perceived roles and
responsibilities of the writing teacher, Bette believes they're many and varied. Primarily
she sees herself as a stimulator, a modeller of writing, and a teacher who is enthusiastic
about her students and about learning:

The writing teacher should be a stimulator -- not necessarily the one who comes
up with the topics. I sometimes want them to come up with their own topics.
You should at least suggest a mode, but you should also vary the mode... you
should make sure that there's a variety of experiences. They can't just be stuck in
the same mode all the time, so that's up to the teacher to ship that. The writing
teacher should model writing. I think if you just do here and there and say, "I write
this" and "I write that" is not enough. Once in a while, I'll even share pieces that
I've written and will say, "Will you edit this for me?" That kind of electrifies
them. "Why would you want me to do that?" I might say, "Is this clear? I'm
trying to write for someone your age, so does this make sense?" I don't have to be
a fast reader, and I don't have to be a brilliant writer, but I should be competent.
They should be able to count on my competence. They should be able to count on
my enthusiasm. They should be able to count on my authentic assessment of
them: I'm translating the grade into some meaningful interpretation." (Interview
2, 2/23/96)

Bette said her high school English and journalism teacher was also a major
influence on the way she assess students' writing and perceives her roles and
responsibilities as a teacher of writing:

She was extremely strict, but she was not a "bean counter" so much. She would
give you an overall grade for the paper and explain it. She was the one who
showed me that feedback is terribly important. She would give you feedback --
both positive and negative. She would always say something good about the
paper, and she would always find some areas for improvement. So I kind of took
after her in that I write a good deal on each student's paper -- it takes a lot of time,
but it really seems to pay off. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)
I asked Bette if her philosophy in terms of her purpose as a writing teacher would remain the same if she moved to a secondary school in a suburb or rural school district near to the city. She said no and that her thinking regarding writing instruction is transferable -- her belief that through paired experiences insight and understanding is gained for those who are different:

I think it's consistent in writing. We all know in English about "voice" -- authentic voice is only going to come through if there's only a measure of truth to it. You will get an occasional kid who's so good that he could write something that is completely false and do a good job at it. But by and large, students write better when they're devoted to the subject, and they care about it. And that usually involves the truth. But if you're saying would I teach "it" differently, I may pick different pieces that would elicit different reactions. But then again, maybe not. I mean, I've very strong components of multicultural literature, and I don't give lip service to that. It must be woven in every step of the way so that everybody feels that their literature background is legitimate, and the kid's ethnic contribution is important and that everybody respects it and that it has a place in the literature of the country. And that just can't be done during the month of February -- that's a big fake. You're lying to people when you say, "You get a month." And then women get a month, and so forth. It has to be woven in, and so I'm likely to combine something like Martin Luther King's letter to the Birmingham jail list with the play Antigone. Now, I mean you couldn't often play Antigone to anybody in an urban setting all by itself and expect them to think it's important. But side by side with something else, and they go, "Oh, well they're kind of the same." Yes, because people are the same all over -- there's sometimes a universal thread that runs through things. I don't know -- well, that's kind of a vague answer perhaps, but I would tailor the material to the students, but the methodology is consistent. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

In terms of her philosophy as a teacher, Bette says first and foremost that she sees herself as a life-long learner and that she is also learning from the students as they've many things to teach her:

They come in with baggage, intellectual and personal values, that must be recognized in order to go anywhere. It is not my job to serve as their social worker, however, whatever subject I'm instructing I must teach to the child. I must speak to the individual person as much as possible. I have to access them as a whole person. If I'm going to teach a real human being, I must be a real human being. It might sound very general, but I think I have to be authentic. I have to be honest, and I have to constantly re-evaluate myself and not remain static. I have to adapt to the situation. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

As far as her philosophy ever changing, Bette says that it's grown and it's been reinforced:

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I think I've always felt like this. I'm not wrong about this, because if you treat students as human beings, then you admit that you're still learning. It's not that old 'I know all the answers' model -- that everything leads to me. But you have to challenge students too -- people who are going to adapt to the future. If I look like I'm still trying to adapt, then they see that this is what adults should do. (Interview 2, 2/23/96)

Her Web

"To Learn Is to Live"

During the time that I have known Bette, several things have been evident that I believe are keys to her effectiveness. Most obvious about Bette is that she thrives on new and different learning experiences. Early in this study, I checked out her dissertation and noted it was dedicated to her son who was around four years old at the time of its completion in 1982. It read "For my son _____ Discere vitare est. To learn is to live." Truly, a motto for her life story. Like Sam, she considers herself a lifelong learner, and she aims to adapt and remain flexible, and she's conscious of a professional development plan. She also looks to change as an opportunity to renew her enthusiasm and admittingly said she seeks new positions every three to four years, changing either classes taught, school locations, or both.

During the course of our first interview, I had asked Bette to share with me what personal characteristics she most valued in herself and how these might help or hinder her effectiveness as a teacher. I then had her describe herself politically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and then to reflect on which characteristics helped or hindered her abilities as a teacher in her school district. Looking back on these generated adjectives, they are confirming as well of my findings at the end of this study. All point to her need to learn and to apply what she learns, her need intellectual challenges:

L.: What personal characteristics do you most value in yourself?
C.: Courage. I guess more mental courage than physical courage. Dedication. Integrity, honesty, and hard work. Woody Hayes said at one time -- my husband's a football coach, so I have to quote something like football (laughter) -- but Woody Hayes said something about "people being smarter than I am and people who had more money yet who cannot outwork me." I did not do the quote justice, but I feel like nobody can outwork me. I feel like that's my strength. I'm a
work horse, and I can really accomplish something if I put my mind to it and get it done. I have put tremendous amounts of energy into this job, and I still have it.

L.: Of the personal characteristics you've shared with me, which do you believe most influence how you perform as a writing teacher in an urban school?

C.: Honesty. Because if you don't write -- and if you don't ask them to write about real things that matter -- then you've fallen short of your mark. They're able to spot deceit of any kind and also they know what isn't real life and what is. My job is to bring great literature and higher-order thinking into their lives in a way that they can actually relate to it. And part of my job is to draw out their "honest faults" so that they have something to write about. My business isn't to dig into their "dirt" or anything, but it is to empower them to write through to the truth and to recognize the "truths" that are available to them in other people's writing.

L.: Generate a list of adjectives that describe you politically.

C.: Well, I'm liberal, and I see that as a good word. Liberal means that I really want everybody to have the good life. Hardworking. Compassionate. Future oriented -- I mean I'm not stuck in the "now" but what do we have to do to make the future a little bit better. Tolerant -- hopefully, I'm non-bigoted. Understanding. Some of these are kind of arrogant, but I guess in political beliefs you have to be arrogant to assume you're right (laughs).

L.: What are some adjectives that describe you intellectually?

C.: Hungry, thirsty, curious. Life-long learning. Excited, still full of enthusiasm -- that's why I change my job about every three to four years: I reinvent myself. I'm still excited about learning.

L.: Generate some adjectives that describe you emotionally.

C.: Unstable (laughter). I'm kind of manic. Deep. Overly sensitive and probably too self-focused. I tend to be moody. I think I come across as straight forward. I'm not sure if that's an emotional trait, but that's important with me. What you see is what you get. I'm on the surface pretty much as the same as I am underneath. Happy most of the time.

L.: How about spiritually?

C.: This is the hardest thing you've asked me to do (laughter). Searching, puzzled, unsure, questing, still looking but also convinced that there's something there.

(Interview 1, 1/30/96)

When I asked Bette which of these qualities in herself might enhance her work as a writing teacher in urban schools or inhibit her work, she mentioned her enthusiasm, her curiosity, and her questing. As far as which might inhibit her effectiveness, she mentioned the "gaps" that existed between her and her students that she strives to overcome:

Sometimes my intellectual curiosity may cause me to talk above the kids. I mean, it can be a problem, so I have to make sure that I'm bringing the thoughts to the level of the students I'm working with -- not that they can't handle the thoughts, but they may need a different language. Also my background. I think I'm perceived on face value as the typical "whitebread suburban female matron." And that's not what's really inside me. I get a little frustrated. I didn't throw in "frustrated" earlier, but I should have. I think that my honesty and hopefully my genuine interest in my own field and my willingness to learn from my own
students — the fact that I push myself hard should help, because it lets people see that you can make something of yourself and that I'm the real thing. I'm not just doing this for a paycheck. I really like what I'm doing. Hopefully, I infect other people with my enthusiasm. (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

When I asked Bette if she would agree or disagree with someone who called her an "expert" in teaching and assessing writing in urban schools, she questioned the nature of the term -- if it were static or dynamic:

Only if you define an "expert" as somebody who has really had hands-on, frontline experience for a great deal of time and has learned from it. You can do it for 20 years and still not learn anything from it. I could be defined as an expert if in fact I've learned from it and have continually refined what I'm doing and make better application every time I try. Then I'd have to say yes. There. I've made up a definition for you (laughs). (Interview 1, 1/30/96)

"Kali"

During our fifth and final interview, Bette spoke to me about her new position as "peer consultant" for that following school year and the new challenges it wrought. Previously, Bette had mentioned that she had applied for this job, and it was unsure as to whether or not the program would be funded the following school year. Essentially, all new teachers to the district are assigned a peer consultant to act as a mentor in their success in the classroom. Teachers who are having difficulties at whatever point in their careers may also be referred or can refer themselves to the program. Bette also spoke as well of her long-term goals as an educator and how this new assignment meshed with those:

Essentially, my long-range goal is to work with adults in teacher education in some fashion. English education or in general and so this is a really appropriate step for me to take, because I'm working with people in all high school fields.... They have a university class that they'll be taking in the winter that will help them progress, and I'm finding out that I like working with adults who are going to affect young people. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

Also during our fifth interview, I asked Bette to sketch a thematic web of her thinking with regards to "who I am and what I value" as a teacher of writing (see Figure 4.2). She took pen to paper right away and came up with a many-armed wonder! It turned out to be Kali, the Hindu goddess of light and destruction (this was rather
appropriate in terms that Bette just had shared with me that she was reading more about Indian religions and cultures as she knew very little about them). In her web she depicts herself as multi-armed -- providing solid support and structure for her student writers, holding grades, and showing herself as a writer for various reasons. Holding up "three bars" of students, she sees herself as not only the foundation but an inspirer and as a climate-builder of encouragement. "I've got my arms stretched up to hold a bar. I guess sort of the acrobat model, like the 'Flying Walendas.' Because I see all teaching as a balancing act" (Interview 5, 9/14/96).

In terms of the students standing on the first and second bars, in Bette's "hands" of support, she refers to these students as the "worker bees":

I'm going to take them a little distance. They're going to try some things that I suggest. They're going to be a little better writers. They're going to handle language with more ease. They don't really support the other guys, but the other guys above them have to stand on something. But they do in a way because just through their work and willingness to comply with what I want in a class, they provide a climate where the risk-takers (on the next bar above them) can take a chance. So on the next rung up, I've got a couple of risk-takers, and they're riding bicycles on a rod 50 feet in the air. They're the ones who are freer thinkers. They're the ones who write -- instead of an essay, they may write a poem or they may decide that they'll design their own topic around something weird or they'll have their own format. I want them to work within a structure, but I still want them to release their thoughts. They might write about something high minded or personal or wonderful that had nothing to do with the assignment. But I still see it as my job as a teacher to release them to write what they need to write. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

In describing the third rung, Bette refers to these students as those with "wings" and her ultimate goal as a teacher to free completely all her students:

So these guys are flying up in the air. I don't even know who they are. They're the "off the wall, out of the box" people who I don't know which one of my students will turn out to be. These are the creative persons who fly away, because I've supported them until their wings would go. If it wasn't me, you could put a whole series of teachers down here doing this. I feel strong and I feel like I could give them inspiration. Now my other arms, my Kali arms, are going out to show myself as a writer for various reasons. There are all kinds of reasons. So I write
Figure 4.2: Thematic Web of Cindy's Thinking
in my personal life — I'm a teacher as writer. And then I think the center of the
diagram (between the risk-takers on bicycles) was meant to indicate
encouragement and climate building. This is building a climate so somebody can
write successfully. (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

I told Bette that I marveled at how easily and quickly she constructed this diagram
"Bette as Kali." Bette explained her frequent use of metaphors and/or diagrams as her
innate ability to make structural sense in her writing instruction, and this diagram was no
exception to the rule in helping me to "see" her view of herself as writing teacher:

Another thing I'm good at for some reason and I think this is intrinsic — I don't do
math well, but the structure of writing makes sense to me. I've always been able
to picture that. Whatever the purpose of the piece of writing is I can sort of
conceive of an underlying structure. It is almost visible to me. I am able to break
that down and when I'm lucky I can show my worker bees and my risk takers and
my "out of the box" people how that structure should function to support
whatever it is they want to write. So you have to build something highly delicate
like this on a foundation. So I'm the solid foundation, and then I want to release
them to go wherever they'll go using the right tools and with the right climate and
with the right encouragement, and they'll be free to write whatever they need to.
The end (laughs). (Interview 5, 9/14/96)

I also asked Bette at the close of our last interview why she agreed to participate
in this study. Bette told me that she had worked for the district for a long time and had
received little recognition of her advanced degree and effectiveness. She was flattered to
be validated as a teacher, and she also was interested in my offer of "reciprocity" and said
she most definitely received something in return:

C.: It's very gratifying. But this is weird -- I have felt for so long, this is my twenty-
fourth year -- I have felt so under used in my limited capacity. Columbus doesn't
have any mechanism for using people who have gotten advanced degrees, for one
thing. That's a difference on the salary schedule, but they don't actually utilize
their knowledge. When I returned from working on my dissertation -- well, really
I never left -- there was no recognition of that. It was kind of "Oh, well." ... It is
truly gratifying, but it's been only in the last couple of years that I seem to be
getting recognition from out of nowhere. And how would any one really know
that I'm a good teacher? I'm a good talker. I perform well in other people's
classes. I talk a good game. I do know what I'm doing, but I could be telling you
that I know what I'm doing. Now you've actually come in and seen me teach but
even then not that much. Just a little here and there. But many people have great
faith in me and have never been anywhere near me teaching.

L.: I knew that you had a Ph. D., and your dissertation had something to do with
"basic writers." This intrigued me from the beginning. I wanted to know more
about who you were, and then your name kept reappearing.

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C.: I have always worried that I was a fraud. Maybe lots of people feel like this, but there aren't many people who can validate what I do in the classroom. Now my friend can because we lived inside each other's classrooms when we taught in the same school. She knows how I operate, and I respect her so if she says I do a thing well then I actually take it on faith value. But I sort of feel like there are a lot of people who have been fooled by my verbal persona. But then I think about it again, and I think, "Gosh, I should know something by now."

L.: I was actually nervous about calling you.

C.: You were? You shouldn't have been. You had a fancy word that I really liked, but I don't know what it was. It was something about recompense. You wanted to do something for me in return, and you would make sure that I got something out of it. I remember joking and saying, "Well, you can introduce me around."

L.: It was "reciprocity."

C.: You already have as far as I am concerned. You have brought me into a different level of thinking, and you have encouraged all of us to put that together. As far as I'm concerned, we're even now. There will come time when I'll probably need to cry on your shoulder either personally or professionally (laughs). But I really feel like people owe the time if it sounds like a useful thing....

(Interview 5, 9/14/96)

Conversations with Mandy

The Poem's Poet

Three of my informants have the name "Linda." The Linda who nominated Mandy to this study began as a nominee -- this Linda was nominated by my "first" Linda who was the initial informant for this study. Mandy's nominator recommended that I engage Mandy's participation after she declined her participation due to her new teaching assignment as of that school year, which included taking on sponsorship of an award-winning literary magazine from a popular teacher who had just retired due to health problems.

Being essentially a "transient" living in this city, working for and attending graduate school, I knew nothing of Mandy's reputation prior to her nomination as had been the case with all of the teachers in this study whom I've chosen based on the recommendations of my informants and later based as well on their teaching assignments and locations. Prior to speaking with Mandy on the telephone and prior to meeting her in person for the first time, I knew only the name of her high school and that Linda knew her through her friend, who happened to be the just retired literary magazine sponsor, and knew her as a published poet as she'd read Mandy's work.

As has been the case with the other teachers in this study, I was delighted and impressed by Mandy's openness and her involvements both in and outside the high school classroom and couldn't help but think how my preservice teachers would learn much from observations in her classroom and from dialogue with her regarding her thinking and pedagogical practices. Early into Interview 1, it was so easy to perceive that Mandy "walked the talk" as a published writer herself. She "revealed" that this is a big part of who she is as an English, and especially as a writing, teacher. When I think of the concept of "Professional Development Schools," I envision classroom teachers like Mandy on the staff, and I long to be the secondary classroom teacher again where I could be, like the university and secondary students in her classrooms, in a constant mode of learning, reflecting, and creating along side such writing teachers.

