HOW DO PRESERVICE TEACHERS LEARN FROM EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCES?

NARRATIVES FROM A COHORT

IN AN ELEMENTARY TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

JENNIFER WRAY OLSON

(Under the Direction of Martha Allexsaht-Snider)

ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study followed a cohort of preservice teachers in a teacher education program, at a large southeastern university, as they progressed through three semesters of early field experiences. The purpose of this research was to understand how they learned to teach as they negotiated early field experiences. The theoretical perspectives of John Dewey (1938) and Deborah Britzman (1991) guided the understanding of experience and learning to teach. Narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) informed the data collection processes and writing of the research text. The researcher began the study in the role of instructor for the cohort in their initial course for the program. Data were collected over three semesters from the whole cohort. Data were also collected from five focus participants through participant observations and interviews over two semesters. Narratives compose a large part of the research text. Each narrative from a differing perspective provides rich description of the multiple contexts of their learning to teach. The researcher developed a new framework for understanding how preservice teachers learn to teach in their early field experiences and brings forward assertions about early field experiences for teacher educators to consider while planning teacher education programs.

INDEX WORDS: preservice teachers, teacher education, early field experiences, narrative inquiry
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JENNIFER WRAY OLSON

B. A., College of William and Mary, 1988

MAED College of William and Mary, 1993

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004
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JENNIFER WRAY OLSON

Major Professor: Martha Allexsaht-Snider
Committee: Betty Shockley Bisplinghoff
Laurie E. Hart
Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2004
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Martha Allexsaht-Snider entered my life when I transitioned from an elementary classroom teacher to a teacher educator. Thank you for showing me that I was a teacher educator just when thought I needed to learn how to be one.

Dr. Betty Shockley Bisplinghoff trusted my own sense of who I was, and allowed me to take chances in my writing. Thank you for encouraging me to write about myself in order to find my interests and passions in education.

Dr. Michelle Commeyras invited me to join her "Teachers as Readers" adventure and my life will never be the same again. I learned who I was as a reader, and how to place that at the center of my teaching and writing.

Dr. Laurie Hart showed me how to mine research relevant to my own interests, and organize that in a coherent way. Thank you for your careful reading and your positive words about my work.

Dr. Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett listened when I most needed someone to hear my voice. Thank you for having your office door open when I needed to talk and always being there to read my work.

Thomas Van Soelen, thank you for letting me into your classrooms, and sharing your students with me. You were always ready to listen, you were always so excited about my work, and you were always open to sharing.

Stacy Schwartz, thank you for all your readings at various stages of this writing. Without our writing partnership after Amicalolola Falls, I would have stopped writing.
To Cluster A, thank you for letting me in to your community. I look forward to hearing about your successes in your own classrooms.

To my focus participants, Jake, Anna, Vicki, Barbara, and June, this work would not be here without you. Thank you for sharing your experience so that I could learn from them and you.

To Stephanie Bales, you helped me negotiate being a student so far away, and yet always said you missed me when I stopped by. Thank you for being a constant in my changing status, and thank you for typing so many of the words I used.

Susan, Bob, Sarah, Nora, and Ethan Cooper who let me stay with them each month as I trekked back to Athens, Georgia from Cary, North Carolina, for another data collection session, or another meeting with my committee. Thank you for sharing your home and supporting my academic and emotional endeavor. Each visit was a safe and comfortable stay as I ventured into the unknown of research.

To my husband Jon, you understood how important it was to get this finished. You supported my choices and helped me adjust to each stage of this process. Thank you for your patience with me as an absent wife on my frequent trips back, and as a preoccupied writer with little time for maintaining a household. Thank you for the many outings you took with the children to give me time to write in peace. Thank you for the forceful push to not give up, and thank you for understanding why this research is important.

To Calvin and Livia, thank you for your patience as I spent hours in my office. Thanks for the whispers as I talked on the phone. Thanks for the hugs each time I came home. I hope one day you will realize why it was important to understand how teachers learn.
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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Building a Deck: What Does That Have To Do With Teacher Education?

*In order to build a deck, some things needed to be considered for the job to be completed. First we planned the deck using drawing, pictures, and sketches that let us incorporate special features into our building project. It made us think about the supplies we needed in order to get the job done. We dug holes for the footers, holes big enough and in the right place for posts. We poured heavy concrete into each hole to form footers. We placed posts erect, big and cumbersome, on each footer. We bolted together each corner and placed extra posts where the length of that side needed extra support. We placed braces on each end so that the deck does not rock when we throw a Friday afternoon barbeque for the neighborhood. We attached the framework solidly to the house.*

*Stringers run from the house to the outside edge of the frame and then are nailed into facer boards. We measured these closely and placed them equidistant from one another so that the floor of the deck is strong enough to support the weight of those enjoying the outside. We had help to screw all the decking boards tightly to the stringers. When walking on the deck you never think twice about the space between the deck and the ground.*

*Last comes the railing, a final protection from a fall. All around the deck a railing allows you to walk close to the edge and enjoy the height and view without fear of falling. An important feature of our deck will be the access to the backyard. The deck is a stable beginning point for our family to get to where we want to be, outside! From the deck we can explore the backyard,
enjoy a dinner at sunset, listen to birds, and watch our children play in the grass and woods.

With the new deck we will have a place to be alone to think, sit with friends or family to share our thoughts, or venture into a day of backyard gardening. When the backyard adventures are over, the deck is still there. Perhaps to kick off your shoes, before you go inside, or maybe to contemplate the day’s activities from a distance. I intend to enjoy the deck for many years to come. Although it is an extension of our home, it is an important part.

So what does it mean? If I consider building the deck a project, then there are similarities to teaching preservice teachers. After all, don’t we dig through their early learning experiences, and examine their assumptions before we lay in a foundation with new ideas? Don’t we provide a framework for teaching? Do we not brace their framework with connections to and from theory and practice? We hope that the framework we begin with is strong enough to withstand the strong layers of understanding that we place on top of each other.

Isn’t each field placement the connection between the university and the schools? Shouldn’t there be, at least a thread that connects the two? Each experience should add to preservice teachers' teaching knowledge. Isn’t the decking then, a place to stand, once all of it is done? A firm place to ground them as new educators? A place where they can plan what they want to do, a place to discuss their plans with peers, and a place to watch the children they teach? Is the construction the place where they head out into a new teaching venture with the frameworks firmly in place?

The foundation will be there, to return to, after a day of teaching, once again to reflect, to discuss, and to relate back to the children’s learning and the teacher’s practice. A structure that has a solid base with braces keeps a balance as one reviews or replays a day’s teaching. Aren’t all the educators involved in the development of these preservice teachers their railing? And
what happens when beginning teachers do step off the deck, their foundation, into the world of a classroom?

So where are the children in the analogy? After all, children are central to the framework. Some children sit squarely in the middle of the deck. The framework supports teachers in helping children to the back yard for play and exploration. After the foundation is laid, it must be used to support children’s learning. Some children may be in the backyard to begin with and you, as the teacher, may have to guide them to the deck to use that foundation to teach and help them find their way to more play and exploration. There may be some children that do not fit what the foundation previously held. These children may be hiding underneath the deck. Whether you use the deck's foundation to teach them, you must find them even if they never quite fit on the deck. What of the children that insist on walking the railing and challenging everything you learned? Jump up there with them, and hold their hands!

Formally preparing teachers for the classroom has been a part of higher education since the normal schools were used as teacher training institutions (Spencer, 2001). Teacher education programs accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) are required to prepare candidates that know and demonstrate content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2002). Although the story of teaching has a long history (Dewey, 1938; Lortie, 1975; Waller, 1932), the stories of preparing teachers are much more recent (Britzman, 1991; Bullough et al., 2002; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). By exploring the learning of a cohort of preservice teachers in an undergraduate teacher education program, I tell a story of how they learned from their early field experiences.
A notable gap in teacher education research exists when viewing learning from the preservice teachers' perspective. Also noted is less research that focuses on the early field experiences. For these reasons I chose to include the preservice teacher's words and focus on the early field experiences that are a part of their early childhood teacher education program in the study I designed and report here.

We are in a time when political legislation, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (Public Law 107-110), calls for highly qualified teachers and yet teacher certification requirements are being questioned (Walsh, 2001). Preservice teachers are taught in many types of teacher education programs yet tend to teach in ways that they were taught themselves (Lortie, 1975). Some consider universities to be an ivory tower and teaching to be the swampy lowland (Schön, 1983). Yet there are teacher education programs that attempt to bridge the gap (Field & Latta, 2001; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001; Upitis, 1999). Each of these statements is a reason to examine preservice teachers learning to teach.

Education and teacher education is at the forefront of the current political agenda. As policymakers and educators place teacher education under heavy scrutiny, it is appropriate to be researching exactly what the preservice teachers are learning in their programs. Each teacher education program is different and much can be learned from a close examination of one program that aims to prepare effective teacher candidates. This research is also necessary to examine the gap between university coursework and schools where preservice teachers are learning to teach. My longitudinal research study with preservice teachers in their early field experiences is timely and necessary for these reasons.

The purpose of this research was to examine the process of the development of preservice teachers as they progressed through early field experiences during their early childhood
education program. In this study, narratives are told of learning to teach. I viewed the preservice teachers' development from the margins. I was on the outside of their journey looking in. They were on the edge of teaching, stepping in. I was once the instructor, then a researcher. They were students and then became teachers. From the margins of our place in this research, together the participants and I told the story of how preservice teachers learn to teach as they encountered early field experiences.

Research Questions

My research question was: How do preservice teachers learn from early field experiences? Other questions that I address are: What do they see as the relationship between university coursework and early field experiences? How do preservice teacher begin the process of learning to teach as they move from university to schools?

Preservice teachers bring their own experiences as students and as learners to their development as a teacher. Once preservice teachers enter the formal teacher preparation program they are influenced by foundational and methodological coursework, as well as field experiences that are an integral part of their program. Although the preservice teachers progress through their program of study in a linear way, their learning may not be linear. Just as the participants of my study bring a wide range of experiences to their learning, I too bring my own experiences of learning, my own teacher education program, and my own experiences as a teacher to my research.

This longitudinal study, of a cohort of preservice teachers, in a formal teacher preparation program, at a large southeastern land grant university, is unique. My own background as a teacher; struggling through the first year, adjusting to diverse students in my classroom, and focusing on student learning, also brings a unique perspective. Finally my role as an instructor
for this cohort was unique; as the preservice teachers began their teacher education program, I was beginning to learn about being a teacher educator. As they struggled in field experiences, I learned how to help them reflect on their practice. As they progressed, I spent time listening to how they were developing. This journey of learning together about their preservice development is about me learning to understand their growth. It is also my journey.
CHAPTER TWO:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter I review relevant literature to support, and lay the foundation for the inquiry about preservice teacher education. The review serves as the basis upon which my own theoretical investments are discussed. Theories guiding my understanding of preservice teacher learning from experiences ground this review of literature on the development of preservice teachers.

Theoretical Investments

In this section I condense what I have learned from theoretical work and how I have internalized its meaning for my study. Britzman (1991) calls these theoretical investments, “the concepts I use to work through the meanings of practice, pedagogy, and becoming, and the discourses that express their particular meanings” (p. 9). If I look at theory in this way, it is easier for me to draw from different theories the ideas that help me to make sense of what I am learning and what I am using in my own research. As I struggle with theory, how it fits into my research, and my understanding of the data I collect, I will keep in mind that the purpose of theories is to help us sort out our world, make sense of it, guide how we behave in it, and predict what might happen next….theories are human constructions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Constructivist and Interpretive Research

“Mindful of the risk of drawing too fine a distinction between interpretivist and constructivist perspectives that share a common intellectual heritage, I have chosen to discuss the two separately” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 119). For Schwandt, the task of explaining the differences
in these theoretical orientations began with the above qualification. I find myself struggling to situate my research precisely in one or the other of these perspectives. I see it as both constructivist and interpretive.