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This interview took place during the school day (11:00 AM). At one point we were interrupted by another teacher who had a question for Mandy. We sat in Mandy's classroom and wrapped the interview around 11:45. As I packed to leave, I mentioned to Mandy that I shared her same birth year. She mentioned her being single in her thirties, gaining weight, and finishing graduate school. I commiserated on all levels. By the time I left, we felt like comrades, indeed.

— from Field Log, 1/25/96

Mandy describes herself as a poetry fanatic which began with a childhood gift from her parents of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*. As far as teaching, Mandy says she loves most to teach poetry. "I love it. Everything about my life has to do with poetry" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). She has published some in literary magazines not only her poetry but essays and a "couple of short stories." Mandy says she'd like to do more but finds it difficult in light of the demands of teaching English, but she manages to give poetry readings all over the city and has read in other cities as well:

I would love to get to the point where I write every day. I don't write every day, really, because I've go so many papers to grade. I would like to write every day. I write a lot, but when I do write, I want to write as much as possible. There are some days, some weekends, where I'll write 12 hours straight. I just keep going and going (laughs). (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

Mandy says the sources of her inspiration are "real life experiences," in particular, difficulties in her life but says she writes happy poems as well. "I'm not all Anne Sexton (laughs)" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). She says her mother often has asked, "Why can't you write about nice things? Life is too short so why not be happy? And your poems don't rhyme. As much as I love _____ (Mandy's best friend), she and all your other poet friends are so strange" (Phone Interview, 4/3/96). Mandy says she likes to teach other types of writing but finds certain forms like "how to write an effective essay" particularly difficult to do, because "It takes a lot out of you when you teach this (laughs)" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Mandy says that in five or 10 years she probably will have left secondary school teaching for the college classroom. "I would like to teach at the college level, I think, at some time and make my 'million' off of my poetry (laughs)" (Interview 4, 4/13/96).
Learning Along the Way

Magic of Words

Mandy was born in 1962 the same city where she teaches and never lived anywhere else until she left for college. She grew up on the city's east side where she also graduated from a high school once considered one of the best schools in the system. However, this is no longer the case. Her former high school is now viewed as one with "a lot of problems," according to Mandy. Mandy said the district started the desegregation (busing) when she was in ninth-grade junior high in 1979. The high school received many more African-American students in the 1979-1980 school period. She said prior to this it was roughly 70 percent white and 30 percent black, and with busing it was more even. She said there was a very small Asian American population too but no more than 5 percent of the total population. There were around 2,000 students total and her graduating class was 454 students which had been considered then one of the smallest graduating classes in the school's history. Her sister, on the other hand, had over 700 in her graduating class.

She describes her family as very middle class, not even close to being wealthy. Her parents have been married for 40 years. Her mother stayed at home, so she could raise Mandy and her three sisters. Mandy's father was a teacher for the same school district that she teaches in now. The family managed to live on his sole income. All of her sisters graduated from college. Her oldest sister teaches art therapy at a university where she also is pursuing her Ph. D. and also works at a hospital teaching art therapy there as well. Her other two sisters, both mothers, have a degree in theater and music and a degree in Russian and political science respectively. Her younger sister says she now wishes she had gotten into teaching and recently offered to help Mandy grade papers. "The piddly ones that I never have time to grade -- they're not the themes and all that --
but the little things, so I'm paying her like it's a job, and it's really helpful. She's teaching vicariously through me, I guess" (Interview 1, 1/25/96).

Mandy's dad has recently retired from teaching. He taught English and history for some time and then became a home-school community agent, dealing with disruptive kids and making home visits. "He made in his career over 10,000 home visits, and he was really involved with the community and the parents" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Her father received a lot of recognition awards for his service to both community and schools.

Mandy believes in many ways she is a product of her dad's career:

The fact that my father was the disciplinarian that he was so involved with the students as a school-community agent has definitely influenced me. I think in a positive way. I've never feared entering a high school because of riots or because of mixture of races or anything like that. I sometimes fear coming to school if I've had a conflict with a student -- I wonder what the attitude is going to be that day but on a smaller scale level. We have problems at this school, and I'm concerned, but I think if you focus on fearing students or fearing gangs that students see that and that immediately creates a wall that doesn't need to be there. I've had successes with some of the worse kids who've been in and out of jail I don't know how many times. Then there have been some kids who are considered honors students, and I've just not hit it off with them at all. It really just depends on the individual. I really try not to focus on people as groups at all, and I think my dad was a lot like that too. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

In addition to learning the value of service and dedication from her dad, Mandy said it was the "magic of words" she learned early in her childhood that also influenced her decision to become an English teacher. Both her parents took her frequently to the library when she was a child. After receiving Stevenson's "Garden of Verses" in the first grade, this was when she decided poetry was for her and that she was going to be a writer some day. "But writing was always first which seems to be always second now (laughs)" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Mandy said as she grew older she even contemplated going into special education and contemplating a degree in deaf education but decided it seemed too monumental as far as everything she had to do for it. "... and it would have taken me away from my writing. Being an English teacher was more compatible with writing" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Her decision to become a teacher and to live life as a poet and an
avid consumer of poetry was further cemented by her seventh-grade English teacher who wrote in her yearbook that she was a fine poet and should keep practicing her art as she had talent. Yet, it was her parents who gave her the ultimate "encouragement" to become a certified English teacher:

Well, I love reading and writing. I've always been a writer, and I've always been a reader. It kind of made sense to teach it. But I'm a writer first — definitely a writer first. I got a degree in creative writing and a degree in English Education. My parents were constantly saying you need "this" to fall back on. I fell into this as definitely my profession. I regret and I don't regret it at the same time. I have a juggling act with that. It is very difficult for me to pursue a writing career because of the demands of being an English teacher. But when I think of some of the things that I've been able to do, people I've been able to help, kids I've helped and kids who've helped me, I can't regret it. It's been a blessing. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

Combining Lives

When I asked Mandy what characteristic she had that influenced her performance most as a writing teaching in the urban classroom, she said the fact that she lives what she teaches is important. "Thing that influence me as a writing teacher are definitely that I live what I teach. That definitely influences me. I know teachers who don't live what they teach and that informs a teacher as well" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Mandy says she also shares her poetry on a regular basis with students who are usually amazed that she's not only a writer but is a "real" person. "They usually are pretty amazed that I'm a real person. That I have had these experiences -- that I had some difficult things to deal with. They think teachers have had things handed to them on a silver platter and that they don't deal with real life issues. My poetry is all real life issues" (Interview 1, 1/25/96).

Mandy is in her tenth year at her high school and is in her eleventh year in teaching. She spent one year as a substitute teacher. Mandy says that she's taught at least one ninth-grade English class every year, has taught the honors classes and both junior and senior English classes. She also has taught evening adult high school where she taught intermediate composition and literature survey. Mandy currently teaches one "regular" ninth-grade English class, three "regular" tenth-grade English classes, and a
creative writing course that consists of tenth through twelfth graders. Her writing course is an elective course and is the only elective English course in her high school:

They choose to be in it. I'm not as stringent about their getting in. I know some teachers in the system are more stringent about that — they have to have a certain grade as a prerequisite in their previous English class. I don't do that. If they have the desire to learn about creative writing, I figure they deserve to be in there. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

Mandy, like Sam and Bette, is also the faculty adviser for the school's literary magazine which she says she and her creative writing students created for the school four years ago. In addition to their practicing creative writing, the students "are also the editors and hopefully the writers (laughs)" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Mandy says her favored grade level to teach thus far, though, has been the adult evening high school which she taught for three years. These classes were comparable to an eleventh-grade class, but the ages ranged from 16 to 65 and were considered adult evening school. Mandy said it was the "mixture" of students that was most appealing. "They are adults who have never received their diploma and are coming back, or they've wanted to take the course just to take it. I've taught drama there as well" (Interview 1, 1/25/96):

It was so wonderful to have adults in there who were great models for the kids. They would say, "Listen, I didn't listen to the teacher when I was your age, and now I'm struggling and trying to get my diploma." They seemed to appreciate it so much, and the kids were in awe of the adults for having the courage to come back. I liked the mixture of the ages. There's something about me that: I like the mixture of ages. I like the 'writers' seminar' class too, because it has three ages. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

In addition to having two bachelor's degrees from one university, Mandy is about four courses short of her master's degree from another. She also has 30 graduate hours from yet another university where she had been taking classes since she 1985 after graduating with her bachelor's degrees. Some of her 30 hours of graduate courses at this particular university included some in creative writing and others on drug and alcohol abuse and counseling. Mandy describes her past life as a student as a "teacher's dream" but not because she was brilliant but because she learned and "learned it good and hard at
home that you're to treat teachers with respect, to be quiet at all times -- my behavior was perfect as it was hammered into my head to be that way (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Mandy said, however, she loved to learn and was never afraid to ask questions. She says she hasn't been successful in everything she has taken and claims to be "terrible" in math and science. "English and foreign languages -- anything creative, music, theater -- I've always been into all of that" (Interview 1, 1/25/96).

As far as her professional involvements, Mandy says she is a member of the teachers unions the National Education Association and its state-level affiliate, both required memberships as they represent the teachers in her district. She is also a member of the National Association for Poetry Therapy and has "gone in and out of being involved" with various other associations and says she's probably the least involved now:

I'm trying to focus more on getting my job done. I used to do too many things. I think as my "clientale" gets a little more interesting, I need to be focusing more of my time on them than my outside stuff. I'm still involved with the poetry world in the city. I've received grants through the state's Art Council to coordinate workshops around and different, particularly poetry, workshops and readings and stuff like that. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

With her involvement in poetry therapy, Mandy has attended various workshops and has conducted several workshops of her own. Many of these have been outside of the city, while others have been local workshops. "For example, I have taught poetry and art workshops at the _____ Mental Health Center and have done some other things -- writing workshops, not just poetry, but writing workshops at different nursing homes and _____ County Children's Services" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). Additionally, she has directed the local Poetry Therapy program, has done writers' workshops in at a writers' bed and breakfast in central Ohio, and has taught writing workshops for a university and community college in neighboring cities and at various other locations all over Ohio. She also has sought some grants, and others she has received through the university where she is completing her master's degree, in part, due to her involvement there as a student.
Mandy says she doesn't read any professional journals on a regular basis but that she is reading constantly. She reads literary journals on a regular basis, such as *Poets and Writers* which is also a subscription she holds, and she reads book "collections of fiction and poetry, anything pertaining to psychology, a lot of nonfiction," and she goes to the library once every month or two just to read different journals and magazines but not to read anything consistently (Interview 1, 1/25/96). In terms of her training as a writing teacher, she said most of this happened after her undergraduate degrees. She has taken numerous writing workshops which she has attended in various locations, has taken several hours in poetry therapy, and has attended activities through the state's Arts Council. She believes the best training she received has been her graduate courses which she says have been "excellent." But a lot of what she's learned has been learned through her environment and as an active participant in the poetry scene:

> At first kids, before they really get to know me, think I'm joking when I say I go to poetry readings. "They give poetry readings somewhere?" (Laughter.) They immediately think I snap my finers and wear black -- the whole beatnik thing (laughs). Then after a while they see it's true, and then I bring in flyers and start requiring that they go to some of these things. Then they go, "Oh, my gosh, this woman's for real." But many of my friends are writers too. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

As far as her undergraduate training, Mandy says her English Education degree did little to prepare her to teach writing and that her creative writing degree was more beneficial, while both did little to prepare her for the realities of the classroom. "I really think it's shameful, and _____ is considered one of the best education universities. I was required to take so few writing courses for the English Education degree, but I had all of these courses I has taken as a creative writer, so I'm really glad as it's helped me as an English teacher" (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

When I asked Mandy if there were any texts that she thought were beneficial to her as a writing teacher, she mentioned Atwell's (1986) *In the Middle* and Rief's (1992) *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts with Adolescents*. With Atwell in particular, Mandy wonders how many urban high schools Atwell has been in as she believes many of her
ideas would be unrealistic but that she admires Atwell for being so organized. Mandy said she's also read "picked around" Glasser's (1993) conceptions of The Quality School Teacher. Nevertheless, Mandy said she has tried some things and realizes that "You have to be versatile and flexible to be a successful teacher" (Interview 1, 1/25/96).

Observer of Life

Mandy's school is located in the southwest part of the city and was built in 1975 in response to another area high schools increasing enrollment. Her school is a one-story dark brown, brick building, noticeably with few windows outside of those on the front and side doors. It sits on a 30 acre tract of land that accommodates as well outdoor activities. When I visited the school's office on my first day there to observe Mandy, I picked up various public relations materials that described the school as "a traditional education in an air conditioned and carpeted building" with "up-to-date technological equipment which compliments the block scheduling now implemented to meet our students' needs." I noticed that there appeared to be "portable walls" in the classrooms. Mandy said this building was built in its original state to accommodate "open classrooms," and these partitions between classrooms, which I couldn't help but note appeared "paper thin," were the outcome of this unsuccessful concept of the 1970s. Mandy said she experienced firsthand this notion of "rooms without walls" as a secondary student. "I think it was the biggest fluke. I had a taste of it as a kid... while I was taking science I heard the French teacher and could see her. I mean, she was two yards from me. I had my fingers to my ears the entire time" (Interview 3, 3/18/96).

Mandy's high school emphasizes computer programming as its featured draw. Mandy has stated that computers are available for programming as well as for use in math and science but access for English classes is tough. "We have this writing lab at school, and I've tried to use that. The fact that there are 16 computers, and I usually have
a class size of 30 which makes it difficult. And now, out of the 16, only four are working (laughs). All the other have viruses" (Interview 3, 3/18/96). Mandy also said the focus on computers is problematic in other ways:

I think we have a lot of other excellent teachers in other departments, and yet we're not getting any support in any of the other areas. The computer program has been given thousands of dollars. I asked for $20.00 for a literary magazine and was told no (laughs). Every year she (principal) has threatened to get rid of Writers' Seminar because "What's the value of creative writing?" I just find this to be so ludicrous and wrong.... But they really kind of ignore them, and the sad thing is they're talking about closing some of the high schools. If they don't close our school, it'll probably be because of the computer science department. (Interview 3, 3/18/96)

There are roughly 815 students attending Mandy's school. The student population is considered at capacity at 825. When Mandy started teaching here, there were 600 students, but she believes with the computer program being one of the best in the system, their enrollment has steadily increased in the past 10 years as the program was built and strengthened. As of this school year, classes have been built around block scheduling which Mandy says hasn't been very effective, in part, due to the principal's poor planning. "Every teacher complains about the fact that one day is total hell with no breaks the entire day. I don't go to the bathroom on my odd days, because I really don't have time to do that (laughs)" (Interview 3, 3/18/96). Mandy says there used to be a four-tiered tracking system in her school that included remedial, basic, regular, and honors challenge courses, but this is no longer the case. There are currently two tracks -- regular English and honors challenge English. Mandy said roughly 85 percent of the school's students were on free and reduced lunch and that she believed this also might be a district-wide fact.

Mandy said that the majority of the students at her school are African American with white students being the second largest group and Asian Americans at roughly 4 to 5 percent and an even smaller group of Hispanic students. Mandy said she understands that most of the students come from divorced or single-parent homes, and they don't see consistently one or both of their parents. "A lot of the kids don't even know who their
parents are. A lot of these kids don't feel loved. Maybe they are, but something is lacking" (Interview 4, 4/13/97). I asked Mandy if she believed "poverty of urban schooling" to be a stereotype. She said that many of the students are considered to be from low-income homes "although a lot of the kids are well-dressed, because they're drug dealers. We've got a huge problem with that in our school. They've had several times through the year -- at night the police come in with dogs to sniff the lockers and try to find something. It's just ridiculous" (Interview 4, 4/13/96). She said that she believed as well that "a lot of kids who are having learning problems also have financial problems" (Interview 5, 9/27/96). Mandy said that during her last grading period 60 percent of her students failed and 50 percent of that was due to poor attendance:

They have a ridiculous rule that if kids miss five unexcused absences it's an automatic F. It's funny, a few kids who've missed say five, six, seven days -- most of them have tried to make up the work. But the bulk of the kids who've gotten an F was because they've missed 30 days or haven't shown up at all. Some kids, I don't even know what they look like. I haven't seen them at all. (Interview 4, 4/13/97)

Mandy also said that she really would dislike teaching in a one-race school as "that's not the real world" and that she strives to recognize cultural differences and to build upon them but that she often takes it for granted that her classrooms are truly a community of learners and not a community of differences:

I can remember one class I was teaching (at adult evening school)... I didn't realize until the semester exam that I was the only white person in the class. I wasn't until they were taking the test that I looked around the room and said, "Hey, guys, I'm the only white person in this room." One kid said, "It took you that long to figure that out?" I just don't really think about that. I really don't. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

I asked Mandy how much of what she does in the classroom does she attribute to her preservice training or even inservice training. She said the best training she had was as a substitute teacher the year after she graduated from college and was awaiting a full-time contract job:

I guess, I really didn't get much to help from my undergrad. I've got to say, number one, to be a writing and literature teacher and to try to be effective I've
got to say that I owe it to my parents for instilling in me early the importance of reading, because so much of what I bring into the class is from what I've read on my own. I really do kind of live a literary life. _____ is considered one of the top education schools in the country, and yet they really didn't talk about the "real world." They didn't talk about what you do when you break up fights. They didn't talk about the varying levels of abilities you're going to find in the classroom or classroom management. As far as actual training, the very best training I got was being a substitute teacher for a year before I got my job at ____. I learned to adapt to any kind of situation. (Interview 4, 4/13/97)

I asked Mandy what she believed colleges of education should do to better prepare teachers for urban schools and asked her to suggest special things that teachers in urban schools should know about managing classrooms filled with a variety of students:

I think that they need to change the education courses in most colleges. They need to bring in teachers from various urban schools and really be candid with presenting all the problems there are. They really give kind of a "Pollyanna type of story" about what schools are like, and it's not the way it is. They need to be more realistic. They need to bring in -- well, a lot of the books that I had to read on education were so archaic. They needed to make everything more contemporary. (Interview 4, 4/13/96)

In discussing classroom management at her school, Mandy talked about teachers who "go down to the students' level" and fail to practice respect. Mandy said she believed "respect" to be an essential component that often is missing between teachers and students:

The way teachers discipline kids varies so drastically. A lot of teachers think you need to "go down to their level." You know, swear at them. I don't agree with that. I really don't. I think you can go down to their level to bring them up to yours. I give class expectations, and I hand them out at the beginning of the year. I even have things like "Profanity is not to be used here." I say to them, "To me, it's all a matter of respect. I'm not showing you that I respect you by doing it, and I don't expect you to do that either." I'm real strict about little things like that, because they need to learn to curb that, because they can't be doing that on the job. For a lot of them, it's a bad habit that they need to break. I've had kids who've come back to me later who've said that it was terrible and that I was the biggest censorer, and I had no right to do this, who got fired from their jobs because of it. They came back and said, "I understand what you were saying now, and I should have listened." A lot of my discipline is based on this whole theme of respecting yourself and respecting others and just very fundamental things. You really have to think about how you plan your lessons and how you're going to do it. That really comes into play with this discipline as well. Certain things are going to wreak havoc in the classroom if you're not careful. (Interview 4, 4/13/96)
Mandy said that her biggest concern as an urban teacher is that the school system appears to be going "downhill." Like Bette, she said she also believed that there was a need for more teachers though she believes that central administration wouldn't agree with her assessment of the situation:

I really think about this if not daily but weekly. I also think many of these kids probably won't see the age of 25. I really worry about that. I mean, I've really cried about that. There's just so much a person can do. I can't totally change their environment and all the abuse that they've gone through, and I've literally prayed to God, "Help me to know exactly what I can do to help them the most." My time with them is so limited, and there's so many within the classrooms. I know a lot of them are "falling through the cracks." I worry about that all the time. I really think it would be really important for there to be more teachers. "Downtown" would laugh at me for saying that, because they're trying to cut them away. I mean, if I had half the students that I have I could do more with them. It's just a real basic thing. (Interview 4, 4/13/96)

Mandy said her greatest joy as a teacher is when students return after graduation and say how much they learned or appreciated something that she did for them:

I got a letter in the mail from a kid that I had my very first year here at _____. I swear I carried that letter for a month every day. It was just the neatest letter -- how I influenced his life in such a great way. He had just graduated from _____ and was going to law school. It's just really neat. He said things that he remembered so clearly. A lot of our conversations and the conversations that he's had with me were so much more meaningful than a lot of the interactions that he's had with close friends. I just thought, "Oh, my gosh, I did make a difference with somebody." That just felt so good. (Interview 4, 4/13/97)

I asked Mandy why she thought some teachers stayed in teaching and why others didn't. She stated that this is where a person's ability level as far as perseverance comes to test. We talked somewhat about accountability too and the public's perception of "teachers not doing their jobs":

It's where your ability level is as far as perseverance that comes in. I mean, some people are able to persevere and deal with the "crap" more than others. I can't believe that as hard as this job is -- well, I don't see how it's an easy paycheck. Now there are some poor teachers who don't do anything, but I would say 90 percent of the teachers I've known work really hard, and they put so much time outside of the school into their work. The job never leaves them. They're always thinking about it. (Interview 4, 4/13/97)
I asked Mandy what she thought of the "missionary concept" of teaching in urban schools. I mentioned to her that my preservice teachers who plan to teach urban have often said that they're going in there to "save" these kids:

S.: Peace be with you. I think that's wonderful, but I don't think that they have any idea what just managing one day is like and how much energy it takes just to get through a day. That probably sounds very negative.

L.: I don't think so. It is a very tough job.

S.: I love challenges, and it's a challenge daily. I love the fact that this is a place where I'll always be needed. I will never feel like I'm not needed. But those people who have a "failure complex" will definitely not fit into a situation like this. Again, I also think for the most part, all student teaching and all education courses are not realistic. If I ever have enough money and enough "know-how" and enough degrees to do something like this, I would love to revamp a lot of education colleges within the country. (Interview 5, 9/27/96)

Mandy said she also believed that there's a lack of parents who care, or understand, the notion of academic success. She mentioned a project in which she and two other teachers decided to call the parents of 155 students who hadn't passed the proficiency test. Their attempt was to train the parents. Out of their calls only 18 parents showed. Three of these represented one family and another four represented another family, and two or three from another family:

I took the parents, all 18 had kids who hadn't passed the writing, and showed them how to write the essay using a writing prompt. I said to them, "Here are some examples of writing prompts. Have your kids do these. Have them bring them in to me, and I will grade them the way they grade the writing prompts." Nobody came in with the essay. The parents took notes but maybe they didn't show the kids how to do it (Interview 3, 3/18/96).

I asked Mandy if she believed this might be due in part to "cultural clashes" between parents and the schools and perhaps parents saw this as the teachers' jobs. She said she believed it was a combination and that most parents don't realize the extent of the teachers' responsibilities but see teachers as getting paid year around but only working "nine months out of the year":

S.: But I think some parents really don't care that much about their kids. I mean, that's what some of the parents tell me on the phone. "I really don't care what my son does." I've heard this expression so many times: "I've 'washed my hands' of him."
L.: *It might make one cease to wonder why kids mess around or fail in school.*
S.: I know and then often when I do meet the parents, then I marvel at how well the kid is doing. After I've met their "goofball" parents, I think, "Oh, my gosh, he's going to be alright if he keeps doing okay after living with you."

(Interview 3, 3/18/96)

Mandy said that one of the most frustrating aspects of teaching in her school is an administration who seems to ignore the needs and ideas of the faculty. The school's current block scheduling has seemed to increase the frustration and anger of many on the faculty. A proposal for next year is a "four by four" plan in which major courses would be semester long and not all year. In some cases, students might have only one class per day and the concern would be that students were free to roam the building for the rest of the day. "I think it would be an attendance nightmare. I don't think that's going to help the kids at all. They seem to be catering to what kids want when most of our kids aren't able right now to make mature, healthy decisions for themselves. So how is giving them more freedom going to help?" (Interview 3, 3/18/96).

Mandy spoke of an assistant principal who was just hired to their building that transferred from another high school and who is considered a "four by four expert." Evidently, he has not discussed this with the faculty in terms of their interests and perceived concerns. Mandy said at one time the school had been under a "site-based management" reform, although it didn't work out as administrators didn't seem to listen to the voices of the teachers. In a recent faculty meeting, one English teacher spoke of her concerns of not having time to teach various novels in her American Studies honors classes:

He said, "They don't need to read them any way." He boasted that he had never read *The Scarlet Letter.* When he asked me if I had my master's degree yet, I said that I was almost finished with it. He then asked me what I was getting it in, so I told him English. He said, "Why?" I said, "Oh, maybe because I teach it." He said, "That's not going to do you any good. That's not going to help you in any way. And why do you write poetry anyway?" (Interview 3, 3/18/96)
I asked Mandy if the public's perception of her, the teacher, is ever problematic. She said it was and how urban school teachers and districts are criticized by the media seems especially difficult to swallow at times:

This district is considered a joke. I think for the most part teachers are blamed for a lot of it. Now I have read some letters to the editor in the paper that are kind of in support of teachers and are kind of scoffing "downtown," but a lot of times teachers get the brunt of the jokes. I'm real tired of hearing that teachers aren't qualified enough or aren't caring enough. We're asked to be -- to really parent these kids at school. I spend so much of my time counseling them and trying to make sure these kids are getting fed in the morning. I've doled out soap -- all kinds of personal hygiene stuff to these kids that they're not getting at home, and yet I'm criticized as not caring and not doing my job. The irony is that a lot of that does take away from the actual instruction time. Sometimes that's what we have to do even more of -- is deal with their physical needs and emotional needs.

(Interview 3, 3/18/96)

Pedagogy

7:30 AM. I arrived during home room... many of the kids look beat. Two in the front row rub their eyes. I can't help but notice the difference between this crew and the students at Sam's school.... The males sitting behind me are vocal, bold and seemingly angry and defiant.... In a few minutes, home room will expire, and Mandy's creative writing class will arrive....

7:45 AM. Mandy mentioned today students received report cards -- some would be happy, and some would be disturbed! I note most of her creative writing students have arrived, though some straggle in from their "home rooms" with seemingly "just rolled out of bed" appearances. Mandy had said it usually takes a while for them to "warm up" and arrange all their desks in a circle for Writers' Seminar....

7:47 AM. Mandy plugs in the tape recorder, playing what I thought to be hauntingly beautiful, a Windham Hill artist's, solo piano. (What I suspected, I discovered to be true -- Jim Brickman's compositions.) She had said previously to all "Good morning!) and then turned to me in an aside, explaining that they begin the morning by doing to music "free writing" which she refers to as "Morning Pages." I note that she didn't say "Everybody be quiet and work," but rather turned on the music and began writing herself....

7:53 AM. Students and teacher are all writing now. I notice a student at my right is maybe six to nine months pregnant. A student goes to sharpen her pencil. Mandy continues to write and so do the others.... The "mother-to-be" sneezes. Mandy whispers, "Bless you." The writing continues....

8:10 AM. The students continue to read at will from their pages.... A female student shares being awake until 2:00 AM as her 19-year-old brother kept her awake.... Mandy relates to their pieces on a personal level, linking what they wrote to her experiences and sometimes to others she has known. She mentions her girlfriend's reading of Pamela Houston's (1992) Cowboys Are My Weakness to one writer who has written about his experiences as a rodeo cowboy....

8:11 AM. Mandy tells students to retrieve their "character sketches." She then pulls out What If? Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers by Anne Bernays and Pamela Painter (1990). She tells the writers that it's a book by writers who
taught a class she took at Antioch College. She says they're (real!) writers who publish on continual bases....

7:55 AM. Mandy starts the class with free writes she refers to as "sentence starters"—for example, "Yesterday might have been better if...." All of a sudden there's an interruption from the P.A. A list of students who needed to make up the proficiency test. It's almost 10 minutes worth! Mandy tells me that one day last week she had 19 interruptions during another hour. I have noticed that her school has far more interruptions than Sam's school and even Bette's....

Relevancy: Poetry That Speaks

Mandy's classroom pedagogy is marked by her love of poetry as both writer and reader. She aims to create relevancy for students by choosing poetry selections that they can relate to and poetry selections that can be paired with other genres in order to create further understanding of them. She also uses poetry exercises for responses to readings and as a way to teach language (to highlight students' awarenesses in light of what's required by the state's proficiency tests) in lieu of grammar exercises, for example. During one of my observations, she was using poetry by Mel Glenn, a young adult author, that was told from the perspectives of teenagers embroiled in real life controversies such as relationship breakups and pregnancy; she was having the students look at its construction (use of literary techniques and word choices) in the creation of meaning. Indirectly, she was linking this to proficiency test requirements which she told me later were on many of the students' minds as they had to retake certain portions of the test, including the English portions.

Mandy says that she also engages students in a variety of writing outside of poetry writing. She tries to make things "bizarre" as well as relevant. She also uses freewriting to encourage practice of ideas on paper:

I've done different things with different kids, because some things just don't work with some kids. I'm surprised every year. Some things that seem to be no-fail, great ways to engage students in writing may not work with a particular class or with a particular kid, and then some bizarre things that I wing sometimes are the most successful. I really believe in freewriting and getting them to do a lot of writing and not concern themselves with mechanics. I think they need to be
interested in it and excited about it before you can really get them to the point of revising and perfecting all that. (Interview 4, 4/13/96)

I asked Mandy how she concerns herself with her students’ dialects, such as those who aren’t writing or speaking “Standard or Edited English” and whether or not this was a concern of hers. She said it was a concern and that she emphasized the politics of this to her students:

I tell them that we do need to realize whether we like it or not the reality is that there’s a standard form of English that they need to know and implement within pretty much the whole school and in the "real world" when they get older and get a job. I talk about how it’s important to use standardized English within an interview and all that, but what you do at home is fine. I really try to celebrate the various dialects in the classroom. We’ve done things where we’ve taken scenes from Romeo and Juliet and have written them in raps and have written them in street talk. I try to use that a lot. A lot of the contemporary stuff, which is the poetry that I bring in, uses a lot of various dialects. I think my kids know that I respect and appreciate those. I’ve given them personal situations where I felt that I had to edit my language, so I think they understand where I’m coming from.

(Interview 4, 4/13/97)

"Poetry Therapy"

Interestingly enough, on April 3, 1996, I was waiting for a call from Mandy, hoping to schedule another interview with her. She called to do so and told me about a poem that she had written that was “censored” by the school district. Evidently, the school district has had in the past a monthly writing context sponsored by a local retail merchant that in more recent years has been turned into a yearly contest. This contest, a district-wide event in which both faculty and students submit various works, results in a small cash award, a certificate, and the winners’ writings published in a district-produced book. At the end of February, Mandy had sent some of her students’ work as well as a poem that she had written. She discovered recently that she had been awarded first place (prize of $50.00) in the faculty category, however, she had received a call about two weeks ago from a “woman” from central office saying that someone in the superintendent’s office thought it "inappropriate." Her poem chronicles a childhood incident in which another little girl tried to molest her. It was really a poem about
memory and survival. She was disgusted with the superintendent for this, "condemning what is real in writing" (Telephone Interview, 4/3/96). Two representatives from the district's central office were coming to her school to speak with her about this the very next day. Mandy said that the judges of the adult poetry contest were professors from a local university, and her poem was "discovered" by the district only when "someone" from the district was compiling all the works to send to the book publisher. Mandy's best friend, who is both a poet and a publisher, was so outraged that she'd considered taking some sort of public action.

Mandy and I met for our fourth interview later in the week on a Saturday morning at a coffee house in her neighborhood. I was anxious to hear what transpired between Mandy and these two representatives "just two levels down from the superintendent" (Phone Interview, 4/3/96). Mandy brought her poem (see Appendix J). After I read it, I wondered why the superintendent thought it too "risque." Mandy said the superintendent evidently believed "we have to protect the reputation of our school system" (Interview 4, 4/13/96). Evidently the two representatives didn't agree but said they had to listen to their boss, the superintendent. They then told Mandy none of the teachers' poems would be published due to costs, but Mandy remained disgusted by this form of censorship:

Well, they thought I was going to be happy to hear this. The first thing out of their mouths was, "Well, we want you to know that we've decided due to our 'shoe-string budget' we're not going to publish any of the teachers' writings in this journal." I said, "Is it really because of the budget, or is it because you're trying to appease me, and you think I'm going to be happy if you don't publish these other two teachers' writing?" They said, "Oh, no. It's because of the budget." When I talked to my friend about this later, she said, "Wait a minute. That's basically one extra page they have to finance. You know, it's two poems on one side and two poems on the other side." Then they said they were sending a memo out throughout the school system saying that due to the budget problem, teachers will no longer be published. My friend was saying, "You know, that's going to cost more to do that than it would to publish the teachers' poems." (Interview, 4/13/96)

Mandy said she chose this poem out of hundreds she's written because she figured there might be kids dealing with this kind of thing and perhaps worse. She thought it
might be therapeutic for them as it was for her to write about it several years after it happened. She said the two representatives pressed it upon her that she would still get her $50.00 and hoped that she'd show for the awards banquet. Mandy mentioned to them that she had said something to one of the judges (her best friend) of the contest. The two women were very concerned and mentioned that she could get fired or laid off in light of the district's budget problems. Mandy referred them to a short story in her students' textbook written by Roald Dahl, "Lambs to the Slaughter," in which the man comes home and tells his wife that he's having an affair, and then she hits him with a leg of lamb and kills him. The women laughs about it at the story's end. "But this (poem) is horrible?" (Interview 4, 4/13/96). Needless to say, Mandy's poem wasn't published nor were the other teachers' who had won the contest, and she was told not to discuss this with other teachers and students, but she said that she already had.