Interpretive research “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Crotty defines constructivism as the term for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on the ‘meaning –making activity of the individual mind’ …Constructivism taken in this sense points up the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is valid and worthy of respect as any other. (p. 58)

My research is interpretive because I am trying to understand the process of meaning making that they use. To connect my work with Crotty's ideas he uses the word *interpretations* while I use the words *meaning making*. My research is constructivist because I believe that each preservice teacher is constructing his or her own meaning through interactions throughout their experiences in the university classroom and their experiences in their field placements. Crotty also points to the *unique experiences of each*. I am watching the development of these preservice teachers in the context of their cohort and the context of the university and the schools and therefore I must also consider social constructivism.

*Social Constructivism*

Theories of learning are applied to learners in classrooms as well as other learning in and outside of schools. I believe these theories can be applied to preservice teachers who are learning also. Constructivism is particularly appropriate for preservice teachers who are actively learning about teaching. Implied in the theory of constructivism is the idea that we as human beings have no access to an objective reality because we are constructing our version of it, while at the same
time transforming it and ourselves (Fosnot, 1996). I extend using constructivism as a theory of knowledge that promotes meaningful learning (Oldfather, West, White, & Wilmarth, 1999) to include meaningful understanding of preservice teacher knowledge and learning.

A sociocultural approach to mind and learning begins with the assumption that everything that we do is mediated and cannot be separated from the milieu where it is carried out (Wertsch, 1991). For these preservice teachers, actions taken in their field experiences cannot be separated from the schools and university where they are placed. The context influencing them both in the university and in the schools must also be considered when understanding their actions. The development of preservice teachers must be considered dynamic (Wertsch) as their learning is in flux within the context of the experiences they are having.

One aspect of these preservice teachers’ knowledge construction comes from the experiences they had while they were in the field, and another may be experiences they are having in their university courses. In order to understand that learning, I must first discuss experience and I turn to John Dewey for that discussion.

*John Dewey’s Theoretical Perspectives*

Just as Dewey makes a case for the need for a theory of experience (Dewey, 1938), I found I have to make a case for using his theory as a means of understanding preservice teachers’ experience. Without an understanding of what I was trying to examine, I would not be able to make any sense of the experiences that these preservice teachers are encountering.

*Experience*

“I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference; namely the organic connection between education and personal experience; or that the new philosophy of education is committed to some kind of empirical and experimental philosophy” (Dewey,
1938, p. 25). Although I may not be considering the same education that Dewey was explaining, I see learning to teach as education also. Therefore I see education of preservice teachers as connected to the experiences they have had, and will have as students, and is central to understanding their development.

The concerns that Dewey raised about experience being equated with education are the same concerns I feel are raised in considering experiences for preservice teachers. “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). Dewey discusses miseducative experiences as experiences that engender callousness, experiences that increase automaticity yet tend to land you in a rut, enjoyable experiences that may promote a slack attitude, and experiences that may be disconnected from one another and artificially form habits. All of these examples of experience share qualities with preservice teachers’ field experiences, which is another reason I look to Dewey’s theoretical perspectives in understanding what preservice teachers are learning in their field experiences.

“It is not enough to insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even the activity in experience. Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had” (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). Dewey goes on to explain that experience should be viewed from its immediate aspect of agreeableness and from its influence on later experiences. It is the influence on later experiences that is most important. Is this not at the heart of teaching and learning to teach? As we send preservice teachers out into the field to learn more about how to teach, we choose schools, mentors, and classrooms, to provide them with an experience in which they will learn. Not only do we want them to deal with the immediate experience and its agreeableness or
disagreeableness, but also what it means to them as they later have more experiences as a teacher, or as a learner.

A philosophy of education, like any theory, has to be stated in words, in symbols. But as far as it is more than verbal it is a plan for conducting education. Like any plan, it must be framed with reference to what is to be done, and how it is to be done. The more definitely and sincerely it is held that education is a development within, by, and for experience, the more important it is that there shall be clear conceptions of what experience is. (Dewey, 1938, p.28)

Because field experiences hold such an important place in teacher education programs, Dewey’s theories of experience helped me to frame those field experiences.

**Principle of Continuity**

“The principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). For preservice teachers this is very important. As we sent them out to schools for field experiences, they took something from that experience. And what they took from that experience had an impact on every experience they had after that, whether it is in another field experience, an interaction with a future student, a discussion in a university class, or in teaching in their own classrooms one day. Therefore how the preservice teachers learned in those field experiences is very important to examine. Dewey’s theory also suggests that, “growth, or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally, is one exemplification of the principle of continuity” (p. 36). It is important to keep in mind growth as we examine what it is that they are learning from those field experiences. If “every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves
toward and into” (p. 38). Once again for teacher education and preservice teacher learning, this is important. If every experience is a force, then it must be considered carefully as to whether it is a moving force in the direction that we want teachers to move.

Principle of Interaction

Experience does not go on simply inside a person. It does go on there, for it influences the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose. But this is not the whole of the story. Every genuine experience has an active side, which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had. (Dewey, 1938, p. 39)

This expresses the principle of interaction that is equally important to teacher education and preservice teacher learning. There are many influences to the experience that actively change the experience.

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked about also being a part of the situation; or the toys with which he is playing; the book he is reading;…or the materials of an experiment he is performing (Dewey, 1938, pp. 43-44).

For preservice teachers each of these ways the environment may interact with their experience must also be considered. Their mentor teacher, their preservice peers, or the students with whom they interact may be considered the environment. It may be the curriculum they teach in a given school, or it may be the materials they use within a classroom setting. In each case the experience is defined by environment. And that too must be examined in order to understand
how the preservice teachers are learning in the field experience. A discussion of Vygotsky's socio-historical theories are included later in the chapter to move beyond using Dewey's theory of experience and his notion of context.

The principles of continuity and interaction are not separate but intertwined and inseparable when viewing experiences (Dewey, 1938). Within a field experience for preservice teachers, what must be examined are the growth and continuity and the environment in order to truly understand it. As a result of watching a cohort of preservice teachers over three semesters of their preparation program, I have had ample opportunity to examine the experiences from the perspective of continuity. I also have been inside each of the students’ placement schools and have reflections from the preservice teachers’ time in the field, as well as interviews discussing those field experiences. Context provided the window into the environment that interacts with the experience.

**Collateral Learning**

Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning. (Dewey, 1938, p. 48)

The concept of collateral learning is so important for teacher educators to consider as they send out eager preservice teachers. What attitudes and dispositions are they gaining from their time in
the field? What is the collateral learning from the experiences they have? Attitudes and dispositions are difficult to measure. And can we really measure change in any of these areas?

A definition of experience is a place to start. The principles of continuity and interaction help to understand the complex and interactive nature of learning to teach. These principles also helped me to focus on the process of learning to teach. Collateral learning helps to make sense of all the things that preservice teachers may learn as they are in the field or in a university classroom that may or may not have been planned. All of these play an important part in understanding the experiences of preservice teachers' development. As I continued to search for an understanding of learning to teach, I found Deborah Britzman (1991), whose ideas helped to further my understanding of the process of learning to teach.

*Deborah Britzman’s Theoretical Perspectives*

I still remember the awe I felt as I read the opening chapter of Deborah Britzman’s (1991) book *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*. It seemed that every other sentence said what I was thinking. I kept a running list of the phrases she used that spoke to me about my interests as well as phrases that would assist in the development of my research question. I eventually returned the book to my major professor, but not until I had ordered a copy of it for myself. I carefully transferred all the sticky-notes and underlined all the same phrases of which I had so carefully made a record. Only then, was I ready to return the book that seemed to open my eyes for a way to view my own intrigue with preservice teachers.

I examine three specific theoretical perspectives from Britzman’s (1991) work that help me to understand the experience of preservice teachers learning to teach; dialogic discourse, social process of negotiation, and preservice teachers being marginally situated in two worlds. All three of these ideas apply to understanding both the context and process of learning to teach.
Dialogic Discourse

Preservice teachers are in a unique position of both learning and having to teach at the same time. If teacher educators are to consider learning to teach as a developmental process, then it is important to consider what preservice teachers do, and the give and take that happens as someone learns and develops.

To see teachers as being shaped by their work as well as shaping their work – we are able to shift the discourse of teacher education from an instrumentalist belief in controlling and manipulating variables – an orientation based upon the suppression of subjectivity – to a dialogic discourse. A dialogic discourse can take into account the discursive practices and their social relationships that realize pedagogy and the lived experiences of teachers. (Britzman, 1991, p. 1)

Within the experience of learning and the discourse and dialogue that must occur, there are tensions that must be negotiated. As preservice teachers observe, converse, and experiment with teaching on their own, they begin their journey to become teachers. It is a process.

Dewey (1938) describes the process using the principle of interaction. Britzman (1991) calls it dialogic discourse. Both Dewey and Britzman acknowledge the non-linear process of learning to teach. Dewey uses words such as “change” and “transaction” to describe what is happening as learning occurs while Britzman uses words such as “shape” and “shift” to describe preservice teacher learning.

Enacted in every pedagogy are the tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience, the technical and the existential, the objective and the subjective…such relationships are better expressed as dialogic in that they are shaped as they shape each other in the
process of coming to know. Produced because of social interaction, subject to negotiation, consent, and circumstance, inscribed with power and desire, and always in the process of becoming, these dialogic relations determine the very texture of teaching and the possibilities it opens. (Britzman, 1991, pp. 2-3)

If the experiences that preservice teachers are having are to be worthwhile, then the dialogic discourse and the negotiation has to take place. That is where the learning or development occurs. That is what makes the experience meaningful. Sayings such as ‘learning from experience’ or ‘experience is the best teacher,’ are commonly heard among preservice teachers. But by claiming that experience alone is what counts, what is missing is the interrogation into the dynamics of social expression, the give and take as well as the sense making process (Britzman, 1991).

Social Process of Negotiation

Further understanding of dialogic discourse leads to a social process of negotiation.

Learning to teach is a social process of negotiation rather than an individual problem of behavior. This dynamic is essential to any humanizing explanation of the work of teacher. Teaching concerns coming to terms with one’s intentions and values, as well as one’s views of knowing, being, and acting in a setting characterized by contradictory realities, negotiation, and dependency and struggle.

(Britzman, 1991, p. 8)

Taking into account the process of negotiation for preservice teachers means that teacher educators do not tell how to teach. It is personal, yet negotiated within a school setting. The learning that occurs in the classrooms at the university is only one part of the learning to teach. The learning becomes personal as the preservice teachers learn to negotiate that learning into
what is appropriate for each school setting. Learning in two places and negotiating two settings puts the preservice teachers in an awkward place.

*Marginally Situated in Two Worlds*

From the classrooms of the university or college where preservice teachers have been listening, talking, and learning, to the schools, where they are expected to begin teaching, preservice teachers are connected to these two contexts as they learn to teach. As they move from classroom learners to classroom teachers, they experience a big change. Some are anxious and eager to get into the teaching classroom, where they feel they will learn the most. For others, the classroom is the place that will challenge all that they have learned. It is a dual role as student then teacher, or as student becoming teacher, or as always a student learning and teaching. No matter how you view the process, the preservice teacher is involved in two roles. Britzman (1991) describes these roles as “marginally situated in two worlds, the student teacher as part student and part teacher has the dual struggle of educating others while being educated” (p. 13).