**Her Web**

**She's "Intricate"**

As I did with the other teachers in this study, I asked Mandy if there was a piece of literature, say a poem, that she could share with me that might help me to see her better as a teacher or as a whole person. She had mentioned Anne Sexton's poetry previously, jokingly referring to its "focus on the erotic," and said there was one "neutral" poem in particular that spoke of who she was. To me this excerpt is representative of Mandy's hopefulness and renewed sense for events of the morrow:

There is joy
in all...
So while I think of it,
let me paint a thank-you on my palm
for this God, this laughter of the morning,
lest it go unspoken...
The Joy that isn't shared, I've heard,
dies young. (p. 455)
--- from Anne Sexton's (1981) "Welcome Morning"
When I asked Mandy what characteristics she valued most in herself, she replied, "I'm pretty hard on myself. I usually think about what I don't like more than what I like. I do really care about people. I'm sincere about that. I'm willing to go out of my way to help people" (Interview 1, 1/25/96). When I asked Mandy to describe herself politically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and then to reflect on which of these helped or hindered her abilities as a teacher in her school district, she generated adjectives that were confirming as well of my findings by this study's end. All point to her need to develop her personal and professional being and in her understandings of others:

L.: Describe yourself politically.
S.: I'm open minded.
L.: What are some adjectives that describe you intellectually?
S.: Insightful, creative, complex -- well, I'm probably more complex emotionally than I am intellectually (laughs).
L.: So what are some adjectives that describe you emotionally?
S.: Intricate -- that word has been thrown out by many people (laughs). Many times people have said, "You're very intricate" (laughter). Passionate. Depressed (laughs). I tend to feel very deeply. It is my nature to let things affect me more than I should.
L.: How about spiritually?
S.: I'm a Christian. I definitely believe in the principles of Christianity. I try very hard to not be judgmental, and I think a lot of people who profess to be Christians are extremely closeminded and judgmental.
L.: Thinking about these adjectives, which do you think may enhance your work as a writing teacher in an urban school?
S.: I mentioned that I'm flexible, and I think that this is so imperative in this job. The fact that I'm insightful. I think I'm sensitive and in tune with kids' feelings more than others maybe.
L.: Are there any that might inhibit your effectiveness?
S.: You know, I tend to let things get to me too much sometimes. The fact that I'm creative is good in many ways, because I've done some different things with my class. But because creativity is so important in my life personally, when that is set aside, I feel left out and get grouchy. Grouchy is sometimes a good word for me here, unfortunately (laughs).
(Interview 1, 1/25/96)

When I asked Mandy if someone were to refer to her as an "expert" in teaching and assessing writing in urban schools if she would agree or disagree, she disagreed:

I don't think anybody is an expert. Anybody who professes to be an expert, I personally feel has stopped learning. I think that I am -- that there are certain areas of my teaching life that are exceptional and some that aren't. I have many extremes. I'm not a very organized person. I bought a book (laughs) How to Get Organized for a Creative Person. I lost it within 24 hours, and then I finally
found it. It looks nice on the coffee table (laughter). I haven't really delved into it yet. Again, I have these good intentions as far as learning goes, but they never really seem to pan out (laughter). I definitely know more contemporary literature and writing compared to many English teachers. I don't think you should stick to the "classics" all the time. You have to find things that your students enjoy or that relate to them in some way. This is very important. (Interview 1, 1/25/96)

When I asked Mandy why she agreed to take part in my study and what she thought now that it was over, she said first of all that she regreted how she "handled this study." I was surprised by this as I believed it to be a rich experience on my part. Evidently, Mandy who is at the 10-year mark in her career and who is now going on 35 has reached a point of reflection on her career in which she is determining which step to take next. Often during our conversations, she asked me questions about my "route" in life, curious as we both are the same age. She had told me at various points throughout this study that she is appreciative of my changes and degree strivings, especially as she heads towards completion of her master's degree the fall of 1996 and thinks about a possible doctorate. I have told her that I'm impressed with how she continues to "move" and to grow in her poetry whereas I've neglected all aspects of my nonacademic writing life as I do "school work" instead:

I feel like I've been more of a disservice to you rather than a service. You've been so patient with me and so kind. I thought that it was a great idea for a dissertation, but I also like, my mother, immediately worried about you. I thought, "How is this woman going to do this in one dissertation?" It just seemed an overwhelming task. I thought, well, I tend to take on overwhelming tasks too. So then I became very curious. I thought, "I really want to meet this woman." And I'm very glad that I did meet you. My gosh, and you like Barry Manilow too. What more can I want in a person? (Laughter.) (Interview 5, 9/27/96)

Mandy also mentioned that she rarely meets anybody her age in education. "They're either way older than me for the most part or I've met a few brand new teachers" (Interview 5, 9/27/96). I explained to her that I had been in the "same boat" at my previous high school in Kansas City -- that I was considered by far the youngest until three brand new teachers in their early twenties were hired. "There is only one teacher younger than I am.... Our principal has referred to our staff, when he talks to me, as an
older staff, and it bothers me. He has mentioned that to me more than once” (Interview 5, 9/27/96).

**Eclectic and Serendipitous**

Mandy wrote in a 1993 edition of the state’s journal for English language arts teachers that “To explore myself as a reader is to explore myself as a writer. If I asked what my philosophy is concerning reading and writing, those words by Rilke ring true to me. I find reading absolutely essential in my life, as I do writing. Each task nurtures the other. I chant to students that in order to write well they must read, and to read well means reading and reading, again and again.” When I asked Mandy to construct a thematic web of her thinking as a writing teacher, her published words rang true. I told her that her web was far more complex than any of the other teachers’ in this study (see Figure 4.3). These complexities also can be noted in a flyer she shared with me for a recent poetry reading she was giving at a local cafe in the city (see Appendix K). She laughed and explained that her life is somewhat of a “mess” and this affects her teaching as well as her writing.

I just kind of wrote down everything that affects my teaching and my teaching affects my writing. It's a mess like this cluster. I've jotted down some names of students who have impact on my life and my writing. The names of teachers and family members and characters in books and a couple of things that I always say in class. (Interview 5, 9/27/96)

Insert Figure 4.3 about here

One of the things I've noted about all three teachers in this study is that they constantly are reading and have suggested books to me throughout this period. Mandy, in particular, is moved by a variety of writers, some that I've read and admired as well, and says she tends to get obsessed with one and reads all of her or his works. Some of the books that she has read, or currently was reading, were *Otherwise* by Jane Kenyon, written prior to Kenyon's death from leukemia, which Mandy says "jarred me to no end,
Figure 4.3: Thematic Web of Sandy's Thinking
and I've used it in different activities, and every class and every kid I've presented that poem to has been affected by it. And we've had probably some of the best discussions" (Interview 5, 9/27/96). Mandy says she's most recently obsessed with the Holocaust and has been reading *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. *Walking on Water* by Madeleine L’Engle, reflections on faith and art, has also proved meaningful to her as both a writer and a teacher. Mandy also mentioned her love of children’s books and says she’s used them on several occasions in her classes. During our final interview, she shared a book by George Ella Lyons *The Basket* which she said she discovered at a book fair where Lyons had spoken. "She had all these books, and I picked that one up, because there was only one left and that made me curious. I read it and burst into tears (laughs). She comes up to me and says 'Is there something wrong?' I said, 'It's just so good' (laughs)" (Interview 5, 9/27/96). This book is about a basket that is passed down from one generation to the next and speaks of family love and traditions and resonates of carrying forth a legacy.

I mentioned to Mandy that previously she had said her seventh-grade English teacher had been a major influence on her desire to write and even to teach and noted his presence in her web. In particular, she had said he wrote "something" in her yearbook. Mandy then mentioned to me that this former teacher and published poet was having a poetry reading at a local cafe in early November, and she thought I might want to attend as well. She said what he wrote still has an impact on her today:

Oh, he told me that I had the ability to be a successful writer. I had the insights and the ability to do that. Or to do anything that required an extra special person or whatever. It just really was meaningful to me. I had to do a writing portfolio for _____ State to show what makes me the writer and teacher I am and the front cover I Xeroxed that part of my yearbook and put it in the center just because he had such an impact on me as a teacher and a writer. More than anybody else. (Interview 5, 9/27/96)

Mandy mentioned the films *Powder* and *The Piano* were also inspiring to her both as a writer and as a teacher of writing:

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I think it's probably the greatest lesson to be taught to kids and adults. It really is a poem to me. I think everyone of us could find ourselves in Powder. The only thing that kept him going on earth was his spirituality in books. You'll love Powder. You will be changed by it. As far as The Piano, I could totally identify with the woman. I think the whole movie is about captivity -- being held captive and trying to break free from that, and I think that as women we're held captive in many ways in our act to juggle more things and to be good at more things. I'm not really a feminist but I do have some feminist beliefs, I guess. I completely identified. (Interview 5, 9/27/96)

When I asked her about Wing Biddlebaum having a place on her web, Mandy said that he's a character from a story "Hands" by Sherwood Anderson that both she and the students can relate to their lives:

I see myself sometimes in Wing Biddlebaum, and I see my students as Wing Biddlebaum. And I see my neighbor across the hall as Wing Biddlebaum. I'll have to get you a copy of this. He was misunderstood by a lot of people in the town. He is a very sensitive person, very creative. He had a different perception on things a lot of the time. Love and yet hated at the time. (Interview 5, 9/27/96)

I asked her who Mary Ann Burkett was. Mandy said it was a "great aunt of mine who was a nurse and a poet. She died of M. S., and she basically believed that she lived longer because of her writing" (Interview 5, 9/27/96). Mandy said the "Anti-Poetry Society" was a group of students who, in her first year at this school, "complained" that she "pushed" poetry on them all of the time:

S.: My first year here -- I believe that this kid is going to be President of the United States, because he's brilliant -- he started calling me the poetry pusher and created this group called the Anti-Poetry Society. They had a mascot named Freddy which is also the mascot, they knew I had come from University. They had a president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. They had their own "A. P. S." stationery, and what we did -- we had this battle going on all year. He kept complaining about the poetry, and I said, "You know, you keep bringing up poetry all the time. That must mean that you really love it, and I've been neglecting you. I've not been giving you enough attention so I will make sure that every day for the rest of this year you will have a poem on your desk from me." The kids said, "Nah, she won't. She won't." For the rest of the year, he got one from me, and they would be saying, "Oh, she forgot this time." We'd be in the middle of reading Romeo and Juliet or whatever, and I would just walk by his desk and give him a poem very single day for the rest of the year. He started writing me "hate mail," and it was in the form of poetry (laughs).

L.: Was it a big friendly joke?
S.: Yes. I would go home -- I would go into the teachers' lounge to get my coat and my pockets would be stuffed with A. P. S. poems. And then I would put poems in their lockers. It was so much fun. This kid I've kept in contact with, and he's now
in law school. It was fun because when he graduated from high school, I gave him the book *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl, and he says that book absolutely changed his life. It's really cool to know I gave a book to him that really changed his life.

(Interview 5, 9/27/96)

It is apparent that Mandy loves poetry and is willing to share it and even poke fun of her passion for it. Mandy has stated that she believes a writing teacher must be a writer herself and to write means to rewrite multifold — to stretch, to change, to grow, and to let go. As a teacher she believes enthusiasm is a key, and she is charged by students' enthusiasm for writing if and when it comes. She is compassionate and passionate and is committed to her students' growth as learners. As a writing teacher, she has been influenced in particular by a former student, Natalie, who died of cancer; Mandy has written about this student in a paper that is soon to become part of a book edited by faculty at the university where she will receive her master's degree. Mandy said experiencing Natalie's death has helped her to see further the value of time with family and the developing good relationships with students as Natalie expressed her appreciation of support and told Mandy how much the literature Mandy shared with her had inspired her as she struggled with her illness.

A Summary Experience Side by Side

Much of what I learned through several conversations and observations of these teachers has been left out of this version of this study. It was a difficult process to undertake, and on hindsight, I realize again my shortcomings in making choices of what to include and how to include it. This study beyond these pages will continue to be, like these teachers, a work in process. It will be enhanced, remolded and refitted in additional formats for additional audiences. But here I have hoped to reveal something about these teachers' thinking and their constructed insights and how they manage to do what they do. In closing, here is a summary, really a limited view, of these teachers side by side.

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Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>No. of yrs. taught</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Where taught</th>
<th>Where k-12 schooled</th>
<th>Active involvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MANDY</td>
<td>34 yrs. old, single, 0 kid, white</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>B.F.A./B.A. creative writing &amp; Eng. Ed.; M.S. Eng. Ed.</td>
<td>in same urban dist. sub'd 1 yr, same h.s. for 10; writing workshops for teachers, poets</td>
<td>urban outskirts (OH) poetry writing &amp; readings; poetry therapist; folk singer; reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM</td>
<td>41 yrs. old, single, 0 kid, Hispanic-mix</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>B.A. Eng. &amp; history; B.S. drama ed.</td>
<td>in ed.; M.S. same urban dist. at (OH)</td>
<td>K-8 parochial, theater; visual artist (paints); music; reader; panelist/workshops multic. ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETTE</td>
<td>49 yrs. old, married, 1 kid, white</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>B.A. Eng. &amp; Latin Ed.; M.A./Ph.D. Eng. Ed.</td>
<td>in several h.s. rural (OH)</td>
<td>in same urban dist.; college level &amp; dist. inservices books ancient Greece &amp; Rome; essay &amp; letter writer; activist; reader; member book clubs; travel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assignment: 9 English; 10 English; 10-12 Writer's Seminar; adviser literary magazine

Assignment: 9 Intro. to Humanities; 10 World Humanities; adviser literary magazine

Assignment: 11 English; 12 English/honors; 12 AP English; adviser literary magazine

Note. This table provides a brief and superficial, not a comprehensive, summary of various aspects of these three teachers' demographics.

How They Maintain "Them"

In identifying four themes in these teachers' thinking, an obvious question to ask might be not only how they "got there" but how do they maintain, or nurture, these ideological underpinnings. In talking with and from my observations of these teachers, I have noted three very conscious "acts" on their parts. These acts, or the things they do,
"speak" of these themes in their thinking. Some of these acts may be obvious after reading their respective cases and then maybe not, so here I've presented them explicitly and in a summary way. In particular, these teachers do three things: (1) They seek dialogue; (2) they seek new experiences; and (3) they "read" to understand themselves and the world around them.

First of all these teachers seek dialogue with others. They all three view and practice learning as a communal experience. Palmer (1983, 1993) states that "to know something is to have a living relationship with it -- influencing and being influenced by the object known" (p. xv). These teachers seek dialogue to learn from others and in learning about others they discover things about themselves. In searching for dialogue with others, they also realize the value of community. In seeking dialogue Sam, for example, has been involved with a portfolio project for teachers, he attends professional development inservices when they're offered and aims to incorporate this learning into his classrooms, and he said his reason for participating in this study was because he has been ready to talk about his philosophy, his purpose and professional fit at his school, and he knew that this study would facilitate that. I found as a researcher that he was doing some "studying" of his own as he sought to understand my method and discussed the doctoral process in anticipation of entering a program of his own. He also seeks dialogue with his students and believes real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subject.

Bette and Mandy seek professional dialogue as well, but dialogue engaged in outside the workplace especially was apparent. Bette is a member of two book clubs; one in particular consists of educators from various levels, and a part of their conversations, aside from book talk, is focused on pedagogy. Midpoint of this study she was attending inservice workshops on "accessing all sides of the brain" and was sharing how she was incorporating this into her students' learning. Additionally, during the course of our last
interview, she spoke of the importance of dialogue with "strong women" who served as mentors to her and who provided her with personal as well as professional validation. Bette said she agreed to this study, because she wanted to "give something in return" and she was appreciative of being valued professionally and looked forward to philosophical and pedagogical conversations. Mandy, too, in seeking dialogue is involved with others outside her school day. In particular, many of her friends are published poets as is she. She engaged with them in workshops, poetry readings, and through shared writing. Mandy said she was interested primarily in speaking with another teacher her own age as there were few opportunities to do so. She was interested as well in engaging in discussions regarding our career paths and purposes.

All three of the teachers actively seek new experiences. Both Sam and Bette have uprooted geographically -- Sam from outside and within the district and Bette from within. Mandy has remained at the same school for 10 years where she has taught at different grade levels, including adult evening school. She also actively seeks professional experiences outside that pertain to her writing and the teaching of writing. All three of them "pull in" from their personal and professional experiences as well readings outside of school. None of them rely on a given curriculum, but all of them rely on copy machines! Humanities teacher Sam talks about reading experiences that encourage students to value the "nobility" of being a human being; while Bette and Mandy both talked about creating curricula that provided "cultural identification" and individual relevancy. They all seem to thrive in development and the intellectual pursuit of new experiences and model and promote this for their students as well.

The third thing these teachers do to nurture their "ideological underpinnings" is to "read" broadly and deeply to understand themselves and the world. With the exception of Bette who also reads a couple of journals for secondary English teachers, all three of these teachers read in their content areas and read to understand "human motives."
found myself writing down several titles during my various conversations with all three
teachers. At one point I remember Sam asking if I had read the novel *Sophie's World*
which presented a historical view of philosophy in a fiction format; he was contemplating
its use for his sophomore students the following fall. Bette consistently shared book titles
from her reading clubs and even asked me to join their discussions, while Mandy offered
continuously several writers' biographies, poetry collections, and psychology books of
human development and behavior. All mentioned that they had pedagogical books that
influenced their teaching of writing, and many of them shared titles with me that were
shared by the others.

In doing these three things and consistently, all three of these teachers strengthen
their abilities to maintain peripheral vision which requires encountering of new and
different experiences and engaging in dialogue about them. They are able to exhibit
responsiveness in their actions as they dialogue, for example, with their students to
develop knowing relationships with them. As they seek dialogue, new experiences, and
read extensively, they live intellectual lives that impart themselves in their classrooms,
and finally, reinvention is facilitated as to be "open" to new learning takes the risk out of
engaging in change which then becomes an opportunity rather than a threat to security.

**Other Aspects of the Cross-Case Analysis**

What follows are other aspects of the cross-case analysis that include
characteristics of these teachers as writing teachers and their perceptions of their context
and their perceived obstacles to their effectiveness. Since this was a study about effective
writing teachers in urban schools, part of my analysis consisted of viewing the ways in
which they work and how they perceive the contexts in which they work. Hence, these
abstractions were derived. It is my contention that the "true beef" of this study rests in
the four themes in these teachers' thinking. These themes are centrifugal to this study's
findings. That in their contexts and in their positions as writing teachers who have been
lauded by their colleagues and their students, this is how they, as career teachers of 10 to 23 years, have managed to grow, stay committed, and to maintain enthusiasm.

**Characteristics of These Writing Teachers**

Resulting from my observations and conversations with these three teachers, I have compiled characteristics of them that are recognizant of their views of themselves as teachers; their views of their student writers; their views on planning and instruction; their views on the act of writing; and their views on response and assessment. In facilitating the discussion of these aspects of their writing teacher personae, I've organized these views into five tables (see Tables 4.3-4.7) and have provided brief elaborations of the characteristics that comprise them; a confluence of these viewpoints is represented in a summary table (see Table 4.8). All three of these teachers reflect these characteristics as writing teachers, although not everyone of them displays them in the same fashion or at the same rate on day-to-day bases.

In compiling these characteristics, I've realized the inevitability of appearing reductionistic and simplistic, something that belies their talents and their classrooms' complexities. I also realize that lines between these characteristics are blurred and at times "repeats" may seem evident, while I also realize human error means that I may have forgotten and slighted some or have failed to see others. Nevertheless, I've attempted to present a confluence that is representative, at least in part, of who these three teachers are as teachers of writing. This aspect of my cross-case analysis is confirming of what is known about effective writing instruction and its assessment and is confirming as well of what is known to be effective in terms of teaching diverse as well as "culturally-marginalized" learners. However, it is the ideological underpinnings that are centrifugal to this study's findings, which point as well to these teachers' interpersonal skills and developed arts, that I suspect are the real keys to their effectiveness as writing teachers.

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Views of Themselves

From my observations of and conversations with these teachers, six characteristics were derived that were indicative of how they view themselves as writing teachers (see Table 4.3). All three teachers stated that they enjoy teaching and like kids. They embrace the multiple realities and responsibilities of their jobs. They see ambiguity as inherent in the teaching-learning process and thrive on it as opposed to being stunted by it. As I observed their relationships with their students during class time and between classes, it was evident that they enjoyed spending time with their students and were interested in their students' lives outside the classroom and that their students enjoyed them too.

In addition to enjoying teaching and their relationships with their students, all three teachers alluded to their high expectations for themselves. If students are apathetic and uninterested, they look first to themselves and don't place blame on their students, parents, and/or their students' cultures. They see failure first as a teacher's problem that stems from their own failure to create relevancy and scaffolding experiences for their students. Their high expectations for themselves also are connected to the fact they they continually self-assess and garner feedback. All three of these teachers have stated in various ways that they "know themselves" -- who they are both in and out of the classroom -- and that they feel comfortable and even look for opportunities to self-assess. One of the teachers mentioned, for example, Myers-Briggs personality inventories and referred to how who is he affects his approaches to teaching and to various students. All three teachers were articulate of their philosophies, beliefs, and practices and were able to discuss readily how these affect their students. All three mentioned that students' feedback is important and that they seek conversations with other teachers to wrangle further with issues of effectiveness and ways to meet students' needs and interests.

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In addition to self-assessment and garnering feedback, all three of the teachers are involved in various activities, social and/or professional, that enhance either directly or indirectly their classroom practices. Essentially, they promote literacy by doing it. Just as they expect their students to learn literacy by doing it, they partake in a variety of literacies, including drama, visual arts, music, neighborhood and city organizations, and poetry writing and readings. It is also interesting to note that all three have "second languages" -- Sam speaks Spanish, traveling to Mexico during winter breaks; Bette has a minor in Latin and speaks some Italian and has even traveled to Italy; and Mandy studied German and was involved in "ethnic activities" in college and after graduation and has traveled to Germany. These wide variety of interests and activities seem to stimulate and contribute to their practices. They also make a point to mix with people and to participate in activities that will help them to read outside their own experiences in order to become more at home in a multicultural and multiracial world. All three of these teachers are idea persons and seem to thrive on creativity. They do not rely, for example, on textbook publishers for ideas and methods. They believe they know their students and contexts best and spend ample amounts of time researching and planning for "relevant" experiences for their students. They are also risk-takers in a similar sense: If they fail at trying something new, they admit it, pick up the pieces, and move on from there by modifying or trying a different approach.

Finally, they are not concerned with "control" or discipline. They engage their students in constructive ways and don't create discipline situations by assigning meaningless work. By perceiving the need to know the "whole child," they attempt as well to understand their students' behaviors; as a result, they believe "rules" are not etched in stone and can be modified or broken. They are also flexible in terms of writing topics and formats and believe writers can improve without teachers dictating all moves.
and directions. They also expect a range of student achievement in the same way they expect a range of behaviors.

Table 4.3

Views of Themselves as Writing Teachers

1. They like what they do.
2. They maintain high expectations for themselves.
3. They continually self-assess and garner feedback.
4. They promote literacy by doing it.
5. They practice creativity and believe teachers need to be idea people.
6. They are not concerned with "control" or discipline.

Views of Their Students

From my observations of and conversations with these teachers, I derived seven characteristics that were indicative of how they view their student writers (see Table 4.4). All three of these teachers believe it is necessary to know their students as individuals in order to best meet their needs, but they also realize that they need to recognize their students' cultural groups. They seek to establish indepth, caring relationships in the course of their day-to-day activities and in this way avoid, deflect, and/or defuse problems that might arise if such rapport hadn't been developed. Additionally, they let their students' needs and interests set the agenda. They are not wedded to a set curriculum or to the concept of "grade-level appropriateness." They recognize diverse needs and interests and strive to meet these. They also resist labels for their students and instead ask, "What can I do to help this student?"

In developing their relationships with their students and in meeting their needs and interests, these teachers acknowledge their students' cultures and experiences. "Different" experiences from their own are not viewed as negatives or inferior. Rather, they seek to build bridges between their students' cultures and experiences and the culture
of schooling and with other cultures and experiences that are new to their students. Also, they believe the writer's voice is something to be built upon. They encourage ownership in their students' writing and believe the writer's voice is something to be valued. They also recognize that "voice" is something that students already have and not something "found" in English class. These teachers believe it's their job not only to let students exercise voice and share it with others but to help students in articulation and understanding appropriateness for various audiences.

Additionally, these teachers believe students need to practice critical thinking. They believe students need sustained opportunities and open invitations to make sense of their lives and to develop in their abilities to read the world. As a result, students don't simply write as a repetitive, meaningless skill; they write to make sense of what's happening to them, to join with, participate, and overcome when necessary. These teachers also believe that students don't need to be writing the same thing and at the same level. They create a supportive environment in which students have choices and opportunities to pursue what interests them. They also attempt to create a supportive environment for all students and encourage students to understand that each others' "differences" are okay, and even with these, commonalities often can be found. Essentially, students are in these teachers' classrooms to grow from where they are. Finally, these teachers think in terms of possibilities. They tend to be nonjudgmental and patient. They look for what's in the student rather than what the student doesn't have. They exhibit interest in students as individuals, encouragement of students in their writing, and expectations that growth will occur.
Table 4.4

Views of Their Student Writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views of Their Student Writers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. They desire to know students as individuals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. They let their students' needs and interests set the agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. They acknowledge students' cultures and experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. They believe the writer's voice is something to be built upon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. They believe students need to practice critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. They do not expect all students to be writing the same thing and at the same level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. They think in terms of possibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Views on Planning and Instruction

From my observations of and conversations with these teachers, I derived 11 characteristics that were indicative of their views on planning and instruction (see Table 4.5). *These teachers are aware of the research on writing and its assessment.* Their awareness is evident in the articulation of their practices. They also realize that teaching is context specific. They test, revise, and are never satisfied with "status quo" instruction. They don't look to others for answers in their classrooms but rather create some "science and art" of their own. In addition to their awareness of writing research, these teachers believe in the value of "paired" experiences and provide a variety of models for their students. They are careful not to impart only their "personal values and experiences" but encourage and provide multiple perspectives and voices. They do this to encourage students to develop understanding and to think critically about what they read and write. They also attempt to build bridges from where the students are that will take them to new and different experiences. They also realize these bridges are two-way streets and thus seek models and examples from their students' worlds.

*These teachers also have students write in a variety of modes and often.* They believe a variety of writing experiences encourages fluency and helps students discover their strengths and weaknesses. They're not caught up in "old constructs," such as writing
the five-paragraph theme in third-person narrative. They are concerned, for example, more with students' abilities in articulating their personal voice and commitments and students' abilities to do so in a variety of formats. *They also use a variety of approaches to stimulate thinking, writing, and its development.* They employ prompts at the beginning, middle, and end of the process. Additionally, they use primary sources, such as interviews or field trips, when possible.

*These teachers also believe that the teacher shouldn't be the sole audience of their students' writing.* They provide opportunities for students to share their work with their peers. When possible, the audience for their students' writing goes beyond the classroom door, extending to contests, literary magazines, hall or display case exhibits, writing for students in other classrooms or schools, writing for potential employers, and so on. All three of these teachers are faculty advisers for their schools' literary magazines and see themselves as "facilitators" to the student editors and writers who determine the magazines focus and directions. Additionally, *they believe writing improves when good habits are practiced daily.* They provide guidelines and structures to make writing improvement a habit in classroom talk and practice. They realize students need to be "trained" before they can pull away the supports. Group work and peer workshopping and/or editing appear in many forms but only after initial expectations have been established, and then things loosen up a bit. They see their roles as providing structured experiences they believe are needed for their students' development, but they provide room for individual determinations such as choice of topics, format ideas, and so forth.

*These teachers believe writing should be used as a tool of discovery.* Writing does not consist simply of regurgitating information but is used to develop critical thinking skills. They believe writing should be used as a means of thinking and provide students with a variety of ways to use in this manner, so writing becomes more a natural and fluent act. Additionally, *they use mini-lessons frequently.* Group and
individualized instruction occurs this way. Mini-lessons are used to introduce, review, and share different perspectives on new and old concepts. They are sometimes planned and are sometimes spontaneous and are dependent on students' needs, interests, and feedback. They are sometimes accompanied by application and practice. They also believe that grammar should be a part of language instruction. They believe it is essential, but it occurs on a needs-only basis and is not taught isolated from its context of speaking, writing, or reading. Grammar instruction usually occurs in the form of mini-lessons, sometimes in response to problem areas noted on students' papers. Sometimes it's addressed to the whole class, while other times the teacher has one-to-one conferences with students.

*These teachers also believe that nothing is in granite.* Spontaneity is valued. They are open to changes and/or modifications and "listen" for such opportunities. For example, although they may plan for certain instruction, they take advantage of student responses, events in the local, national and/or world news, and so forth, and will have students write in response to various concerns or events. Finally, they teach the student not simply the subject. They believe that they are "teaching for life" not for the perpetuation of a "race of English majors." Emotional and physical needs are sometimes dealt with before the academics.
Table 4.5

Views on Planning and Instruction

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>They are aware of writing research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>They believe in &quot;paired&quot; experiences and in providing a variety of models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>They have students write in a variety of modes and often.</td>
</tr>
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<td>They use a variety of approaches to stimulate thinking, writing, and its development.</td>
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<td>They believe nothing should be in granite.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>They teach the student not simply the subject.</td>
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</table>

Views on the Writing Act

From my observations of and conversations with these teachers, I derived four characteristics that were indicative of their views on the act of writing (see Table 4.6). All three of these teachers have stated that they believe writing shouldn't be taught in isolation of other literacies. Essentially, they are whole language teachers and view literacies in a holistic way as they believe it's more meaningful and more interesting for the students. Additionally, they acknowledge that literacy instruction is political. During our conversations, all three of these teachers shared that they believed that there's a danger of discrediting various communities if one literacy is held "better" than another. At the same time, they realize that language skills are used as a "gatekeeper" to opportunities and institutions and see it as their job to ensure students have a working knowledge of Standard English. They also tend to look at nonstandard dialects as a form of "bilingualism" and provide students with rationales for learning Standard English as well as provide them with opportunities for writing neighborhood or home dialects.

*These teachers also believe that writing is a developmental act that calls for flexibility.* They are cognizant of the notion of the "writing process." They recognize that
real writing undergoes stages of development and that not all students follow the same process. Finally, they recognize that writing is a messy and time consuming act. Writing improvement is ongoing and opportunities for revisions are important.

Table 4.6
Views on the Act of Writing

25. They believe writing shouldn't be taught in isolation of other literacies.
26. They acknowledge that literacy instruction is political.
27. They believe that writing is a developmental act that calls for flexibility.
28. They recognize writing as a messy and time consuming act.

Views on Response and Assessment

From my observations of and conversations with these teachers, I derived seven characteristics that were indicative of their views on response and assessment (see Table 4.7). In responding and assessing students' papers, these teachers do not look for and grade everything all at once. They look for a variety of aspects in their response and assessment of students' writing. They look for different things at different times and let students know in advance in order to heighten students' "visual acuities." They also give focused and particular feedback. They provide feedback that states both strengths and weaknesses. Feedback regarding weaknesses usually focuses on two or three areas at a time. Feedback also consists of specific not general comments. Additionally, they do not believe that all writing needs to be graded. Writing sometimes is used to provide feedback or as an exercise to stimulate thinking. They realize the more students write, the more likely they are to develop their fluency. Drafts may receive holistic grades or are not graded at all. This is also one shortcut they've learned to ease their paperloads.

These teachers believe their students need to self-assess. They believe students need to become critical consumers of their own writing. They also need opportunities to
become "critical" of other' work in an attempt to see their own writing in new lights. They believe shared writing experiences and opportunities for self-assessment of others' work creates independent learners. Additionally, they believe students need opportunities to share and talk about their writing. Students need to discuss their writing with their teacher and their peers and should be given opportunities to ask questions and receive feedback on their writing as often as possible. They also need to hear others talking about it with interest, asking genuine questions.

All three teachers have stated that "good" writing can be arbitrary. They recognize that students look to them for guidance regarding the mechanics, structure, and content of their writing. They also realize that good writing comes in all shapes and sizes and that other teachers may not share their viewpoints, and they acknowledge this to their students. Finally, they don't believe in closure. They look for development over time, both in their students' writing and in themselves as teachers.

Table 4.7
Views on Response and Assessment

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
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<td>30.</td>
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<td>32.</td>
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Insert Table 4.8 about here
Table 4.8

Characteristics of These Writing Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views of Themselves as Writing Teachers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. They like what they do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. They maintain high expectations for themselves.</td>
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<td>3. They continually self-assess and garner feedback.</td>
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<td>4. They promote literacy by doing it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. They practice creativity and believe teachers need to be <em>idea</em> people.</td>
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<td>6. They are not concerned with &quot;control&quot; or discipline.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Views of Their Student Writers</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. They desire to know students as individuals.</td>
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<td>8. They let their students' needs and interests set the agenda.</td>
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<td>9. They acknowledge students' cultures and experiences.</td>
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<td>10. They believe the writer's voice is something to be built upon.</td>
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<td>11. They believe students need to practice critical thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. They do not expect all students to be writing the same thing and at the same level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. They think in terms of possibilities.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Views on Planning and Instruction</th>
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<tr>
<td>14. They are aware of writing research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. They believe in &quot;paired&quot; experiences and in providing a variety of models.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. They have students write in a variety of modes and often.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. They use a variety of approaches to stimulate thinking, writing, and its development.</td>
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Note. Characteristics presented were derived from teacher interviews and observations. These were "triangulated" with interview responses from informants and students.

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Perceptions of Their Contexts and Obstacles

Resulting as well from my observations and conversations with these three teachers, I have compiled their perceptions of their urban contexts — their students, their colleagues, their schools and school district, and the urban universities that send student teachers to their schools as well as their perceptions of teacher educators’ value of classroom teachers (see Table 4.9). I’ve compiled as well their perceived obstacles to their effectiveness as teachers (see Table 4.10). In terms of my review of related literature and in terms of my continued reading after completing this particular aspect of this study, it is evident that my findings in these areas are conclusively representative of other teachers’ and/or researchers’ perceptions of both urban and secondary contexts in general. Perhaps the true value in considering these teachers’ perceptions of these particular aspects of their profession resides only in light of the four themes in their thinking that are presented earlier in this chapter (see Table 4.1). In considering these four themes, further illumination might occur when contemplating how these teachers maneuver, maintain their momentum, and continue their growth and commitment as teachers, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in discordance within the contexts in which they teach.