By understanding Britzman’s (1991) theoretical investments of marginally situated preservice teachers learning to teach, I may begin to place my own understanding of my participants’ learning from experience. Britzman’s perspectives have helped me to focus my attention on the tensions and complexities that exist in learning to teach and developing as a teacher.

*Dewey and Britzman Considered Together*

I have never seen Dewey’s (1938) and Britzman’s (1991) theoretical perspectives brought together, although I have seen articles that cite both in their work with preservice teachers (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Field & Latta, 2001; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Vitis & DeVitis, 1998). Britzman discusses Dewey’s meaning of experience and education in her
opening chapter on *The Structure of Experience* (Britzman, 1991). It was reading the first chapter which encouraged me to take a closer look at Dewey’s work. In trying to frame my own research with preservice teachers I see myself drawing from both perspectives. I am critically connected with Dewey’s ideas on experience because I am examining the preservice teachers’ field experience. His theory of experience is at the heart of my interest in preservice teachers. I am connected to Britzman’s ideas about practice because I view preservice teachers’ learning from experience as a socially mediated process. In some earlier writing I began to see these connections graphically.

Figure 1. A graphic representation of the theoretical perspectives of John Dewey (1938) and Deborah Britzman (1991) used to make sense of preservice teacher learning from experience.
Figure 1 helped me connect the theoretical perspectives of Dewey (1938) and Britzman (1991) so they could work together in understanding preservice teacher development. The principles of continuity and interaction that are central to Dewey’s understanding of experience are pictured as ongoing through the context of the experience. The people or roles are pictured as circular and with no specific direction. This circular, non-directional organization is from Britzman’s idea of preservice teachers being situated in two worlds, and that that the roles are socially mediated and ongoing. Everything is in the context of the experience. For Dewey the context is referred to as the environment. Both Britzman and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe tensions. For Britzman, the tensions were described earlier in the discussion of dialogic discourse. Clandinin and Connelly, describe tensions at the boundaries using Dewey’s principles of continuity and interaction.

Dewey’s two criteria of experience, continuity and interaction, provide a theoretical frame for identifying tension at the boundaries. Tensions pertaining to continuity that were brought up by experience…are temporality, people, action, and certainty. Tensions pertaining to interaction are context, people, action, and certainty. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 21)

I include Clandinin and Connelly (2000) here although later I make a case for using narrative inquiry as my methodology for examining preservice teacher learning. I will not go into depth on that, but I do want to demonstrate how narrative inquiry also fits into my conceptual understanding of teacher learning using Britzman (1991) and Dewey’s (1938) theoretical perspectives. In narrative inquiry the focus on experience lends itself to using Dewey’s theory of experience. Using stories, or narrative, was one way to examine those tensions within the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).
Adding Aspects of Social Constructivism

As my understanding of experience and practice comes together with Dewey (1938) and Britzman’s (1991) help, I find my work returns to social constructivism. Ideas such as knowledge being socially constructed, and learners building on prior knowledge, are all important in understanding preservice teacher learning. I turn to Bakhtin (1981) for his discussion of voice, and Vygotsky (1978) to further my understanding of learning.

Voice

In understanding the experiences of these preservice teachers learning to teach, I am particularly interested in their voice. By listening to their voices in interviews or reading their words, I better understand their learning process. By listening to their voices I can address ways to change teacher education. Voice (Bakhtin, 1981) is important in learning to teach. “One’s own discourse and one’s own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other’s discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 79). As preservice teachers learn to teach, their voices will begin to stand on their own. The authority of the teacher educators and others involved in their learning begin to fade. In the quote above from Bakhtin's work, he describes voice as "dynamically stimulated by another." As Britzman (1991) describes dialogic discourse, I see where her work connects with Bakhtin’s dialogue.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 76)
Britzman’s (1991) dialogic discourse relates to making sense of learning through discourse, and I believe Bakhtin (1981) is relating his concept of dialogue to words and sentences. His work begins with trying to understand the interactions between people who use words, while Britzman is trying to understand learning through those interactions.

My aim to examine a process of learning to teach makes it difficult to situate the preservice teachers’ voices. Their voices are changing and adapting and negotiating as we talk, as we wait, and as we analyze. The challenge for me as the researcher is letting the preservice teachers’ voices come through. The idea of mind as described in the book *Voices of the Mind* (Wertsch, 1991) in which the voice, although individual, is situated in a social and communicative process. Understanding that meaning making is an active process is also helpful for conceptualizing voice in my research. For preservice teachers, the voice is individual, but the meaning they make of learning to teach is situated in the social— their own school experiences, the university classroom, and the schools—and is active—they are learning as they are doing.

The socio-cultural approach to mind integrates the individual voices within a context. Wertsch (1991) draws from L. S. Vygotsky's earlier writing to outline a framework for the socio-cultural approach to mind. The three basic themes that run through Vygotsky's writing are

1) a reliance on genetic, or developmental, analysis; 2) the claim that higher mental functioning in the individual derives from social life; and 3) the claim that human action, on both the social and individual planes, is mediated by tools and signs. (Wertsch, 1991, p. 19)

My research sought to understand how preservice teachers develop so I relied on understanding the social planes as well as the individual planes of human action. Understanding the interactions between the preservice teachers and the schools, mentor teachers, and their peers on a social
plane aided my understanding of their actions as individuals in classrooms. The Zone of Proximal Development was one term used by Vygotsky and Wertsch to help understand the sociocultural situatedness of mental functioning.

*The Zone of Proximal Development*

I am using the term *Zone of Proximal Development* that is used in many learning contexts, and applying it to learning by preservice teachers. “Thus the zone must be thought of as more than a clever instructional heuristic; it is a key theoretical construct, capturing as it does the individual within the concrete social situation of learning and development” (Moll, 1990, p. 4). The social nature of learning to teach, both in the university classes within a teacher education program and in the field experiences, are important parts of preservice teacher learning and development. Vygotsky defined the Zone of Proximal Development as, “the distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Other researchers have considered using the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development with preservice teachers “through situated engagement and negotiation with practitioners and peers in the teaching community, preservice teachers come to define for themselves what it means to be a teacher” (Samaras & Gismondi, 1998, p. 715).

The Zone of Proximal Development may be applied to preservice teachers to consider the distance between their actual development and their potential ability to teach with guidance or in collaboration with someone. One example is a field experience situation with a mentor teacher. The Zone of Proximal Development of a given preservice teacher could be considered by what he or she is able to do independently in a classroom situation, and what they could potentially do
with assistance from the mentor teacher. So a preservice teacher’s zone may span read – a – loud time as something they can do independently but may need guidance to conduct a reading lesson involving a Directed Reading Thinking Activity. In a university classroom this may mean that a preservice teacher has the ability to plan activities for a thematic unit independently but needs assistance to incorporate developmentally appropriate activities.

As I contemplate the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, I consider Moll’s (1990) three-part discussion of the zone. He described holistic analysis, mediation, and change as important components (Moll, 1990). I see the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development as a place to begin considering the process of learning for these preservice teachers. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development can help us capture a more meaningful view of the preservice teachers in the context of their teacher education program and field experiences.

The holistic analysis for me, means considering the setting of the schools for field experiences and the courses at the university as a setting for their learning, and also for understanding these preservice teachers in a holistic way. I see the mediation as the various models, instructors, mentors, children, and classmates they encounter as they learn about being teachers. I see change as the acquisition of control or mastery of tools and thinking as they begin to gain confidence in their learning. The focus of learning becomes not the transference of skills, but the collaboration and communication of meaning so that the preservice teachers begin to take control of their own learning and, as a result, teaching (Moll, 1990).

Summary of My Theoretical Investments

My theoretical investments span a wide variety of reading. My understanding of context first viewed through Dewey (1938), now is expanded to consider the sociocultural (Wertsch, 1991) and context as a site of conflict (Britzman, 1991). I view actions as mediated by the
context and the people involved in the action, such as the teacher and the students. My understanding of preservice teacher learning has expanded with the consideration of voice (Bakhtin, 1981) and the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Dialogic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Britzman, 1991), being marginally situated, and the social process of negotiation are part of my theoretical investments. Once again I try to form a graphic representation (see Figure 2) of the integration of these theories to explain my use of them with preservice teacher learning. The figure resulting from my understanding of all these theoretical investments is complex and intertwined, but it is my ongoing understanding of learning to teach.

Preservice Teacher Learning

I use the term preservice teacher learning to describe a large body of research literature. It includes understanding teacher knowledge, reflective practice, and learning from field experiences. In order to situate my own research in the bigger picture of teacher education research, I review relevant research. I begin with Zeichner and Tabachnick's (1981) seminal piece on the effects of university coursework and experience. Next I review teacher knowledge and how I view preservice teacher knowledge. Reflection is central to the development of teacher knowledge and links knowledge and experience, so I review the literature on preservice teacher reflection. Finally, I review the literature on field experiences.
Figure 2. Graphic representation of Dewey’s (1938) theoretical perspectives on experience, Britzman’s (1991) theoretical perspectives on learning to teach, Wertsch’s (1991) theoretical perspectives on mediated action, and Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) narrative inquiry.
Preparing teachers for the realities of a classroom is a difficult job. Teaching preservice teachers about handling differing abilities and differing learning styles, and addressing the individual needs of their learners is challenging. In teacher preparation programs, the aim is to provide beginning teachers with an understanding of children's learning. A teacher education program also teaches methodologies for different subjects. In traditional classrooms the teacher is more apt to direct the learning in the classroom. In a progressive classroom teachers are more likely to let children’s interests and needs direct the learning in a classroom. Lortie (1975) suggests that the endurance of traditional teaching practice derives in part from the fact that teachers are highly likely to teach in the way they themselves were taught or in ways the context supports.

Zeichner and Tabachnik (1981) describe three possible interpretations for the shift in preservice teachers from a more progressive stance to a more traditional stance in their teaching. They looked at reasons other than blaming the change on conflicts between university and school expectations. The commonly accepted scenario is that the university moves students toward a more liberal view of education and then the students move in the opposite direction as they experience full time teaching. Another possibility is that socialization of teachers occurs long before they get to the university and that the prospective teachers come to teaching with traditional views and the university or college does little to change that. The last scenario actually argues that the university may actually have an impact on teachers but not a liberalizing one. That in fact the teacher education programs may fail to enable prospective teachers with conceptual tools to transcend structural contexts where teaching currently occurs.
Since this article was published it has been used many times as a citation. It has been used to emphasize the mismatch between teacher education programs and field placements (Black & Ammon, 1992; Breidenstein et al., 2001; Gallego, 2001; Powell, 2000). In fact, a search on the Social Science Citation Index, which lists articles that reference a given article, had ninety-eight references to this article. The references spanned nineteen years, from 1982-2003. It was a good place to begin my search to learn about preservice teachers learning about teaching.

Zeichner and Tabachnick’s (1981) article helped me maintain a more complex view of learning and field experiences. By keeping in mind many explanations for the changes in preservice teachers’ teaching from progressive to traditional, I can begin to look at learning that is occurring in the field and in the university classes.

The complexity of teaching is apparent. What is learned from Ziechner and Tabachnick’s (1981) article is that attention must be paid to what is happening in the university classes and what is happening in the field experiences. The link between preservice teachers and their learning to teach begins with an understanding of teacher knowledge and how it develops.

_Professional Knowledge_

In order to discuss preservice teacher learning, first I review my understanding of terms in the literature on teacher knowledge. In this section of the paper I discuss my understanding of those terms relating to teacher knowledge and preservice teacher learning.

_Declarative and Procedural Knowledge_

I begin my path of understanding learning in a cognitive psychology textbook. In a most basic sense, learning and memory storage are broken down into declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is knowledge about how things are, and procedural knowledge is how to do things (Ormrod, 1990). In this basic conceptualization of two kinds of
knowledge, I can begin to make sense of the complex ways of conceiving knowledge in the development of teacher knowledge, as preservice teachers become teachers.

**Narrative and Paradigmatic Modes of Thought**

Not only must I consider the memory storage and the different types of knowledge, but I must also consider the thinking of these preservice teachers as they learn about teaching. Jerome Bruner outlined two different modes of thought (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001). Narrative thinking comes in the form of story and acknowledges the stories that teachers share. Paradigmatic thinking is what researchers often rely on and operates by recognizing elements as members of a category (Polkinghorne, 1995). As a starting point for understanding preservice teacher learning, paradigmatic thought describes what some call the knowledge base for teaching, and narrative thought describes teachers' knowledge that is dependent on context and is often expressed as stories (Munby et al., 2001).

So what do these two differing views of thought and knowledge have to do with my understanding of preservice teacher learning? I understand that there is more to teaching than can be captured by the concepts of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. The simple binary of declarative and procedural knowledge does not include any consideration for context. However, the binary of narrative and paradigmatic thought does not speak to the benefit of considering declarative and procedural knowledge when learning how to teach and becoming a teacher. Understanding knowledge as declarative vs. procedural or narrative vs. paradigmatic modes of thought, is too simplistic for understanding teacher learning, so I consider broader concepts of teacher knowledge also, in order to form a more complex framework for preservice teacher learning.
In the next section I describe some commonly used terms in teacher education that are related to teacher knowledge. Each of these terms carries with it assumptions about teacher learning.

**Knowledge**

“Knowledge (n) the fact or condition of knowing something with a considerable degree of familiarity gained through experience of, or contact or association with the individual or thing so known” (Webster's, 2002). This definition is broad. In the area of preservice teacher learning and teacher knowledge, I have encountered more specific definitions of knowledge such as content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, theoretical knowledge, personal knowledge, and practical knowledge. In this section on preservice teacher learning I examine the meanings given to these types of knowledge.

**Content Knowledge**

Content knowledge is knowledge of subject matter. In a typical liberal arts program at a university, elementary education preservice teachers would be expected to have a broad base of knowledge. Depending on the certification requirements of their state, they would have taken some courses in the sciences, courses in math, courses in literature, arts courses, and social studies or history courses. These would be considered content knowledge, knowing about subject matter that is specific to that field.

**Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

If content knowledge is the subject matter, pedagogical content knowledge is knowing how that subject is learned by others, and how to teach that content knowledge to others. Shulman (1986) describes this knowledge as “ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (p.9). This formulation of subject matter into something
comprehensible to others is where teacher education programs pick up. For example, in an elementary teacher education program, preservice teachers may or may not learn new mathematics content, but they learn how children learn mathematics and ways to teach mathematics.

**Personal Knowledge**

Personal knowledge refers to the knowledge that preservice teachers have about themselves. Understanding themselves as learners and becoming teachers plays a role in their knowledge of themselves as teachers. The role of preservice teachers’ beliefs about learning, subject matter, and about students cannot be ignored while considering their learning to teach. Their beliefs about learning significantly influence what they learn in teacher education (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996). The origins of those beliefs may be personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge (Richardson, 1996).

**Practical Knowledge**

Practical knowledge relates to practices within classroom settings. Practical knowledge is interactive and sometimes referred to as thinking-in-action. First developed by Elbaz (1983) and then developed further by Clandinin and Connelly (1997), it is how teachers understand classroom situations (Munby et al., 2001). In a teacher education program practical knowledge would be highlighted as the preservice teachers enter field experiences.

Declarative and procedural knowledge are exemplified in the varying definitions of teacher knowledge I encountered in my review of research. I view content knowledge as declarative knowledge, because it is knowledge about how things are. With a deep understanding of content comes more theoretical knowledge about that content. I view pedagogical content
knowledge, theoretical knowledge, and practical knowledge as examples of both declarative and procedural knowledge because they show knowing about things and knowing how to do things.

If I connect these definitions to my earlier discussion on narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought, I would say that personal and practical knowledge are narrative modes of thought because they relate to the preservice or in-service teachers’ own learning and knowledge and are often articulated in the form of stories. I view content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and theoretical knowledge as paradigmatic modes of thought, as these types of knowledge are organized around key elements used to categorize and organize. Theoretical, content, and pedagogical content knowledge are all categorized by content to begin with, and the fact that they are separated into these categories to begin with, lends itself to paradigmatic rather than narrative thought.

Teacher Knowledge Research and What That Has to Do with My Research

What is reflected in the literature about preservice teacher learning and knowledge acquisition is the complexity of understanding what learning is. As teacher educators grapple with the complex process of learning to teach, more and more nuances for understanding the nature of teaching are revealed. My own assumptions about preservice teacher learning span all these definitions of knowledge. Content knowledge is important for any elementary teacher to have (Ball, 1999; Gaea, 2001). How much subject matter knowledge is necessary and how to assess it is difficult to determine because there are no good all-inclusive measurements available for assessing subject matter knowledge (Wilson & Floden, 2003). Important also, is a preservice teacher’s understanding of his or her own limits of knowledge and having the knowledge to pursue an understanding of new content. Understanding limits of knowledge and the ability to pursue new content ties into what was described as personal knowledge. If preservice teachers
understand themselves as learners, they will be able to gain more content knowledge as needed (Richardson, 1996). Practical knowledge addresses the need to be flexible and use context to determine how teachers use their content and pedagogical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge is the perpetual struggle in teacher education. When to teach theory, and how much theory to teach are difficult to ascertain, especially when preservice teachers would rather have the procedural knowledge (Kagan, 1992).

In returning to the dictionary definition of knowledge, the phrase “familiarity gained through experience,” is important to my own understanding of teacher knowledge. Practical knowledge addresses the type of knowledge I view as valuable for preservice teachers as they learn to teach. In my view, knowledge includes experience, which I see as important, and it includes knowledge of self, which I also see as crucial to becoming a teacher. Teacher education programs do teach content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, but experience and knowledge of self are important too. I believe that there needs to be a balance.

Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Knowledge

Teacher educators have used research on teaching to guide their programs (Munby et al., 2001), but research on what good teachers do is not the same as knowing how teachers learn to think and act in ways that contribute to their learning to be teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996). Typical teacher education programs begin with content knowledge and methods courses, and end with student teaching, but there is little research to support that as the best way to learn to teach (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996)

Content Knowledge

Many state the need for content knowledge as a teacher (United States Department of Education [U. S. DOE], 2001; Munby et al., 2001; Murray, 1996; National Association of State
Boards of Education [NASBE], 2000; National Board for the Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS], 2001; Sanders & Morris, 2000). Politicians, teacher educators and even teachers would agree that there is a need for content knowledge, no matter what you teach. The debate becomes more complicated when discussing teacher education and elementary education and the need for general content knowledge.

Content knowledge courses are not traditionally part of a teacher education program that is developed and taught under a college, or school of education. However, often methods courses depend on a general content knowledge in the subject to be taught. An example would be mathematics. A student may be required to take probability courses in the mathematics department of a college or university, because once they have begun an education course on teaching mathematics, they are expected to already know basic probability. Each state has different requirements for content knowledge of their teacher candidates, so even across states and schools, colleges and departments of education there is only some commonality regarding course-taking in the content areas (U. S. DOE, 1999).

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

The question remains, “what content knowledge is necessary for good teaching and what does it take to put that knowledge into teaching practice?” Pedagogical content knowledge was first introduced by Shulman (1986) and is a concept that helps to understand what knowledge it takes to put content knowledge into teaching practice. Some researchers call for intertwining content and pedagogy in learning to teach (Ball, 2000). A study in England on mathematics knowledge showed that preservice teachers or Initial Teacher Training (ITT) students who were confronted with their own deficit of knowledge in certain areas chose to disbelieve or ignore the poor results. The authors called for challenging the preservice teachers to accept gaps in their
content knowledge and ensure that they incorporate that subject knowledge into their perception of teacher competence (Sanders & Morris, 2000).

The Debate

Nowhere has the debate about how much content knowledge and how much pedagogical content knowledge is necessary in order to teach been more heated than when the Abel Foundation (Walsh, 2001) published their report on teacher certification. Their contention was that teachers do not need any education courses. They also felt that content knowledge alone was enough to teach. The author's review of literature found no credible research that supports the use of teacher certification as a barrier to teaching (Walsh). In a scathing reply to this document, Darling-Hammond (2002) addressed the misrepresentation of data and missing data from the report by Walsh. Darling-Hammond systematically used the same literature that Walsh used to show that teacher education does make a difference in student learning, and that it is the education courses that Walsh thinks are unnecessary, that do make a difference. Darling-Hammond’s paper prompted Walsh to make some changes in her report. The debate continued into discussions on teacher education reform as Cochran-Smith and Fries (2002) used the Walsh / Darling-Hammond “discussion” as an example of extending the dialogue with open debates about empirical evidence (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2002).

Bullough (2001) has little faith that pedagogical content knowledge will take root in preservice teacher education programs. He feels that teacher education research is divided between academics and professionals and therefore lacks the critical mass to make changes in established views of learning to teach. Ishler, Edens, and Berry (1996) describe the debate as a pendulum. Their review of literature found the focus changed in teacher preparation from liberal arts, to subject matter, to courses in how to teach. They close by saying that without consensus
among teacher educators on what the body of knowledge and skills are for teaching, it will be hard to ascribe a professional status to teaching.

*What the Debate Means to My Research*

My own beliefs about content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are deeply rooted in my own process of becoming a teacher that involved both my teacher education program and my student teaching experience. My liberal arts background at a competitive college provided the declarative and content knowledge that I felt I needed. My education courses were called methods courses and they provided highly procedural knowledge for me to use as a new teacher. I had little conception of what my role as a teacher was. There was little focus on me, and my own narrative of becoming teacher. My mom still laughs at the stories I tell about my first year of teaching, but I was not laughing in that first year. In my telling, I was beginning to make sense of the complexity of teaching. No one had opened my eyes to a paradigmatic approach to teaching, suggesting that things could be tried, reflected on, adjusted, and retried, a view that is more the reflective practitioner’s view of teaching and learning. I could tell stories about what I was doing, but I could not tie those stories into learning, teaching, and how to be a better teacher.

My own experience as a developing teacher demonstrates to me my own lack of pedagogical content knowledge. I believe it is imperative to have that knowledge as a preservice teacher. I do not, however, believe that a preservice teacher can walk away from a teacher education program with all the pedagogical content knowledge they need. More pedagogical knowledge is gained by continuing to teach. Pedagogical content knowledge is gained when a teacher begins to consider the context and students they are teaching, and as a preservice teacher that is hard to do. As I come to understand the role of pedagogical content knowledge in the
learning of preservice teachers, I must consider how to form a more complete picture of preservice teacher learning.

*Forming a More Complete Picture of Preservice Teacher Learning: Considering Other Forms of Knowledge*

There are researchers and practitioners who feel that content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge alone are not the way to view teachers’ knowledge. I examine some of these other forms of teacher knowledge such as practical knowledge, craft knowledge, and pedagogical content knowing.

*Practical Knowledge*

For those who believe that pedagogical content knowledge and content knowledge are only the beginning of the complex task of teaching, practical knowledge may be another form of knowledge to help understand teaching. Practical knowledge relates to practices within and navigation of classroom settings and highlights the complexities of interactive teaching and thinking in action (Munby et al., 2001). Research in the area of practical knowledge does not form conceptions of what teachers know but how teachers learn by teaching (Munby et al.). Preservice teachers are just beginning to build their practical knowledge, as their knowledge in practice is limited to the field experiences they may have. The assumption of practical knowledge is that teachers have a base of experiences from which to make choices and with the limited experience of preservice teachers in classrooms, they may not have a lot from which to draw.