Perceptions of Their Contexts

Prevalent conceptions that run throughout these teachers' perceptions of their contexts are diversity as richness and diversity as a challenge; concerns with accountability; and issues of validation and assessment. In terms of their perceptions of their students, these teachers talked about a "gamut" of students in their classrooms, depicting a wide array of students with varying needs, abilities, and interests. All three of these teachers talked about the after-school lives of their students and the range of support and facilities at home that contribute to or hamper students' successes. All three of these teachers discussed cultural styles of their students that pertain to age and
maturity levels and ethnic and neighborhood orientations. All three of the teachers spoke of student apathy, and all three perceived a good part of this to be due not to out of school circumstances for their students but rather to irresponsible teaching and practices of schooling where relevancy to students' lives is not created. All three spoke of low self-esteem derived mainly from the public's perception of urban students, urban teachers, and urban curricula and the quality of an education dependent upon standardized proficiency-exam scores. All three of the teachers spoke of the richness of student diversity in their schools and city. Learning from their students was a priority for them and so was creating relevancy; however, they also spoke of the challenge to find students "in" the schools' textbooks and stated that discovering pertinent resources was a time consuming but major aspect of their planning and instruction. As a result, they combined much of their personal interests and activities with their professional in-class readings and other activities.

In terms of their colleagues, all three of these teachers acknowledged a large gap between those "who are" and those "who aren't" successful in the classroom. They were in agreement in that rarely is the "mediocre" teacher the "butt of rumors" but rather the teacher extremes were well known by both students and faculty. All three of the teachers were curious as to whom the other teachers, including their locations and class assignments, were in this study. As they asked me questions of each other, and I became their "informant," we noted the significant number of veteran teachers in the district who were close to retirement. During the time of this study, an article published in Columbus' major newspaper, The Dispatch, addressed the retirement wave to occur in the immediate years. I asked all three teachers if they knew of any young, male, and/or nonwhite English teachers in the district. All three had difficulty providing names, and all three believed this to be problematic and questioned whether or not -- and if -- the
demographics would soon change. According to recent statistics, I wasn't able to report otherwise.

As far as their school and district, these teachers spoke of "cultural conflicts" between parents perceptions of their roles and teachers' perceptions of their roles in the schooling of their children. Two of the teachers "sang praises" of low accountability for a district-suggested curricula that they believed was dated and not representative of their students' cultures and interests. A third teacher who teaches in the alternative school said there wasn't a district curricula for humanities courses at his school, but rather the teachers created their own which changed from year to year. All three felt as professionals it was their responsibility to create and determine what's best for their classrooms. Yet, all three recognized as well that some teachers may be more apt to be content with a general curricula that isn't reflective of who the students are in their classrooms; in this case low accountability (teacher responsibility) can contribute to student apathy and dropout or failure. All three of the teachers spoke of reforms currently being considered or enacted in their schools with varying degrees and levels of commitment by administrators and faculty. With the exception of Sam, who teaches at an alternative school, the other two teachers spoke of top-down reforms that fall short of enthusiasm, understanding, and implementation without support from the administrators as well as from the other teachers in their schools. As mentioned previously, all three of the teachers perceived me as their "informant" who relayed stories of other teachers in other schools in the district; few opportunities for collegiality and community-building existed in their schools and especially with teachers in other schools. Bette said that during the early 1980s, during the push for the "writing process movement" in their district, that various inservices were being offered that were very beneficial and facilitated teachers' collegiality, but nothing like that has happened since. As a result, it's no wonder they know professionally few English teachers in their district.
With regard to their schools and district, these teachers also spoke of bureaucratic frustrations in terms of unresponsive and out of touch administrators and administrators unwilling to "share the wealth" in terms of professional development opportunities for teachers. Two of the teachers spoke of administrators who did not value the study of the humanities, including the value of a literary magazine written for and by the schools' students. In Mandy's case, to pull out what minimal support she received for her school's magazine was used as a threat, while Bette's principal understood why some students might enjoy it, but it still wasn't considered a money-maker in light of sports activities. Bette and Mandy both talked about the district's cutting back on the number of classroom teachers and increasing class sizes as well as the district's dilemma of not being able to hire needed substitutes for ill or absent teachers. Both believed the "top-heavy administrators in central office" had forgotten the realities of the classroom, and Bette suggested they should be required to substitute at least one day out of the month -- perhaps they'd come to different conclusions as far as where to save money. Sam mentioned "teachers on special assignments" who were on special assignments seemingly for "life"; he spoke of wanting to have opportunities outside of the classroom within the district and mentioned that perhaps these teachers should be rotated in and out of the classroom so qualified and deserving others have opportunities for such professional experiences and growth.

Finally, these teachers spoke of their roles, or lack of consideration, in teacher education and their perceptions of universities in the area who send student teachers to their schools. One of the teachers in this study was involved in an ongoing relationship with a local university -- this teacher (Sam) sponsored social studies student teachers and freshmen preservice education majors. Another teacher (Bette) had a student teacher during one of the two grading periods that I was collecting data at her school, but this experience was an anomaly for her, despite her years and varied experiences and
advanced level of education. Another teacher (Mandy) had no experiences as a cooperating teacher whatsoever despite her 10 years in the classroom and a willingness to receive student teachers if offered. One of the teachers talked about cooperating teachers in the schools who were reluctant to address students teachers' ineffectiveness in the classroom; she seemed to think this resulted in part from confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor. As a result, she believed some teachers' harbored resentment for university supervisors.

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Insert Table 4.9 about here

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Table 4.9

Teachers' Perceptions of Their Contexts

Students

1. Classrooms are a "garnet" of students with varying needs, abilities, and interests.
2. Students are "upfront."
3. Student apathy is apparent. Teachers who don't acknowledge students' interests, needs, and cultures may be a large part of this problem.
4. There are many students and teachers with low self-esteem.
5. Control/power issues between teachers and students are evident.
6. Cultural conflicts between teachers and students, including "age-ism," are evident.
7. Creating relevancy takes extra work: It's a challenge "to find" students in textbooks.

Colleagues

8. Extremes in colleagues' competency are well known.
9. There's low accountability for teaching/administrative excellence.
10. There's a significant number of "career teachers" who will soon retire. These teachers are largely white and female from working or middle-class backgrounds.

Schools and District

11. There's a lack of parent involvement perhaps in part due to busing and "cultural conflicts" between parents' perceived roles and schools'. Also schools' efforts for getting parents involved are infrequent and minimal.
12. Curriculum accountability is low: Teachers have freedom to teach whatever and whenever. Teachers who aren't knowledge seekers and idea persons and who are content with "status quo" instruction may be less effective, especially if they're incapable or unwilling to provide relevancy not reflected in the curriculum.
13. Reform initiatives come and go, rarely sticking without support to initiate/continue. They also fall short when teachers aren't the "creators" but are the receivers.
14. Few opportunities for collegiality/community building exist within schools and especially with teachers in other schools. Essentially, they teach in isolation.
15. Student and community diversity is rich as are city resources.
16. In the same district, there are gaps between schools that "have and have not."
17. There's a bureaucracy of a large urban district that many if not most teachers resent.

Urban Universities and Teacher Educators

18. Universities seem to pay "lip service" to urban school-university ties and perhaps see them more as a large deficit.
19. Urban teachers are an untapped source of expertise by teacher educators.
20. Too, there's a lack of university responsiveness for student teachers. Cooperating teachers often do not tell student teachers they're doing poorly or are failing.

Note. The numbering of these perceptions does not refer to order of importance.
Perceptions of Their Obstacles

In terms of these teachers' perceptions of the obstacles to their effectiveness, much of what they've shared has been reported in the professional literature regarding the context of schools in general and the context of secondary and urban schools in particular. However, two aspects of their perceived obstacles might provide additional insight in terms of teachers' needs and interests. All three of these teachers talked about their frustrations with the isolation of the contexts in which they teach. All three of these teachers actively sought dialogue with other teachers and professionals. As they spoke about their need to talk with and observe other English teachers, all three mentioned their interests in publishing their work in some form or another. During the course of our conversations, we talked about the internet and the possibilities that it might engender -- that is, if teachers had access to and were online in their schools which they believed would be an accomplishment indeed! We also talked about research in education -- and in particular, in the teaching of writing to diverse students. All three of the teachers are avid readers of fiction and nonfiction, but most spoke of their limits on time and money in terms of keeping up with professional memberships and the reading of journals and texts, and as a result, they believed it more beneficial to focus reading efforts on content as opposed to method. I also found myself in the role of suggesting pedagogical texts that I was familiar with that they might be interested in reading -- and this typically after I was asked for these suggestions. All three of the teachers mentioned the lack of access to a professional library and access to technology, both "tools" they believed would be used in a widespread manner by other teachers well.

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Insert Table 4.10 about here

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Table 4.10

*Teachers' Perceived Obstacles to Their Effectiveness*

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<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of time</td>
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<td>2. Classroom interruptions</td>
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<td>3. Varying abilities of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Poor student attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Outside lives and communities of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students who aren't readers: It's difficult for them to buy into writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Understanding students' cultures, determining &quot;what's best&quot; for them (very political)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Apathetic students disinterested in schooling: They try but don't always reach them</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Parent engagement with concerns of schooling</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Burned-out colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Lack of accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lack of administrative support and communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Administrators who don't buy into what it means to be a scholar/who don't believe in the liberal arts, especially humanities and the fine arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Outsider (including the media's) perceptions of the district/schools/students/teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Forums to publish (the internet might encourage this -- only if teachers have access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Professional conditions: They lack professional libraries thus access to journals and texts, communication with colleges of education and colleagues in other schools, access to technology, responsive inservices, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Teacher education programs and teacher educators who don't validate their existence and/or knowledge</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The numbering of these obstacles does not refer to order of importance.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

"Here time, also, is subject to confluence. The memory is a living thing -- it too is in transit. But during its moment, all that is remembered joins, and lives..." (p. 114).

-- Eudora Welty, from One Writer's Beginnings (1983)

Introduction: All That Joins

Viewing these three teachers separately and then side by side, it is evident that all three teachers are multi-talented and that they may not have "traditional" backgrounds in terms of their education and in terms of their professional experiences. In considering this study's cross-case analysis, it is also evident that these teachers possess similar attitudes and principles in terms of their ways of knowing their students and their contexts and in terms of the ways in which they work. Although there might have been other possible directions to take in terms of presenting the findings of this cross-case analysis, I believed what was most compelling were the four themes in these teachers' thinking. These themes were derived from my observations of them and from the extent of multiple conversations held over time, regarding what they believed was important in terms of being an effective teacher. All three teachers rarely spoke of writing instruction and assessment in an isolated manner. That is, they spoke of other factors as well, such as developing relationships with their students, choosing literature that would hold their students' interests and would encourage new ways of perceiving, and spoke of their experiences outside the classroom and how these informed their own thinking and
actions. They spoke in holistic terms: Everything and anything seemed to inform their writing instruction and assessment. It was obvious that these three teachers had identified early in their careers their talents and had been building upon their respective arts in terms of their classroom pedagogy.

In this chapter implications are presented in light of these four themes in their thinking and in light of their resultant classroom practices. "How others might come to be this way" is being considered. In particular, I've chosen to discuss the areas of inservice education/professional development and preservice teacher education. Suggestions for further research are presented as well that are built upon the perceived richness that can be derived from case-study research and from case-study teaching methods and that can be derived from collaborative work between university researchers/teacher-educators and classroom teachers. It is suggested as well that the notion of "effective" be "troubled" in terms of what works for particular individuals and groups of students in various classrooms.

**Implications: How Others Might Come to Be This Way**

In discussing implications I am proposing that it might be beneficial to encourage other teachers to develop the four themes prevalent in the thinking of these three teachers who participated in this study. Perhaps some of what I discuss here as implications in terms of schools and universities supporting the inservice training and professional development of teachers and in terms of preparing preservice teachers for the realities of urban schools has been discussed on other occasions by other participant-observers and participants. In education it seems that it's the same "ailments," and at times it's the same solutions, being suggested over and over again. It's easy to surmise that schooling is a system that's not only difficult to change, but it's one that perhaps may never change, despite proposed reforms meant to affect both the students' best interests and the best interests of the teachers in terms of their effectiveness.

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Recently, I was watching a news segment on local television in which community and business leaders were said to have met to discuss how to improve the nature of the city's school district, most importantly how to save on operating costs. A private consulting company had been hired to make suggestions, and this committee had met to ponder them. As a result the committee had proposed a plan to the city's school board. One of two suggestions made (the other having to do with cutting costs in providing school meals) was to reduce the number of teachers and teachers' base pay and require all teachers to earn incentive pay. Reducing teachers' base pay would mean lowering beginning teachers' salaries and would mean as well salary cuts for currently-employed or tenured teachers. I thought this interesting for two reasons: No teachers were a part of this "group of leaders" as were there no school administrators or even university scholars, and most significantly, there was no suggestion to cut any part of the urban district's cumbersome, central bureaucracy where perhaps some of the largest individual salaries resided or to cut building administrators' salaries and encourage them to earn incentive pay. It is exactly at times like these that I reinforce my conviction for a "small but consistently-repeated dents theory" -- that perhaps the system or the public's perceptions won't ever change but teachers can and that one by one, separately and side by side, several of "us" spread over time and geographically can make continued and concentrated dents that may have far more impact than any one major blow dealt from seemingly "far-removed," top-down "experts."

As a result of my hope placed in this theory, really my belief in starting with the teacher or the teacher starting with herself, the following implications derived as a result of this study's findings call for a reconceptualization of inservice education and professional development and of preservice teacher education that encourages teachers to become philosophers, activists, and even "spiritualists" -- that is, teachers who start searching within and outside of themselves for their effectiveness and for the developing
of their abilities to become more effective teachers; teachers who not only reflect on the contexts in which they will or currently teach and thus seek a role in governing and altering those organizations; and teachers who practice learning over a lifetime and are committed to their professional growth and development as knowledge makers and seekers. So first, this is a call to individual teachers to expect "greater things" from themselves: Change and accountability start from within. These tenets can be facilitated and nurtured, but they only can be maintained by the teachers once they're out there in a system that facilitates isolation more than it does corroboration and does little to support the professional development of its teachers. Second, this is a call for attitudinal and constructural changes to occur in both inservice education and professional development and in preservice teacher education -- changes that will provide opportunities and experiences for both inservice and preservice teachers to practice peripheral vision, responsiveness, intellectual lives, and reinvention.

**Inservice Education and Professional Development**

Opportunities are needed for dialogue, community building, and collaborations. As I thought about the implications resulting from this study's findings, and even before I started this study, I realized and had experienced myself the inevitable that classroom teachers have little opportunities for collegiality built into their workdays and that collegiality outside their schools is even more difficult unless workshops or inservices are held that engage teachers from their respective buildings. But even then, this doesn't ensure meeting and conversing and sharing and creating together. I found it particularly interesting that none of these teachers knew each other before we gathered together as the "T-Project." Prior to this, I was asked "Who else is in this study? What do they think about ________? What is the English Department like at ________?" I served as a link between these teachers and their different schools. When I attended the "rare" after-school inservice workshop that Bette was instrumental in organizing and facilitating, Sam
attended too; however, when he saw me, he asked me if I were following him. I told him that I was there on invite from another participant in this study. He hadn't the foggiest notion of who that person might be, so I introduced them to each other that day.

All three of the teachers said they'd like opportunities for observing other teachers in other classrooms through leave time or opportunities for team teaching. One of my informants referred to this as "giving your battery a recharge" by observing other teachers, especially the good ones, at work. Rarely (or not at all) have these three teachers had the opportunity to visit others in their classrooms. It would appear then that many of these three teachers' "commonalities" have been self-nurtured and derived. Although Cohen (1991) states that it's rare for preservice teachers to have such opportunities to see good teachers in action, it is my contention as well that inservice teachers have even rarer opportunities outside their classrooms to witness truly great colleagues in action. In support of this, Beach (1994) has contended that one of the reasons why inservice education fails is because teachers rarely get to see "it" in practice. The teachers in this study also spoke of "freedom" to teach what and when what they pleased. This "low accountability for curricula" was advantageous to them as they felt an increased sense of professionalism (given, however, in a very "backdoor" sense). All three realized that they are the "experts" who know how to meet their particular students' needs and build relevancy and interest for their students. However, this "isolation of practice" also results in what does or what doesn't go on in all teachers' classrooms: For the less effective and less dedicated teacher, this is problematic in light of this lack of dialogue that is a result of their teaching contexts.