*Craft Knowledge*

Another view of teacher knowledge is craft knowledge. First described by Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992), craft knowledge is defined as “a construction of situated, learner-focused,
procedural and content-related pedagogical knowledge” (p.393). Craft knowledge embodies teaching sensibility rather than a knowledge of propositions. It is knowledge in response to experience. Response to experience is a sensibility which comes from learning from teachers and practice-oriented researchers who study dilemmas inherent in teaching (Munby et al., 2001).

How do you explain the success of Vivian Paley (1990, 1992, 1997) and her books that are so popular with teachers? She uses language in her books that preservice and inservice teachers can appreciate, the narrative rather than the paradigmatic, to use Munby’s (2001) comparison. Her books demonstrate craft knowledge. Her writing reflects her teaching, that shows teachers’ judgments in events and practices from their own perspective or from the perspective of students (Grimmett & MacKinnon, 1992). Just like practical knowledge, craft knowledge is difficult to use to describe preservice teacher learning because preservice teachers often do not have the necessary experiences to draw on.

*Pedagogical Content Knowing*

As debates continue in teacher education about the importance of pedagogical content knowledge and content knowledge, Cochran, DeRuiter, and King (1993) suggest another view of learning: Connecting pedagogical content knowledge with a constructivist view of teaching and learning to form what they call pedagogical content knowing (PCKg). They define pedagogical content knowing as “a teacher’s integrated understanding of components of pedagogy, subject matter content, student characteristics, and the environmental context of learning” (p. 266). They add to the debate between the two types of knowledge (content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge) the necessary components of the student and the context to teachers’ knowledge. The idea that these components are interconnected and overlapping is important because that is the reality of the classroom. The teacher must consider all students, content, and
context as she teaches. A limitation of the notion of pedagogical content knowing is that personal knowledge is not considered. For me, a robust concept of teacher knowledge, and particularly preservice teacher knowledge, must include personal knowledge.

There is debate about pedagogy and content and few describe the need to form a more complete picture, or an interconnected picture, of teacher knowledge. No one disagrees that a teacher’s job is difficult; perhaps the knowledge that it takes to do the job well is difficult to explain also. I argue for an integrated view of the knowledge such as Cochran, DeRuiter and King (1993) convey with the concept of in their pedagogical content knowing, but I also argue for expanding their view to incorporate personal knowledge.

**Frameworks for Teacher Knowledge**

One difficulty in examining preservice teacher knowledge is that most of the theoretical frameworks address teacher knowledge. There is a big difference between teacher knowledge and preservice teacher knowledge. In order to understand preservice teacher knowledge, however, I must first examine the frameworks for teacher knowledge.

**Shulman’s Seven Categories of Teacher Knowledge**

In trying to conceptualize teacher knowledge, Shulman (1986) was the first to describe pedagogical content knowledge (Munby et al., 2001). His seven categories of teacher knowledge were (1) content knowledge, (2) curriculum knowledge, (3) general pedagogical knowledge, (4) pedagogical content knowledge, (5) knowledge of educational contexts, (6) knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and (7) knowledge of learners and their characteristics.

Shulman’s (1986) categories were helpful to delineate the difference between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. But I hesitate to use Shulman's categories as the
complete model for examining the becoming teacher because it was designed to understand teacher knowledge. Shulman leaves out personal knowledge as a part of teacher knowledge. Other researchers in teacher education have also tried to capture the complexity of teacher knowledge.

**Grossman’s Six Domains of a Typology for Teacher Knowledge**

Grossman’s (1995) typology focuses more on the integration and intersection of knowledge as teachers draw from the different domains (Munby et al., 2001). The domains are (1) knowledge of content, (2) knowledge of learners and learning, (3) knowledge of curriculum, (4) knowledge of context, (5) knowledge of general pedagogy, and (6) knowledge of self. Grossman’s typology addresses what Britzman (1991) felt needed to be added to teacher education, knowledge of self. She also suggests using narrative inquiry as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to explore teachers’ knowledge. Later, I discuss using narrative inquiry to study preservice teacher learning.

Shulman’s (1986) introduction of the concept of pedagogical content knowledge acknowledged the unique knowledge associated with teaching a particular content. Grossman (1995) added to that view of knowledge by pointing to the importance of knowledge of self. I see Shulman’s pedagogical content knowledge as a key part of teacher education, but teacher educators must also consider the knowledge of self for the preservice teachers. Preservice teachers are at a crossroads; they are not quite teachers and yet they are leaving the role of student. Although Grossman’s typology addresses the self, it does not accommodate the unique situation of trying to understand the preservice teacher’s knowledge as they learn to teach.
As I consider preservice teacher learning, an important part of that learning is dependent on reflective practice. In the next section of this paper, I discuss the relevant literature on reflective practice and preservice teacher education.

Reflective Practice

Reflection and reflective practice are now part of many teacher education programs. Some programs include reflection as the theoretical basis (Conway, 2001; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Korthagen et al., 2001; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) while other programs just include reflection as part of the learning process (Breidenstein et al., 2001; Collier, 1999). In 1990, The Handbook on Teacher Education (Houston, 1990) makes no mention of reflection. However, in the 1996 Handbook of Research on Teacher Education (Sikula, Buttery, & Guyton, 1996) there is a whole section of the chapter on field experiences devoted to reflection. Since The Reflective Practitioner (Schön, 1983) was published, reflection has become part of the profession of teaching also. Reflection-in-action are the words that Schön uses to describe reflective practice.

When someone reflects in action he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means, which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing, ratiocinating his way to a decision, which he must later convert to action. Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry. Thus reflection-in-action can proceed, even in situations of uncertainty or uniqueness, because it is not bound by the dichotomies of Technical Rationality. (Schön, 1983, p. 68)
Reflection-in-action as Schön (1983) describes and Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience are important for me to consider together. Although Schön has Dewey listed in his references only two times, I see a link between the two. Dewey’s principles of continuity and interaction in experience may be placed in the center of Schön’s concept of reflection-in-action. If every experience takes something from what came before and modifies those experiences that come after, then this is like reflection-in-action because there is no finite means to an end. Reflection-in-action is also like the principle of interaction of Dewey’s, because of the interactive nature of the problem solving set into a particular context. Both Dewey and Schön consider the individual as the center of the experience and reflection.

Dewey (1910) includes the following elements in reflective thinking “(a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief” (p. 9). This description of reflection also fits with Schön’s (1983) reflection-in-action, with doing at the center of reflection. Both Schön and Dewey place investigation and experimentation at the heart of reflection.

As teacher educators encourage the growth of reflective practitioners, next I consider the research base on reflection during preservice teacher education.

Reflection Research With Preservice Teachers

In teacher education I see reflection as an important piece to discuss. If a program has a strong tie to reflection as a part of the process of learning to teach, then I must consider what research has demonstrated about using reflection with preservice teachers. The program for the cohort of preservice teachers I am following includes reflection (Mewborn & Stanulis, 2000). The instructor, for the two semesters of the teacher education courses I studied, also had an
interest in fostering the preservice teachers’ reflections about their practices (personal interview, 2003).

**Characteristics of Reflective Thought**

Collier (1999) found three categories of reflective thought in student teachers as she tried to determine which reflective characteristics student teachers exhibited during their field placements. These categories include *technical rationality* that concerns effective application of educational knowledge and skills. She adopts the words that Schön (1983) uses to describe reflection. The second category is *practical action*, in which the student teachers describe an experience so that a certain theory or system is easily discerned. The third and final category is *critical reflection*. This type of reflection reveals open mindedness and includes moral/ethical and social considerations. The researcher found that most reflective thought was in the first and second category. Only one of four student teachers showed category three reflective thought. I would only use these categories as a beginning point for considering reflection of preservice teachers. These characteristics omit a consideration of context, which is important for my research. It is also missing temporality and knowledge of self, which are also part of understanding learning to teach.

**Anticipatory Reflection**

Typically reflection is thought of as something that you do after an experience. In fact we often use the phrase "think back on an experience." Some teacher educators believe that preservice teachers need to be taught how to incorporate anticipatory reflection in their learning to teach. This reflection happens before action (Conway, 2001). Conway used a story line methodology to study what happened when preservice teachers were introduced to anticipatory reflection. The story line method has been used to understand adult development and in teacher
education to explore experienced teachers’ remembered teaching experiences and their perceptions of professional identity. The preservice teachers graphically represented their experiences. The first line they drew represented their comfort level over their internship and they also projected into their first year of teaching. The second line was to reconstruct their anticipations over the internship before they began. He found that looking at their anticipation helped preservice teachers to make sense of their reactions and further reflections on their internship.

A Typology of Reflection

Jay and Johnson (2002) claim reflection has become an integral part of teacher education programs but there has been no single way it is incorporated into programs. The authors developed a typology of reflection that may be used in all teacher education programs. Using Dewey (1938) and Schön's (1983) definitions of reflection as a base, they formed three dimensions of reflection: descriptive, comparative, and critical. They feel by using these types of reflection, the typology may be used to teach purposeful thinking for better understanding (Jay & Johnson, 2002).

Collier (1999) and Jay and Johnson (2002) are similar in their desire to understand levels of reflection. Collier’s characteristics are centered more on the experiences in the field drawn from her research with student teachers. The Jay and Johnson typology is broader, and could include learning in university classrooms. Interestingly, both name one of their three categories critical. The typology calls for critical reflection to include viewing decisions from multiple perspectives. Collier’s (1999) research indicates that critical reflection happened less frequently.

As stated earlier, some teacher education programs place reflection at the center of their preservice teacher learning. No one disputes the need for reflective practitioners in the field of
education; instead what is discussed is how to teach preservice teachers to become reflective. As Collier (1999) said, “Often they are so distracted by the process of teaching, that they do not concede to the process of learning” (p. 179). But it is believed that, “reflection improves a teacher’s ability to make appropriate and sound judgments and, therefore, become an empowered decision-maker” (Han, 1995, p. 228).

The link between preservice learning and reflection is made apparent when the preservice teachers enter their field experiences. “Experience alone is not enough. It is the subsequent action associated with the experience which determines its value in the learning process” (Johnston, 1994, p. 207).

What makes an experience stand out from the flux of life is that something in particular happens that surprises us and through this, if we take what happens seriously, transforms us. In other words experiences re-members us, requires us to be a different person in a different place. Thus experience (and a good lesson) does not end in closure, but rather in openness (Field & Latta, 2001, p. 889-890).

After making a case for the importance of reflection in preservice teacher learning, I discuss the research on field experiences with preservice teacher education programs.

Field Experiences

Differentiating between student teaching and early field experiences is not always made clear by researchers as they report their research. For the purposes of the literature review, I use student teaching to refer to the prolonged and final phase of a teacher education program. For some programs, student teaching is the only field experience. For me, early field experience refers to any field experiences prior to the student teaching.
Until the *Handbook of Teacher Education in 1990*, most programs only reported using student teaching. It was about that time that there was an increased discussion about early field experiences, in part due to the Holmes Report of 1986 and the Carnegie Task Force of 1986 calling for teacher education programs to reform in order to help reform education in general (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Following the release of the Holmes Report and the Carnegie Task Force, a book was published on *Preparing New Teachers: Operating Successful Field Experiences* (Slick, 1995). Reading the book was like reading a how-to manual. There was little research used to explain the reasoning for developing early field experiences, but they were described as ways to “provide students with a realistic basis for deciding whether to pursue a career as a teacher (p.16) and “ provide students with opportunities to experience activities relevant to their preparation” (p. 18).

Recently there has been research on others types of field experiences beyond the traditional that have been integrated into teacher education programs. Traditional programs include one student teacher assigned to a mentor teacher or cooperating teacher in one school. Some variations are partner placements of interns with a single cooperating teacher (Bullough et al., 2002; Samaras, 2000) and field experiences outside the typical classroom (Gallego, 2001; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Each of these types of field experiences are so unique it makes comparisons difficult, so there are few comparative studies of early field experiences (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990).

*Research on Student Teaching*

There is simply not enough research on field experiences to make any claims on what might be the characteristics of high quality experiences (Wilson & Floden, 2003). To begin a literature review with this statement speaks to the difficulty in finding relevant research. Most
research on field experiences relates to student teaching (Collier, 1999; Johnston, 1994; Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Sanders & Morris, 2000; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson & Fry, 2004). In fact an entire issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* in 2002 was devoted to student teaching. The entire issue raised new questions about student teaching (Clark, 2002). Furthermore, in a review of literature on teachers’ knowledge and how it develops, authors claim, “It becomes more obvious that teacher education needs to reconsider the place of student teaching and the balance, chronologically and epistemologically, between the teaching experience and in-college courses” (Munby et al., 2001, p. 897). Some feel that there is no way to address the problems of learning to teach during student teaching under the current structures (Zeichner, 2002).

Research on student teaching is different from considering the early field experiences that are the focus of this research. Student teaching refers to prolonged experience in the field, and often this is the only time where preservice teachers take responsibility for teaching. “It appears that what occurs during the field experience is more important than the length of that experience“ (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996, p. 176). Little research is available on the early field experiences that are part of many teacher education programs. Wilson and Floden (2003) call the lack of research on field based experience “sobering” (p. 17). If teacher educators must consider the beliefs and attitudes that preservice teachers bring with them to their courses and student teaching (Richardson, 1996), then the early field experiences must also be examined.

Lack of Theoretical Base for Field Experiences

Many field experiences lack a theoretical base, although field experiences are a widely accepted component of teacher preparation (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Little is known about the effectiveness of models of delivery of field experiences (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). A more recent review of literature on field and laboratory experiences called for more research in teacher
education programs that are using new ideas for field experiences, such as cohorts, in order to find answers about what works best (McIntyre et al., 1996).

What We Do Know about Field Experiences

What is clear about field experiences is that preservice teachers view it as the most important part of their learning (Richardson, 1996), although they may not be learning what the teacher education program has set out for them to learn (Johnston, 1994). We do know that preservice teachers and cooperating teachers both feel the affective learning that takes place is equally as important as the practical knowledge they may learn. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) conclude, “It is not clear how early field experiences contribute to self knowledge. It is clear that many students view knowledge about themselves as a primary outcome of early field experience” (p. 516).

Concern about the disconnect between university and school is not a new one, and many years ago Title (1974) found that cooperating teachers and student teachers perceived that the most important factor during student teaching was the development of self-confidence. However, college supervisors and school administrators consider application of theory into practice as the most important issue during student teaching (Title). No one says that more clearly than a leader in the field of teacher education, “There is often a huge disconnect between the campus-based portion of teacher education programs and student teaching. Cooperating teachers and university instructors are often mutually ignorant of each other’s work and the principles that underlie it” (Zeichner, 2002, p. 61).

Call for Research on Field Experiences

As teacher educators began to expand field experiences beyond student teaching, researchers called for more research in that area.
Despite the overwhelming positive feeling about the efficacy of field experiences, there does not exist enough data to determine that extending field experiences, whether at the early field experience or student teaching stage, will develop more effective, thoughtful teachers than those prepared in shorter field experience programs. (McIntyre et al., 1996, p. 176)

Researchers recommend naturalistic inquiry because it regards field experience as a process and acknowledges the complexity of field experiences (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990). Field experiences are central to teacher education programs for teacher preparation. Currently student teaching is the central field experience that prepares teachers to take on a classroom. The newer trend of including early field experiences as a part of the program must be explored further.

In Summary

The complexity of learning to teach is exemplified in the broad base of research reviewed in order to place my research in the field of teacher education research. I began the review with Zeichner and Tabachnick’s (1981) article Are the Effects of University Teacher Education ‘Washed Out’ by School Experience? As early field experiences are key to my research this provided a place to begin my understanding of learning to teach.

The range of articles that contributed to my understanding went far beyond just research on field experiences. In order to situate my research, I included articles on teacher knowledge and the debates about content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. I included a discussion of pedagogical content knowledge and frameworks for teacher knowledge. I found that Shulman’s (1986) framework and Grossman’s (1995) frameworks regarding teacher knowledge do not address preservice teacher learning. Also included in the review was research on reflection, as it
is important in understanding preservice teacher learning and development. I concluded the review of relevant research with research on field experiences and student teaching.

The important ideas that I drew from my broad reading of the literature on preservice teacher learning are the concepts of narrative thinking (Polkinghorne, 1995), pedagogical knowing (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993), and reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). Narrative thinking guides my data presentation and analysis. Pedagogical knowing is at the heart of how I believe preservice teachers make sense of their experiences. Reflection-in-action is how they develop as teachers through their university coursework and early field experiences. These are important ideas for my research study as I return to them in the analysis and conclusion sections of the study.

In the review of literature I have discussed the theoretical investments that I have used to understand preservice teacher learning and field experience. I have discussed the interpretivist and constructivist aspects of my work. And finally I have discussed the relevant research on preservice teachers, reflection, and field experiences. I have made a case for using the theories I have chosen to support my work, and I have made a case for a need for research in this area.
CHAPTER THREE:

BETWEEN THEORY, RESEARCH, AND METHODOLOGY--THE RESEARCHER

I am a researcher. I am central to my research. I am part of the learning as I was the instructor for the preservice teacher participants in the study as they began the teacher education program. I am part of the data collection as I am the one who made decisions about gathering papers, interviewing participants, and observing preservice teachers in their field experiences. I am part of the analysis as I retold stories, and found meaning in their words. Placed after theoretical investments and research with preservice teachers, and before the methodology, I am between these chapters. Squeezed in the middle of heavily cited paragraphs with words drawn from teacher educators, researchers, and theorists before me, my own story is important for anyone to know. The reader must know me as learner, as teacher, as researcher and as teacher educator before they proceed any farther.

In chapter one I introduced the purpose of my research and where it fits into teacher education research. There are also personal reasons for conducting the research. I present narratives of my own learning as a way to introduce myself as researcher, to explain my personal connection to the research, and to begin using narrative inquiry. In the next chapter I elaborate on narrative inquiry and how it is part of my methodology for research, but here I use it as a way to introduce myself.

Learning

As I read drafts of my own work and as I read over sections of my research, one word is repeated. I must address how I view that word; learning. Learning is a process. Learning is
ongoing. Learning is something that has begun long before any formal schooling and will continue long after any degrees are conferred. As I describe what I view as the learning of these preservice teachers, I also address things that they learned outside the teacher education program. Most important is that I view learning as a process, and these preservice teachers were on their way to becoming teachers and learning along the way.

My own autobiographical writing, as I began the journey into understanding preservice teacher learning, explored some of my own experiences as student, preservice teacher, and then as teacher. It addressed my own learning. As an introduction to me as a part of the landscape of the research, I used some of that writing to explain my interest in the research and my own subjectivities. All names used are pseudonyms.

My Personal Connection to this Research

I am a teacher. I am now on a journey to become a teacher of teachers, but I will always be a teacher. My reasons for wanting to work with teachers come from my own school experiences, my teacher education experiences, and my teaching experiences.

My Own School Experience

Let me begin with my own grade school and high school. For me they are the same. I went to an international, private, Christian school that was also a boarding school. My school was in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains in India. As fantastic as that sounds, I have few other school experiences to compare it to. It was my life. I knew no other.

It is hard to begin to explain the experience to others. Although the school was a Christian school, we had students who came from many religious backgrounds: Indian and, Eastern religions, many types of Christians, Catholics and even Bahai’. We had our share of zealots and we also had agnostics, but most of us were trying to find our own way. In terms of
nationalities, when I graduated the school had 40 nations represented. Many were Indian, some were North American, some were from the British Isles and the rest were from various places around the world. We were affected by world events in unique ways. As Iran faced the revolution, we received many refugees in the school whose parents sent their kids away. The children did not speak English and they were virtually cut off from contact with their parents for safety reasons. I learned about English as a Second Language (ESL) as a child, and had many friends who learned English as a second language. As a child in elementary school, I remember two Bhutanese princesses in the dormitory. I also remember thinking it odd that a princess was being sent away to boarding school, but never considered it odd that I myself was there. We had Indian movie stars’ children, diplomatic children, business children, military children (from around the world), missionary children (me) and United Nations children. Some of the students were second-generation students. Their parents had attended the school and wanted their own children to experience what they had. The mix was amazing, now that I think back on the experience. But at the time, it was my world.

Add to the mix, the extraordinary setting. The school was nestled in a hill station community of the Himalayan Mountains. We called it the foothills, but the school was at an elevation of 6,500 feet. The school overlooked the Doon Valley. Each sunset was a picture that should be painted. The sun set on the winter line over the lights twinkling below, as though it were being slid into an envelope. The climate was mild for most of the year we were there. Our school calendar was different, as we closed the school down in the winter months because there was no heating. Our weekends involved hiking into the mountains and visiting the bazaar in town. We lived in relative isolation, with phones only in the business offices, no television and it was well before email was common. Weekly letters were required of all boarders, and that was
our lifeline to family and friends. There was one road and one school vehicle. In my twelve years of school I think I rode in it one time. It was a beautiful location in which to be isolated.

We were a community. The student body rarely exceeded 400. There were kindergarteners to twelfth grade students. Most of the students were boarders. The younger grades had fewer students and I graduated with a class of 50. Most of the boarders were in the upper grades, but I began boarding at the age of eight, which just happens to be the age of students that I taught most of my teaching career. I was always amazed that at that age I had been boarding, away from my parents. My experience there was nurturing, challenging and diverse.

Scene: The Researcher’s Story; Third grade at Woodstock School

Miss Ronda said, “I want to see your face when you open it.” She was referring to the birthday present wrapped up for me. It was my birthday in October of 1975. Miss Ronda was my third grade teacher. I was in a boarding school and this was probably the only present I would actually open on my birthday. My birthday had been celebrated with family, long before the actual date of my birthday, when the family was together.

As she waited for me to pull back the plain wrapping paper, I could tell that she was just as excited as I. Bright yellow cloth showed through. The package was soft and not very heavy. I finally saw why she was so anxious to see my facial reaction to the gift. It was a large smiley face pillow. A big yellow face smiled at me. The eyes and mouth expressed my own feeling.

I still have that smiley face pillow. It is a little ragged, the edges are slightly torn, and on the back of the pillow is my writing JENNY + TYLER; the name of the boy whom I had a crush on for years. I still run my fingers around the eyes every time I pick it up. Miss Ronda must have sewn the eyes by hand; each eye was made of a swirl of chain stitch. Even in third grade I understood how much she had put into that gift for me. What amazes me now, is knowing that
she made gifts for each of us on our birthdays. I don't remember any one else's gifts. But I know she remembered each person on his or her birthday.

Is she the reason I looked at education when I was in college? Did I run my fingers around that smiley face swirl as I contemplated what I wanted to do in my future? As I lay my head on that pillow did I think about what major to choose in college? I do not remember, but I do remember that pillow.

The teachers made the school. They were obviously committed, as the school did not pay much. The choice they had made to teach at the school was a choice that reflected their commitment to teaching. A commitment, I feel, that reflected a view of learning that goes beyond teaching in a classroom, to what goes on outside the classroom as well. Not only were the teachers involved in the lives of their students in a given subject, but they also became mentors and advisors for more personal parts of their students' lives, such as sports, extra curricular events, overnight stays as relief from dormitory life, and hiking trips into the surrounding mountains. I am still in touch with some of my teachers. There was a rite of passage; as you graduated, you began to use their first names, as though they went from being your teacher to being your friend. In 1984 I made that transition.