Opportunities are needed as well for teachers to experience new job sites and course changes without being "penalized" for taking up opportunities such as sabbaticals or for changing schools within the same district and from one district to the next. Both Sam and Bette expressed their concerns with this. Sam believed his effectiveness
increased due to the flexibility and new ways of thinking that occurred when he changed from one teaching job to the next. He spoke of his concern with teachers who teach in the same building and even in the same district for long periods of time without ever having to experience other ways of practicing. Bette mentioned that after her sabbaticals, which occurred because she was pursuing advanced degrees and other teaching experiences outside the secondary classroom, she was relegated at one point to being a "traveling teacher" who taught part time in three different schools all at once. Additionally, as she changed from one school to the next, it has to be wondered how she was viewed in her new contexts, especially in light of her advanced education and her variety of teaching experiences. All three teachers spoke of their frustrations with faculty who were either stuck in old constraints or were obviously not fully committed to their job as teacher. In Brause's (1992) *Enduring Schools*, she shares similar sentiments and sought change outside the secondary school classroom, although Sam, Bette, and Mandy have expressed interest in doing this as well:

I found it demoralizing to work with "colleagues" who did not have the same professional commitment I had. But their perspective made it possible to appear daily, albeit without any professional responsibility, without any vision or investment in improving schooling. Instead of adopting their perspective, I and like-minded colleagues left teaching in the secondary school. The system needs to nurture professionals.... Endurance should not be the criterion -- excellence should be. But how do we get there? (p. 124)

Opportunities also are needed for veteran teachers, especially veteran teachers with advanced education, to utilize their knowledge and their "arts" in their departments, in their schools, in inservice training with teachers from other schools, or in other types of ways, such as in partnerships with preservice education classes and with teacher educators perhaps doing collaborative research. Mandy, for example, talked extensively about her experiences as a master's student at a university in a neighboring city where she engaged in intensive summer conversations with other teachers who lived on campus as part of their graduate program, and she also shared how teaching writing workshops for
this same university and a neighboring community college and for various organizations in the city and outside of this city increased her sense of efficacy and professional worth. Bette shared opportunities she's had through a small liberal arts college located in the same city where this same school district resides where she's lead summer workshops and has taught (though for a very brief stint) while on sabbatical for their integrated studies program. Though Bette facilitated a workshop during the time I was collecting data, Mandy has never utilized her writing talents in this way with her school district. If her talents are a well-kept secret, then one needs to ask why are hers or any teachers' talents unknown? Sam also has talents in terms of utilizing process drama as a "prewrite" to exploratory writing activities. His current school and English Department may not appreciate his emphasis on experiential learning, but perhaps other schools or districts might. Perhaps other exchanges, and rich ones at that, would result from opportunities extended to teachers to share their insights and talents. It is my contention that teacher education, especially teacher education that is responsive to the circumstances of urban schooling, would benefit from their lore in terms of preparing preservice teachers, developing curricular and determining field experiences. Furthermore, practicing teachers often have insights from their "front line perspectives" that those further away may have forgotten or may not know about. Perhaps inservice training and professional development opportunities, for example, that recognizes veteran teachers' insights, really their epistemologies, might result in a teacher revival of some sorts in which teachers are able see through previously-held skepticism and can see that there's a possibility that their needs and concerns are being met.

Finally, Sam spoke on one occasion of his involvement in a portfolio project that was being piloted as a potential way to evaluate teacher performance in the district. Sam saw lots of potential in this to encourage his and other teachers' professional growth. Perhaps with such a system in place, the self-imposed practiced "spirituality" of these
three teachers might take hold in others as well and especially in those who've been "bankrupt" and have perceived they've had no incentive to search for something within. I also wonder, too, in light of the aforementioned "opportunities" whether or not any and all might have an affect on the current rate of teacher absenteeism and teacher turnover rates and perhaps once legislatively in place may attract more people to the field who would normally see teaching as a "dead end" track or as lacking "intellectual flavor" and support? As Brause (1991) states, many people (current and former teachers included) believe there are many "ignoramuses" in teaching and don't want to be associated, despite the enormous and far-reaching responsibilities and potentially-rewarding aspects of the job, as a "bird of similar feathers."

**Preservice Teacher Education**

Preservice teachers should also be provided with a variety of field experiences and opportunities to discover community organizations that may yield potentials insights for their thinking and practices. These also should be accompanied with dialogue and ample time for biographical inquiry. Vinz (1997) states that student teachers need to learn how to live with the uncertainty in the teaching-learning process, while Sarason (1993) especially warns of the bureaucratic structures of large urban school districts and the necessity for preservice teachers to learn how to survive in and despite of them. Sarason (1993) contends that student teachers should make every attempt to realize the inevitabilities of their teaching contexts and should enter the profession avoiding the "isolatonist" mentalities but instead enter it with the heart and will of an "activist" in mind.

It is my contention as well that all three of the teachers in this study have interpersonal capacities that are at the core of their effectiveness. They are individuals building on their personal talents -- both inside and outside their classrooms. Lortie (1975) concluded in his seminal study of teachers and teaching that "interpersonal
capacities" are at the very core of effective outcomes, that style or personality is the key to classroom success. If this is true -- and it certainly seems to be for the subjects of this study -- then preservice teachers need more opportunities to practice their interpersonal skills in real school settings. Such opportunities provide aspiring teachers with a critical but risk-free testing ground on which to begin formulating a style in which they are comfortable. I believe, too, that it's these interpersonal capacities that engender their critical pedagogy and their tendency to practice what Ladson-Billings (1994, 1996) refers to as "culturally-relevant teaching." As a result, preservice teachers also should be given not only opportunities to practice in these various settings their interpersonal skills but should be encouraged to identify and build upon their "arts" in these various arenas, and in true biographical inquiry, they should take part in dialogue to better understand not only these circumstances but themselves and others acting within them and how they relate or don't relate to these contexts. It may be possible that the more they know and realize they don't know, the more they may grow and desire to grow.

All three of these teachers stated that their teacher education preparation did little to prepare them for teaching let alone the realities of urban schooling. Teacher education, they believed, occurred primarily on the job. However, it also should be noted that none were trained in a field-based program -- a program model that seems to be consistently becoming a norm. Teacher education reform recommendations made by the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Foundation (1986) address precisely the problems that the subjects of this study complain about most vehemently: the lack of intellectual rigor and the overemphasis on the classroom as opposed to field-based learning and the tendency to substitute formulas for problem solving. All three of these teachers are highly reflective and reflexive, and it's this curiosity for others and the knowing of the self that encourages their responsive practices in terms of their students' needs and interests. This has lead them to learn and to dialogue in order to increase their own effectiveness. Sam
stated on more than one occasion that he had wished that teacher education coursework included a lot more philosophy of education and psychology — that the study of principles underlying conduct, thought, and the nature of schooling would especially be beneficial to preservice teachers and perhaps even the study of ethics, that perhaps this should undergird, be so integral to, all coursework and experiences. All three of these teachers are obviously philosophical "by trade" and are resultant "activists" which contributes to their perceived open-mindedness to change — adaptability, flexibility and creative-abilities.

As mentioned previously, Cohen (1991) states that few student teachers get to experience really great teachers in action, and in her cases of five veteran teachers of 30 years or more, she suggested that continued case studies of exemplary teachers be conducted for utilization in preservice education courses where there's also a paucity of real teachers' voices. She contends that themes such as passion for subject, self-protection and self-enablement, are difficult to teach in preservice programs in an abstract manner but need concrete evidence. Britzman (1991) states that often hidden from student teachers are the pedagogies teachers employ and that preservice experiences should also engage students in learning more about these:

Hidden is the pedagogy teachers employ: the ways teachers render content and experience as pedagogical, consciously construct and innovate teaching methods, solicit and negotiate student concerns, and attempt to balance the exigencies of curriculum with both the students' and their own visions of what it means to know.... Rarely disclosed by teachers themselves and absent from the student's account are the more private aspects of pedagogy: coping with the competing definitions of success and failure, and one's own sense of vulnerability and credibility...." (p. 4)

Britzman (1991) also states that the image of teaching should be dialogic: It should be situated in relationship to one's biography, present circumstances, deep commitments, affective investments, social context, and conflicting discourses about what it means to learn to become a teacher. With this dialogic understanding, teaching can be reconceptualized as a struggle for voice and discursive practices amid past and
present voices, lived experiences, and available practices. "The tensions among what has preceded, what is confronted, and what one desires shape the contradictory realities of learning to teach" (p. 8). Learning to teach is a social process of negotiation rather than an individual problem of behavior. The contradictory realities of learning to teach should be confronted and so should the subjective realities of the student teachers.

Finally, preservice teachers should be encouraged to politicize their beliefs and practices and practice what Kutz and Roskelly (1991) refer to as an "unquiet pedagogy" in the teaching of English. Secondary teachers need to recognize the tension between the home culture of difference and the school culture of similarity as a meeting of opposing forces, with the home a "centrifugal force," pulling away from school uniformity. They call for a new approach to teaching English in the high school classroom that reconceives the relationship between literacy and the learner. Teachers' pedagogy must be critical. It must examine the assumptions that both teachers and students bring to the educational enterprise, taking into account the context of learners' lives and it must question rather than accept quietly existing practices:

This tension of similarity and difference works in the high school classroom. Where many cultural groups are represented in one class, the teacher may draw from their individual perspectives to create a common understanding that can encompass them all. Where the student body is itself homogeneous, the teacher finds herself with a more difficult task — trying, through the literature read and the topics discussed, to create a framework of knowledge that will extend the learner's understanding beyond those of the community and into the larger culture. (p. 88)

Inservice as well as preservice teachers need opportunities to develop peripheral vision, responsiveness, intellectual lives, and reinvention. Some way in which to do this might include the following: (1) Require biographical inquiry, reflecting "stories" learned along the way; (2) continual assessment of the self and of others — one way to do this might be through use of videotaping classroom teaching and by having opportunities to view others as well as to open your classrooms to others by being observed or by team teaching; (3) provide students with a variety of field experiences in
which they're able to develop relationships with students and are able to build upon their individual talents; (4) provide opportunities in which preservice teachers can create and build on real students' lives and interests and complete case studies of themselves in their development; (5) provide opportunities to know communities and resources; (6) Provide opportunities for students to engage in "conversations" through student lore, parent lore, administrator lore, and so forth; and (7) facilitate teacher inquiry through preservice and inservice education by encouraging students to self-assess and determine their effects on their students; portfolios might be required that have teachers "show" their effectiveness (as should administrators maintain one perhaps); (8) provide teachers with a forum to publish — to share their ideas and concerns, and provide teachers with access to professional libraries — books and relevant journals and (9) use case studies/exemplars as a means to "recruit" by showing preservice and inservice teachers the profession through the eyes of various individuals.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

**Case Studies**

Many have suggested the value of case study research and case studies used as a teaching method. Cohen (1991) has suggested recruiting people to teaching by showing them the profession through the eyes of individual that they can respect. It is also recommended that continued exemplars (case studies of teachers in various contexts) be used to "recruit" new teachers and to provide insights to inservice teachers as well. What might especially be valuable are case studies that provide multiple and contrasting perspectives, such as effective versus less effective teachers, veteran versus new teachers, rural versus urban teachers, nonwhite versus white teachers, teachers who've taught at multiple levels and sites versus those who haven't, effective teachers of literature versus those of writing, and so forth.

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Collaborative Inquiry

Sometimes the most useful knowledge is already there, and we just need to tap into it and make it public. Another suggestion for continued research is the value of teacher lore and collaborative work between teachers and university researchers/teacher-educators. With regards to the above implications, research into teacher lore in the form of collaborations can provide rich results for all parties involved. Other lores should be garnered as well, such as student, administrator, and even parent lore. Student lore that might be informing for teachers might include the ways in which students develop their dreams and aspirations; the ways in which they experience curriculum in urban versus suburban schools; or a collection of student voices on a variety of aspects about schooling. Other types of lore might include the lore of inservice education or how teachers become educated after college; administrators lore at school and district levels regarding hiring and evaluating practices; and parent lore regarding their expectation of schools and teachers and of their children. All of these teachers have stated the reason for participating in this study was to receive the benefits of shared reflections and a sense of collegiality.

Effective for Whom?

The intent of this study has never been to deduce a model or a formula for effective teaching. The attempt of this study has been to share insights gained. If the stories of these teachers helps others to view themselves and their practices in a renewed or different light, then this study's findings have served some purpose. Throughout this study, I continued to ask whether or not there were better ways to collect information about teaching and realized my limitations in depicting in narrative form good teachers in action. I was overwhelmed by how carefully these teachers thought about their practices and how cogently they talked about them. I was disappointed, but not surprised, at how little of their "wisdom of practice" has found its way into the district's central office.
administration, into local university classrooms and into preservice and inservice teacher training, and into teacher preparation literature. I believe it's very important to capture the practice of enthusiastic and successful teachers' practices and to determine why and how they've come to be as effective as they are. I also believe it's important to be "troubling" the concept of "effective teaching." Ladson-Billings (1994) amongst others has made a call, for example, for the professional knowledge base of effective pedagogical practices for African-American students, Native-American students, and so forth. In light of this, some questions to be asked of our practices and in terms of the focus of our research on effectiveness might include the following:

1. What is meant by "effective"?
2. Who determines what is effective?
3. Where does and/or how should accountability (both personal and school district) come into play, especially when considered in light of the needs of all the students and their respective communities?
4. Is "effective" defined the same way by various populations and/or cultures?

Questions need to be raised regarding the "policymakers" who determine what "effective" means: "Who are these people, and who are they making these policies for and what benefits are being derived by the school's clientele and community?"

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to begin with a child-centered focus, and we need to be prepared as teachers to answer questions such as the following, even questioning our responses to these questions every day:

1. How do I know if I'm "effective"?
2. How do I and will I determine this?
3. What have I done to help "this child" today and every day?
4. How am I being responsive to the community of my school district, to my child's home community, and to the role we play in our nation at large?
5. What kind of negative and positive effects might I bring to school with me? How will I check these at the door, while I'm in the classroom, and in preparation of my school day tomorrow?
6. Do I have love or respect for these children as human beings, and if I don't, what should I do about this?

There are many reasons cited for not trusting story accounts. A common lament of those critical of stories is "Whose story is it?" and "For whom is it being told?" and...
"By whom is it being told?" and even "What was said that is being left out?" In recognizing as well the missing voices in this study, I have admitted that there needs to be some "troubling" of those voices that I have included, and there needs to be some consideration of those that I have missed in terms of defining "writing teacher effectiveness."
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APPENDIX A
TEACHERS' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Interview 1

1. What do you like to teach most? Why?
2. What are the courses and grade levels you currently teach?
3. How many years have you been teaching?
4. Have you taught in any other schools? If so, what are the locations, the courses and grade levels, and the amount of time spent there.
5. What are your professional associations and/or memberships? How involved are you?
6. What journals do you read regularly? Why do you prefer these journals?
7. Why did you become an English teacher?
8. When did you know you wanted to be an English teacher?
9. When and where were you born?
10. In what kind of community(ies) were you reared?
11. Describe in brief the composition of your family as you grew up (marital status of parents, socioeconomic status, number of siblings, etc.)
12. Briefly describe your own secondary schooling (size, locale, racial/ethnic composition, etc.).
13. Is there anything in your family background, community, or education that you believe may either enhance or limit your ability to work effectively with student writers in urban classrooms?
14. What is your highest degree completion and the last year you took classes? From what universities/colleges have you graduated and/or have attended and the years you attended?
15. What were your undergraduate and/or graduate areas of specialization?
16. How would you describe yourself as a student, both past and present?

17. How would you describe yourself as a writer, both past and present?

18. What kind of training have you had as a writing teacher? (Include years trained.)

19. Have you had any previous professional work experiences outside of teaching? If so, what and when?

20. What were the most important factors in your decision to become a teacher?

21. What personal characteristics do you most value in yourself?

22. Which of the above characteristics do you believe most influence how you perform as a writing teacher in an urban school?

23. Generate a list of adjectives that
   a. describe you politically.
   b. describe you intellectually.
   c. describe you emotionally.
   d. describe you spiritually.

24. Referring back to your list of adjectives, which qualities do you believe may enhance your work as a writing teacher in urban schools? Are there any that inhibit your effectiveness?

25. If someone were to refer to you as an "expert" in teaching and assessing writing in urban schools, would you agree or disagree with that assessment? Explain.
APPENDIX B

TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH AND CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHING AND ASSESSING WRITING

Interview 2

1. I'd like to discover more about your background in English:
   a. Your courses -- both undergraduate and graduate, favorite and least favorite.
   b. Your areas of concentration. Your areas of specialization.
   c. Your strengths in English. Your areas of weakness or areas of difficulty.
   d. Your most important papers written as an undergraduate and graduate student.

2. Tell me about your teacher education coursework -- both undergraduate and graduate, favorite and least favorite.

3. Did any of the above influence your ideas about teaching: In particular, how to teach English and more specifically, how to teach and assess writing?

4. Tell me about any other experiences (both positive and negative) you have had that have affected how you think about teaching English/writing -- both your instruction and your assessment of it.