Once I left the close community of my school (I was there from kindergarten until twelfth grade), I attended college in Williamsburg, Virginia. I believe the culture shock lasted for two years. The students at the college were all intelligent and highly motivated. I fit into that part of the experience. But I did find it hard to relate to the students socially. I had little in common with most of them. I had no experience with the music, movies, or drinking that was so much a part of college life. I felt very much an outsider. I finally found my place as I entered the College of Education at the College of William and Mary. I stumbled into a class on teaching reading,
where we were required to tutor adults, and stayed in the elementary education program until I graduated with a B. A. in Elementary Education.

My Own Experience with Teacher Education

I had field experiences in two different schools. The placements were made for my language arts and math methods courses. I scheduled my time in the schools around my course schedule. In these early field placements I visited the same classroom throughout the semester for a couple of hours a week. I taught one or two lessons during my time there, and spent most of my time helping individual students as they worked at their desks. We learned about planning lessons in our campus classes, and about ways to teach reading and math. It is odd for me to think about my own teacher education now. What is it that I learned in those methods classes? I am not sure what we learned about teaching. I remember thinking that I was learning much more from my hours in the schools and from my mentor teachers than I was in the university classrooms. Which is what I hear my participants say in interviews, and what I read in their journals.

My student teaching experience in a third grade classroom was far from what I thought was a typical classroom. The school tracked students by reading ability, and Ms. Dott’s classroom had all of the most able readers. In fact she did little teaching, as it had been described to me in the textbooks and classes I had taken. I thought teaching meant standing in front of the whole class, giving directions, and pacing the classes’ activities. In her classroom, however, most of the students were independent and followed their own interests. I rarely saw Ms. Dott teach in a way that I thought teaching should look.

What I believe I was missing in my own teaching program was the ability to articulate my choices for what I wanted and needed to do in my classroom. Much of what I did in my own
classroom when I began teaching was done by intuition, it felt right and I felt that the students were learning from it. I think I lacked the ability to express my ideas about teaching in a way that showed pedagogical and content knowledge.

*Scene: Early Field Experience in a First Grade Classroom*

As part of the requirement for my Teaching Language Arts in the Early Childhood Classroom we kept a journal. The assignment was to write about the hours you spent in the classroom.

My journal from a day in October 1987 said,

> I finally did something different in the classroom. Mrs. Roberts wanted me to test the students on words they should know through the reading program. Starting with Buffy and Mack all the way to was and were. I started with her lower reading group. I was surprised to find that a couple of the students did not even know half of the words they had been reading in their books. Andy could not even distinguish between Buffy and Mack. I used some of the markings we discussed in class for the IRI (Individual Reading Inventory), I wrote down the errors they made so Mrs. Roberts could do some sort of error analysis if she wanted to.

On the day that I taught my language arts lesson to the students I wrote,

> Well, this was the big day. I was to teach a lesson. The students were already on a roll when I got there. I think what we discussed in class one day really rings true; you need to grab the children’s attention the minute they come in. While they wait for attendance, milk counts and lunch counts they lose interest. Once all that was taken care of and the board-work assigned I was given the time. I read “Where the Wild Things Are” and did a little dramatization afterwards. To put it mildly...the beginning went all right but the dramatization did not work.
The children weren’t cooperative and got almost too excited. I think I was a little too ambitious. I have to say they did like the story.

As a preservice teacher, I saw a variety of teaching models. I observed a first grade teacher who struggled with classroom behavior and who thought that colorful bulletin boards were a distraction from the prime goal of keeping students on task. In my view as a becoming teacher, it was important to have the behavior of the students under control before learning could begin. At the same time, I observed and was in awe of another teacher who had many things going on in the classroom. My journal from that time reflects my attempts to incorporate the things that I was learning in my college classes into the classroom I was visiting, but I did not seem to make those connections very well.

My own experiences in teacher education, as I was learning how to teach, shaped my interests in preservice teacher learning. I experienced struggles as I moved between campus classrooms and schools.

My Own Experience as a Teacher

My first year of teaching in 1988 was as close to hell as I have come. I thought that I was finally facing the real world. I had been sheltered long enough, had enough success in my life and now I had to face reality. It was my time. The outgoing principal had assigned the two new teachers the trailers at the back of the school. Our mentor was a third year teacher who was getting married and had little time and interest to help. I survived with the support of a phenomenal principal who allowed me to struggle and persist on my own terms. She only stepped in when I asked. And struggle I did. I did survive with the support of her and another first year teacher who helped me to realize that I was not alone in having these difficulties. The lowest point for me was when an administrator came from the central office to observe me. It
was required, as I was a non-tenured teacher. She tore me apart. Lesson, management, organization, and personality were all prey for her evaluation. My principal stood behind me and was so angry that when she became assistant superintendent of the district, she removed that requirement from the evaluation of teachers. That experience alone made me want to find a way to help new teachers find success.

Not all my experiences teaching were difficult. I began to get comfortable with each new year, each new class, and each new challenge. I stayed in Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools for five years. The school system was small with only one high school and all the schools reflected the ethnic diversity of the community. I felt a part of the learning community. I taught third grade with another teacher for three years. I focused on reading and writing and he focused on math and science. It worked well for me. I spent lots of time on literature. The school encouraged us to use trade books in the class, so that is all I did. I was able to try lots of things those years. We did journals, reading logs, buddy journals, Junior Great Books, discussion groups, we grouped by choice, by ability, by interest. I did reading and writing workshops in a wide variety of ways. I had a lot of freedom to try anything I wanted, and my principal supported me. I was encouraged and praised for trying new things and for sharing my successes and difficulties. In another year of teaching I collaborated with a special educator.

Scene: The Researcher’s Third Grade Classroom, Williamsburg, VA, Fall 1992

“How did you know that you should line the kids up like that?”

Denise asked the question. She was the teacher’s assistant for Diane. I worked with Diane and her special education students for math and science and social studies. I was the third grade teacher, with 24 of my own students. Denise wanted to know how I decided to line the kids up during a math lesson.
In our planning together Diane and I decided to work on number order. We taught together, we had the students work in groups, with different teachers, and we had worksheets the students completed. But they still seemed to be struggling.

Denise’s question floored me. I could not answer it. Why did I decide to make cards for the students with numbers on them? Why did I decide to line them up in groups of four first and then the whole class? I did not know why I had done those things, but Denise seemed to think that it was that decision, that activity, and that learning that made the students understand digits and place value.

I walked away from that lesson feeling pleased that I had impressed someone with my teaching. What I did not think about was what had led me to that choice? I still did not make those decisions openly, with open deliberation. In fact my plan book was almost always empty, aside from the pages I intended to read in the latest book for reading and the topic we were working on for math.

“Who taught me to teach this way? Where did I learn how to make those decisions?

The summer after my first year I attended the Eastern Virginia Writing Project, sponsored by the college. I fell in love with learning all over again, and that jump-started my Master’s Program. For four years I worked on my Masters in Teaching and a reading specialist endorsement. I have that certification but have not used it outside a regular classroom. Even as I left that graduate program, I felt I had so much more to learn. Each class had energized me to come back to my own classroom with new ideas and new strategies, or to see things from a new perspective.

Now I am back in education in a way that I feel I can make a difference, in the teaching of teachers. I am back in education, as a student so that I can begin to learn how to teach
teachers. I want to teach those teachers who are going to have face many challenges in their own classrooms, some challenges that I faced, and many that I have yet to face. They will be in classrooms that may look very different from what they expect, classrooms that may look different than any I taught, but where each child brings his unique self to the learning experience.

My experience as a student was very different than the students in my classroom ever experienced, and different still from any preservice teachers I may work with in the future. My own experiences as an elementary education major were different from those my participants encountered in their early childhood program. My experience as a teacher may be different than what my participants might encounter, and their careers may follow different paths than my own. I know that my experience has been and will be a part of who I am as a teacher and an educator. The meanings I made of my experiences are part of what has brought me to research with teacher education.

Weaving My Experiences Into My Research

As I look back on my own experiences as a student, I must be careful not to assume that my experience in learning is any more valuable or less valuable than the experiences that my preservice teacher participants have had in their own life. I must also consider the fact that I have never been a student in the type of classrooms that they are encountering in their programs. Central to my experience as a student was the school community, and the importance of teachers in my life. I value those parts of my schooling and must keep that in mind as I listen to stories from my participants about their own ideas of community, classroom, and teachers.

As I look back on the experiences I had as a preservice teacher in my field experiences, I know now that I learned from both the classroom teachers who taught in different ways. I do not think that I ever had the opportunity to talk about the way those two classrooms were different,
or the way that they were similar. The courses I took to prepare me to be a teacher never included a discussion across the different courses of elementary education content. Any sense that I made of those experiences was made on my own, without the intervention of a teacher educator. Oldfather and her colleagues (1999) describe this as epistemological empowerment, the process of constructing meaning. The fact that I am just beginning to make sense of it now, years later, makes it clear to me that those connections need to be made explicit in teacher preparation programs. I believe that if I had had the opportunity to reflect on my experiences in a classroom with other preservice teachers and with the support of a teacher educator, I might have had an easier time. I might have better understood how to apply, and not apply, the things that I was seeing in those classrooms. Preservice teachers must construct their own ways of knowing as they try to gain coherence in their personal experience (Cobb, 1996).

As I look back on my experiences as a teacher for ten years, as a preservice teacher and as a student, I bring with me struggles and successes that may or may not be part of current preservice teachers’ experiences. In looking at myself in this way, looking at my own experience as a student, as a preservice teacher and as a teacher, I hope to make explicit the personal qualities that come into contact with my research (Peshkin, 1988).

Those qualities that may come into contact with my own research are related to my experience as a student, my experiences as a preservice teacher, and my experiences as a new teacher. I value my own elementary education’s uniqueness, and the differences that were celebrated in my schooling, as well as the personal connections that were made by teachers with their students. In my own preservice teacher education I valued the hours I spent in classrooms, more than the hours on the college campus. As a teacher I still struggled with knowing why I thought something was right in my teaching choices. All of these qualities may come into contact
with my research in a very real way. But at the same time, they explain why I am at the heart of this research, and why I chose the questions I did.

My choice to place this section here, instead of in the traditional location with my methodology, was deliberate. My subjectivities are particularly relevant in relation to research literature and theories as well as being relevant to my methodology. My reading of the research in the field of teacher education and the theoretical understanding of experience led directly to my choices for methodology. My personal interest in the topic of early field experiences and learning to teach is rooted in my own experiences in learning to teach. My self-examination led to a methodology that allowed me to study preservice teacher learning in a way that fit my interests and my questions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe doing research narratively as going backward and forward. In the placement of this subjectivity statement, I demonstrate how I have gone backward into my own experiences in teacher education, and move forward to understand the experiences of a cohort of preservice teachers in an early childhood teacher education program.
CHAPTER FOUR:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

Earlier I mentioned that I used Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) work on narrative inquiry to inform my theoretical framework. Here I discuss how I use their methodology to understand preservice teacher learning. Clandinin and colleagues have drawn from narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997) to study preservice teachers. Other researchers have used narrative inquiry to study learning to teach in a wide variety of ways (Doecke, Brown, & Loughran, 2000; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Rushton, 2001; Rust, 1999).

Narrative inquiry is a particularly suitable methodology for exploring experience, a central focus of my study.

Education and educational studies are a form of experience. For us, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18)

My research is based on the early field experiences of preservice teachers and so I have used the ideas stated here to study those experiences narratively. In order to represent the multiple early field experiences I chose to represent them narratively.