5. What do you think it means for someone to know English? If someone is a self-proclaimed expert in English, what would you expect her/him to know?

6. Tell me about what you see as the reasons for studying English (for both literature and writing) in high school. What are your goals for your students? What areas do you want to cover in your classes? (Does grammar instruction fit in here?)

7. What is (or should be) the purpose of writing instruction and assessment in schools?

8. What is your philosophy of teaching? How does writing instruction and assessment fit in here? Has your philosophy ever changed? Why or why not?

9. What are some methods you use with writing instruction? Why these?
10. Are you aware of other writing instruction and assessment approaches? If so, what?

11. What makes a student want to write? Does your instruction and/or assessment encourage your students' writing? Explain.

12. What is the biggest obstacle in encouraging students to write? How can teachers help overcome this obstacle?

13. What kind of writing do you assign? Why?


15. How would you define "good writing"?

16. How would your students define "good writing"? Why?

17. What are some books/authors/researchers/articles/experiences that have influenced your writing instruction and assessment?

18. Define (a) a skilled student writer, (b) an average student writer, and (c) a "basic" student writer.

19. Do you use portfolio assessment? Why or why not?

20. How do you use portfolio assessment in your classroom? Why this way?

21. Do you use writing conferences? If so, what is their purpose? How do you implement and facilitate writing conferences?

22. How important is it for an English teacher to write well and/or to be a writer herself/himself?

23. Are you a writer? In what sense?

24. Do you perceive yourself more as a "teacher of writing" or more as a "writer who happens to teach"? Explain.

25. Tell me about the best and worst teachers you ever had.

26. What is an "ideal teacher"? An ideal writing teacher? What does this "effective" teacher look like? Do you fit this description? Why or why not?

27. What should be a writing teacher's role(s) and responsibility(ies)? Why? What instructional and assessment strategies should a writing teacher use?

28. Are there any influences on your teaching philosophy that I haven't asked you about?
APPENDIX C

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE NATURE OF URBAN SCHOOLING AND THEIR RESPECTIVE SCHOOLS

Interview 3

Nature of Urban Schooling

1. Define "urban schooling."

2. What are the stereotypes of teaching in these locations: Urban? Suburban? Rural?


4. How do you view cultural differences? How aware of them are you? What makes you sensitive/insensitive to them?

5. Can you characterize students as groups -- that is, what kinds of cultures they bring to the classroom?

6. What are some urban school reforms you're familiar with? What are some your school has adopted or rejected? What about you personally?

7. What is the public's perception of you the teacher? Of urban schools and their teachers?

8. What do you think of the "tenure controversy"?

9. What do you think is the public's perception of what "we do" for a living? How does this perception affect you?

Your School

10. Describe your school to me -- the faculty, the students, the course offerings, etc.

11. Describe a typical school day, week, and/or quarter.

12. How do you view the district's curricula? (May I have copies of your curricula? How wedded to it are you?)

13. What are the books you use? Who chooses them?
14. What is the nature of the state-required proficiency tests? Can you give me a history of them? What's their purpose? What's your opinion of them? How do you (and your school) prepare students for taking this test?

15. Tell me about the students in your classes (in terms of number, heterogeneity, homogeneity, etc.).

16. How does the English Department function at your school?

17. How many periods does your school have? Do you see the kids daily? How many times a week?

18. Does your school have dress codes? What is the policy here?
APPENDIX D

TEACHERS' CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AND MISCELLANEOUS PERSONAL DATA

Interview 4

Your Classroom Experiences

1. Describe the curricula of the various courses that you teach.

2. How do you go about planning? Record keeping?

3. Can you think of any characteristics that your students bring as a group to your classrooms?

4. How much time do you usually spend outside of the school day on preparation for teaching your classes?

5. What kinds of things have you done in the classroom that facilitate the academic success of students?

6. How do you handle the possible mismatch between what you want to teach and what you have to teach with (for example, materials or supplies)?

7. How do you handle the possible mismatch between what you want to teach and what the administration (principal or superintendent) wants (for example, curricular mandates or instructional philosophies)?

8. How do you think the schooling experience of the students you teach differs from that of suburban or rural communities?

9. How much of what you do in the classroom do you do as a result of your teacher training -- both preservice and inservice? Explain.

10. Tell me something about your classroom management. How do you handle discipline? Are there special things that teachers in urban schools should know about management and discipline?

11. What role do you believe parents play in the success of your students?
12. How do you deal with conflicts, such as (a) tardy students, (b) chronic absenteeism, (c) poor grades (failure to complete work or late work), (d) demands/accusations, (e) parents, (f) interruptions to your class, (g) with your colleagues and/or administrators?

13. What are your biggest concerns as an urban classroom teacher? How do you overcome them -- or don't you? What are your greatest joys?

14. Why do some teachers stay in teaching while others do not? Why do you stay in teaching?

15. Where do you see yourself in one year? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years?

16. If you could revamp teacher education (in both preservice and inservice) so that teachers would be more effective in urban schools, what kind of changes would you make and why?

17. What kind of involvements have you had with "preservice teacher training"? Inservice training?

18. What role does instructional technology play in your life? Your students? What role should or shouldn't it play? How about pop culture? How about audio-visual materials?

19. Describe the three students that I interviewed from your classrooms as both writers and as students in general. Tell me some biographical information about these students as well.

Miscellaneous Personal Data

20. Do you know any other languages?

21. Do you buy books? When you do, what kind?

22. What do you do in your free time?

23. What is your favorite color? Time of year?

24. Do you know your Myers-Briggs type? If so, what is it?

25. Do you have a most embarrassing moment in the classroom that you could share?

26. Do you have a "Kodak moment" in the classroom that you could share?

27. Do you see yourself in any literature -- perhaps even relating to a particular character? Or, perhaps you might relate better to a particular song or film?
APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS TO PREVIOUS TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Interview 5

1. What kind of reading have you completed over the summer?

2. What are you teaching this year? Is this different from last year or from previous years? Was this your choice?

3. How do you feel about starting another new school year? How have you prepared?

4. Tell me something about your work and work schedule for this year.

5. How do you view change?

6. What’s most important in your life?

7. What most affects your performance as a teacher?

8. What advice would you give to first-year teachers?

9. What advice would you give to "burned-out" teachers? How would you define a "burned-out teacher"?

10. How do you remain enthusiastic for what you do?

11. Share a thematic web (a sort of "who am I" and "what I value" sketch) that represents your thinking as a teacher of writing?

12. Why did you agree to take part in this study? What do you think about your participation now that it's almost over?
APPENDIX F

STUDENT QUESTIONS

1. Describe your school.

2. Tell me something about you. (Grade level, your age, extra-curricular activities, your family, etc.)

3. What's your favorite subject? Why?

4. Describe a "good teacher." A "good English teacher"? A "good writing teacher"?

5. What is "good writing" to you? To your English teacher?

6. How important is being able to write well?

7. What makes you want to write?

8. What discourages you from writing?

9. What kind of writing do you do in school?

10. Describe the English class you have with Ms./Mr. ______. (Overall classroom atmosphere -- student mix, teacher-student relationships, assignments including your favorite and least favorite assignments, the difficulty and/or ease of this class, etc.)

11. What kind of writing do you do in Ms./Mr. ______'s classroom?

12. How often do you write in this class? In school? Outside of school?

13. What kind of writer are you? What are your strengths and weaknesses? What do you think helps you to write better?

14. Have you ever shared your writing with other people -- students, adults, etc.?

15. Have you enjoyed (and/or disliked) any writing assignment in particular that you completed (or didn't complete) for Ms./Mr. ______'s class?

16. Would you share some of your writing with me?

17. Do you have any especially good stories to share with me about Ms./Mr. ______?
APPENDIX G

INFORMANT QUESTIONS

1. Why did you recommend ______ to me? (Tell me what you know about ______’s reputation -- in terms of writing instruction and assessment, rapport with students and colleagues, training, etc.)

2. How long have you known ______ and in what capacity? (Have you attended classes with this person, have you observed this person teaching, etc.)

3. How would you define an "effective writing teacher"? Does this definition pertain specifically to an "effective writing teacher in the urban school," or does it apply to other settings as well? (That is, is pedagogy different for urban teachers? Should urban teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes be different than that of their suburban and/or rural counterparts?)


5. What is your professional title?

6. How long have you worked for this school district? Have you taught in other districts?

7. Is ______ unique to the district? Why do you think ______ may be more effective than other English teachers in the district in terms of writing instruction and assessment?
APPENDIX H

FEESP CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Student Name: ____________________ District: _____________

Teacher Name: ____________________ Date: 4/25/96 Critical Incident # 4

Critical Incident Report: Write at least a one page typed, double spaced essay answering the questions below. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts and feelings in seminar. Complete one of these "Report Forms" for each of the ten weeks in the field. Your Field Coordinator will collect and read them.

A Critical Incident is an event that led you to be surprised, startled, pleased, concerned or upset, or confused.

(1) Objectively describe one critical incident or event that occurred in the field last week

(2) Who were the key players in the incident?

(3) What was your reaction to the incident?

(4) Did the incident require action on your part?

(5) If so, what?

(6) What did the incident teach you?

(7) Why did you choose this particular incident?

(8) As a result of the incident, what did you learn about the career of teaching?
A teacher's behavior means everything to a student. The student may not know it, but the student watches the teacher with very careful eyes. Anything that a teacher may say or do in a classroom atmosphere is very critical to the formation of a student’s own behavior and how the student respects the teacher.

This past week, I watched Mr. Bis's behavior in the classroom, both before and after class. Before class, he tries to make himself available to the students. Although at times, he has a lot of running around to do, he somehow makes time to answer questions that the students may have. However, he not only concerned himself with academic questions, he also showed a genuine interest in the students' lives away from the classroom. I watched as he looked at pictures that a student had brought with her to school. He sat down, asked questions, and listened to her responses. This may sound a bit unimportant to the profession of teaching, but I don't think it is at all. In fact, I believe that doing something as small as looking at pictures, even for a few minutes, means a great deal to a student. Not only is he showing interest in that student's life away from the classroom, but now, that student also feels that this teacher really cares and thus, takes whatever he says or does very seriously. In simpler terms, they respect each other.

Another thing that I noticed about Mr. Bis is his way of teaching and how he presents himself in front of a class. He's always smiling, he's always looking at the students, and he just seems to be enjoying himself. He's also a very energetic person. Right now, we are reading the play Julius Caesar, and the kids have a blast watching Mr.
Feeser act out certain parts. His voice booms as he speaks like a Shakespearean actor on a stage. The kids may have difficulty understanding the language of the play, but they have no problem in figuring out what type of action is going on when Mr. helps to act it out. I even find myself smiling at this entire scene of learning. His type of behavior in the classroom proves to be very beneficial for the education process of these kids.

Talking with after classes helps me to understand just how a teacher should behave both in and out of the classroom. He is professional in both places, but he is also fun, and not as strict as some teachers I have had or known. That is why the kids enjoy him and his class so much. I hope to learn the ways to become an effective educator in this way, because in the long run, it will be rewarding for not only the kids, but for me as well.

Well explained.
And analyzed.
APPENDIX I

AGENDA FOR TEACHER PANEL

(1) District Curriculum: Is it etched in stone? How is it usually taught -- for e.g., are certain readings to be read during certain times of the year? Does it have to be taught only "one way" or can a teacher use various strategies without getting any flack from "officials"?

(2) "What happens if I don't 'know everything'?": A question posed to last week's student teacher panel was "What if I have to teach mythology when I don't know 'diddly' about it?" Posed further was "What and where are some good resources for me to use?"

(3) Two of the student teachers depicted CPS as being monetarily poor. One said she was teaching Odyssey with about four different versions floating around the classrooms. So is it true that Columbus Public Schools is a scenario straight from Jonathan Kozol's text: Perhaps you all could address this "dilemma" regarding no money and/or lack of supplies if there is such a dilemma. (This particular ST is currently at Eastmoor.)

(4) Is there a "true art and/or science" regarding how to grade writing? (Hey, perhaps Mrs. M. could address keeping grades on the computer as well!)

(5) How does the "writing process" look in the classroom? Basically, how can beginning teachers encourage it into schools?

(6) How does what Minna Shaughnessy speaks of in Errors and Expectations inform us in our classrooms practice? What is the "basic writer"? How do teachers help kids with different intelligences or who are second-language learners? What should they look for in identifying these writers? What can teachers do to help those students "master" standard English without appearing "language-xenophobic"? (Should this latter idea be a concern?)

(7) Planning and paper work: How do you do it? That is, what do you consider when planning your lessons, and how do you handle to paper load?

(8) What are the "realities" of urban schooling? That is, what kind of students populate the schools, what kind of teachers teach them, and is it true that conditions make it difficult for any real learning to occur? (This question is based on the prejudices stereotypes the media and various rumors help to perpetuate.)

(9) Culturally-relevant teaching: How does (should) culture play a role in their classroom instruction and assessment? In classrooms that may be filled with a diversity of students, will "we" be able to be as effective as a "teacher of color" or as a "teacher of urban schooling experiences herself"? (These questions are meant to address the "aura" of urban teaching.)

(10) HOW SHOULD GRAMMAR FIT into writing instruction? What are some ways that have been successful for you all?

(11) What is this whole notion about "paired texts"? What's the rationale for doing it? How does it look in practice?

(12) How important is it to have a philosophy of teaching?

(13) What has kept you all so "spirited" AND ENTHUSIASTIC about what you do? Any advice for new teachers in practice -- that is, student teachers, first year teachers, and so on?
APPENDIX J

Winnie the Pooh Tunnel

Winnie The Pooh Tunnel

Say you can’t wait to play at her house because the week before
she dodges you Halloween night,
beats the girl next door
to trick-or-treat with only her,
and say you can’t wait
because your Mom doesn’t trust her much,
so you think an invitation
defines an apology,
welcomes temptation.

Say you run as fast as eight years
of living can carry you,
sprint past twelve houses to hers,
not wanting to waste much
of your thirty-minute allotment
on traveling to get there.

Say you promise Mom
her parents will be there,
and you mean your promise
because you think she means hers.

Say you knock and your wait seems long,
exhausting, on porch steps
littered with leaves.
When she finally answers,
she tells you you’re going
to look for pretty rocks
at the top of her driveway
and you say yes,
because you love adding colors
to your home shoebox collection.
You wonder why her parents’
station wagon is absent
from the gravelbed,
but stuff your pockets anyway
until she says, “Let’s go inside.”

Say you veer left to her bedroom,
see walls of daisy stickers slapped
haphazardly on lavender.
You say “Groovy” when she flips
a 45 on her red and white record player,
turns the Partridge Family on high.
You dance “the jerk” and “the monkey”,
then agree to shift gears down
the basement for play.
Say your eyes fix bright
on the parachute tunnel.
Winnie the Pooh decorates
its start and its finish.

Say you accept her suggestion
to dive through the hole first.
You crawl fast because you know
your time's almost up,
but hands grip your ankles,
interrupt round three of the race.
She squeezes harder
fingernails find skin
just under your sock rims.
What tickles becomes pain
then turns to confusion
at the bend in this passage.
She turns you over,
burrows your smiley face sweatshirt
under her long thin body,
wearing her dad's flannel.

Say you feel her lick your neck.
Her palm over your mouth
muffles your scream,
then she laughs
says, "No one can hear you."
the replay button already pressed
thirteen stairsteps above.
"Hey everybody, there's a song
that we're singing,
come on get happy!"
Its high volume
sits heavy on your bangs,
pulls hard your panic cord.
She removes her right hand,
presses foreign lips onto yours.

Say you discover her left hand unzip
your bell bottom jeans;
you yank a clump of dark hair,
pull your frantic surprise.
She loosens the force of her body
on yours; you wriggle free to the end,
strip from her crooked cave
then skip all the odd steps,
land evenly on kitchen tile
at the top, by the railing.
You move like a 45 on 78
speed outside, down the driveway,
feet pounding the pavement.
Say you neglect the count of concrete blocks, and this time you forget if you stepped on the cracks. You pull pebbles from your pockets, dress the sidewalk with a stone trail of gray.

Say you run toward a mother's patience at the yard's edge, you spill breathless inside tend to the Susan doll left half-clothed an hour before.

Say memory never once mentioned that toy channel. You were as free from it as your name sponged off in seconds from your miniature chalkboard. No, memory never talked but Pooh did when he met you again cuddled up with your nephew and a picturebook on the blue flowered couch.

Say you find lips forced on your face, a zipper undone, hidden in the center of the bear's caramel torso and somewhere in the middle of his story, memory hurtles you toward that cold cellar floor and how your lungs hurt during that fast-breathing flight home.
APPENDIX K
A POETRY READING

"Oh, earth! you're too wonderful for nobody to realize you."

Spur silence affects

The strange thing is
That is because of my
The

everyone in the end.
I don't think myself alone.
I shall miss it

Piano, by Jen Caspian
"This is not, on reaching its end, an observer's story" (p. 97).
-- Eudora Welty, from One Writer's Beginnings (1983)