Thinking about experiences narratively requires distinguishing between narrative inquiry and thinking according to the grand narrative. The grand narrative is the science of education
based on the observation and numerical representation of behavior, and it became the
unquestioned way of looking at things. Clandinin and her colleagues distinguish grand narrative
from their own narrative inquiry with the argument, "Experience happens narratively. Narrative
inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied
narratively" (p. 19).

Tensions in Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss the tension at the boundaries between thinking
according to narrative inquiry and thinking according to the grand narrative. They find five
specific tensions that influence their work: temporality, people, action, certainty, and context.
My work exhibits some of those same tensions, and therefore I conclude that narrative inquiry
methodology, including these components, is an effective tool for examining preservice teacher
learning.

Temporality

In order to capture the process of learning to teach, I “take for granted that locating things
in time is the way to think about them” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My research with these
preservice teachers is just one part of their learning to teach, and I give as complete a picture of
each part of their learning as I can, situated in the time it took place. This cohort of students had
progressed through an teacher education program at a specific time and through a specific
sequence. The temporality of that program provided one important way to think about their
learning to teach. "Any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied
future" (p. 29). For the preservice teachers these early field experiences were situated in their
own experiences in the past as a student, their experiences as they learned to teach, and their
plans for teaching in the future.
People

In narrative inquiry the researchers “take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 30). The preservice teachers were in a profound process of change. Their role as student was changing to become one of teacher. I paid particular attention to the stories they told as they experienced change. Missing from their discussion of the tensions is the interaction that may occur between people. Dewey (1938) addresses that clearly with his principle of interaction. Although it pertains to more than interaction between people, the ideas that every interaction takes something from and changes what is to come is especially important when viewing the tensions related to viewing experiences and people.

Action

“In narrative thinking an action is seen as a narrative sign” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 30). The action does not directly relate to meaning. “In narrative thinking, however, there is an interpretive pathway between action and meaning mapped out in terms of narrative histories” (p. 31). Interviews and observations conducted as part of my research were only part of the narrative. For example, the cohort of students developed rituals in their university classroom. As an observer, I had to understand the rituals as they fit into their learning and development of their community. I could not merely relate an event, without understanding the action in context. One of the rituals for the cohort was a read-a-loud. Each week a student chose and read a picture book to the rest of the cohort. An observer may think it odd that a 21-year old student sat in a chair, while twenty-four other undergraduate students were on the floor listening to a picture book written for elementary age children. But the action had meaning, if the narrative is told.
Certainty

Events and actions can be interpreted differently from divergent points of view. An event that I observed in a classroom had the meaning that I assigned to it. “There is a sense of tentativeness, usually expressed as a kind of uncertainty, about an event’s meaning” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 31). The meaning that the participants may have attached to that same event may be different. I entered the classrooms on the campus and at the schools as an observer, and any other observer or participant may have interpreted any event or action that I noted differently.

As the cohort of preservice teachers progressed through the university coursework for three semesters together, I noted that their roles began to change from students to teachers. Earlier, in my review of theoretical investments, I described Britzman's (1991) ideas of being marginally situated in two worlds that relates to this same idea. The instructor for the course may have described it differently. His goal was to have them claim ownership of the course to meet their learning needs, so he might have seen the change I interpreted as a change from student to teacher, alternatively as a fulfillment of that goal. Certainty is a particularly relevant issue also for preservice teachers who are trying to mediate between university "certainties," mentor teacher "certainties," and their own desires for "certainties" about how to teach.

Context

I feel that context is the most important tension that aligns me with narrative inquiry, because I also feel that “context is necessary for making sense of any person, event, or thing” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 32). The context that surrounded the study of preservice teachers learning to teach was complex.
Included also in my own understanding of context is the socio-historical context of the preservice teacher's own experiences in learning, and in learning to teach, as well as the socio-cultural context of all the schools where they are placed for their early field experiences. There was the context of their own learning, the context of the university, and the context of each field experience. By incorporating interviews throughout their experiences, by reading their reflections throughout their experiences, and by observing them in the field and at the university, I believe my research provided the context with which to tell the narratives of these preservice teachers learning to teach.

My own experiences in education and my own experiences in teacher education, as described in the Chapter Three, provided context to understanding the experiences of these preservice teachers had. My interest in their development stemmed from my experiences, my understanding of their experiences connected to the sense I made of my own learning to teach.

*Using Narrative Inquiry: Inward, Outward, Backward, Forward*

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) thinking about narrative inquiry is closely associated with Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience. As I also draw heavily from his ideas on experience, I feel that using many of their research process ideas make sense. Clandinin and Connelly's inquiry focuses on four directions or actions: inward, outward, backward, and forward.

By inward, we mean toward the internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality - past, present, and future. …to research into an experience – is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. Thus when one is positioned on this
two-dimensional space in any particular inquiry, one asks questions, collects field notes, derives interpretations, and writes a research text that addresses both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward, and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future. (p. 50)

My inquiry into the preservice teacher’s learning through experience reflected these four directions. Inwardly, I acknowledged the feelings, hopes, and reactions of the preservice teachers as they interacted with their field experiences. My questions during interviews encouraged the participants to elaborate on the feelings about the experiences. In an interview following a field experience I began by asking,

Tell me as much as you want, how you are feeling about becoming, how you feel, what is missing and that kind of thing. First, think about a specific time in your field experience where you felt like you were learning. (interview Vicki, 11/17/02, Block Two)

In another interview I asked a similar question, and the response I received contained a report of the preservice teacher’s actions, or outward direction as well as her inward reflections about her reactions and feelings in the situation.

He started crying and he got very embarrassed and he put his head down. And I went up talking to him….I mean he didn’t understand what we were asking for. And I just remember feeling, it made me feel really terrible because he didn’t understand what we were asking for. (interview Barbara, 3/31/03, Block Three)

Outwardly, my research attended to the conditions and activities within which these preservice teachers are learning. Each school placement was an important context to consider. As they were placed in three different schools for their three field experiences, each of these
contexts and the accompanying activities played an important part in my study. The university environment and activities also framed the preservice teachers’ learning.

The notion of backward and forward directions for actions also undergirds my study. In learning about teaching, these preservice teachers have related and connected stories of their own learning in elementary school in the past, are learning about teaching in the present at the university and the schools, and are making plans for their own classrooms in the future. In addition to that, each event they experience brings with it past, present, and future.

I said, if I am tired from thinking about this one little girl and wracking my brain trying to think of what it is that she needs and how people can get to her, what I can do in the short time I am here to help her, it was exhausting….I first had to reach the point of being so emotionally involved and then toward the end I was like, this is really tiring, this is really hard. And then looking back and like, oh well, you know you just have to learn to deal with it. (interview Anna, 11/17/02, Block Two)

Anna related her story to me in the present, but she is thinking of the past, and projecting into the future also. It exemplifies how the backward and forward directions in understanding experience were important to my study.

As a researcher studying experience, I base my thinking on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of moving beyond the two dimensional space of inquiry into the three dimensional space of narrative inquiry. Not only am I viewing continuity, interaction, but also situation. All of these contribute to understanding experiences narratively.

*Being in the Midst of Your Research*

Doing research narratively means that you are in the midst of you research. Locating yourself in the midst of the research makes it a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space.
“Temporality along one dimension, the personal and social along a second dimension, and place along a third” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Negotiation is part of narrative inquiry; negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating transitions, and negotiating ways to be useful. It is all part of being in the midst of your research. As I changed my role from instructor to researcher with these preservice teachers, I had to negotiate new roles in relation to my participants. Later in this chapter I specifically address my role as researcher. As the research evolved to follow these preservice teachers in their early field experiences within the program, I had to negotiate and explain my purpose. I also negotiated transitions, such as what my research questions were and how to find information that helped to answer those questions. I negotiated how to be useful within the context of the university classroom, and for the participants who still viewed me as someone with knowledge about teaching.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe immersion into the field of your research as living life on the landscape.

In order to join the narrative, to become part of the landscape, the researcher needs to be there long enough and to be a sensitive reader of and questioner of situations in an effort to grasp the huge number of events and stories, the many twisting and turning narrative threads that pulse through every moment and show up in what appears to the new and inexperienced eyes of the researcher as mysterious code. (p. 77)

For me, living the life on the landscape was being the instructor as the participants began their first class at the university. It was joining their teacher education class as they began to form a community. It was observing them in the classrooms where they were placed for field experiences. And it was being a part of the preservice teachers’ discussions on an electronic
mailing list. Living the life on the landscape produced a wide variety of data. Clandinin and Connelly provided a way for me to view all that data.

The next table (Table 1) provides a summary for the way in which I view the tensions described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and how they pertain to this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tension</th>
<th>Temporality</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Certainty</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) Narrative Inquiry</td>
<td>&quot;Locating things in time is the way to think about them&quot; (p. 29). &quot;Any event, or thing, has a past, a present, as it appears to us, and an implied future&quot; (p. 29)</td>
<td>&quot;It is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process [of personal change]&quot; (p. 30).</td>
<td>&quot;An action is seen as a narrative sign&quot; (p. 30)</td>
<td>&quot;Interpretations of events can always be otherwise&quot; (p. 31).</td>
<td>&quot;Context is ever present….context is necessary for making sense of any person, event or thing&quot; (p. 32).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Research: Living Life on the Landscape</td>
<td>This includes moving back and forth in time for instance looking back into the preservice teachers' personal biographies (and mine as a researcher).</td>
<td>The preservice teachers are in the process of learning to teach and in the process of becoming teachers.</td>
<td>The actions that the preservice teachers took were interpreted narratively.</td>
<td>I acknowledge that these narratives are my interpretations of the events.</td>
<td>The unique context of each early field experience is described in the narratives presented in Chapter 6.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Field Texts

Field texts are what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use to “aid the inquirer to move back and forth between full involvement with participants and distance from them” (p. 80). Field texts “help fill in the richness, nuance, and complexity of the landscape, returning the reflecting researcher to a richer, more complex, and puzzling landscape than memory alone is likely to construct” (p.83). The range of possibilities to include as field texts is what drew me to using them in my own research. Clandinin and Connelly include teacher stories, autobiographical writing, journal writing, field notes, letters, conversations, research interviews, family stories and stories of families, documents, photographs, memory boxes and artifacts, and life experiences as sources for field texts.

In my own research I used a range of these texts. I used participants’ journals, that included teacher stories, my own journals, autobiographical writing throughout the research, letters, field notes from observations, notes on conversations with participants, photographs, and interviews to help me write about the preservice teachers' learning from experience. As I leave my discussion of field texts in Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) work of narrative inquiry, I begin my discussion of my role in the research process and those data collection processes I used to study the preservice teachers’ learning through early field experiences.

Researcher’s Role and Relationship with Participants

While living life on the landscape of the research, my role changed. I began the study as a full time student in the Elementary Education program with a graduate assistantship. My assignment for that assistantship was instructor for the initial course for the teacher education program (Block One). A cohort of twenty-five preservice teachers entered my classroom, as I entered into my new role of teacher educator. During that time I was responsible for coordinating
their field placements at a local elementary school. I was responsible for all class meetings, discussions, and assignments. I was also responsible for assigning grades in both the field experience portion and university portion of the course. The class met once a week for one hour and the preservice teachers were also responsible for spending one hour a week in their field placement.

After the initial semester in the program, my role changed. I became a part-time graduate student who lived a six-hour commute away, and I was no longer a graduate assistant. My research with the cohort continued. A fellow graduate student became the instructor for the next two semesters of instruction for these preservice teachers in their teacher education courses. The instructor for the course was a colleague and friend. He allowed me access to the university courses and to the assignments from the whole cohort. All members of the cohort consented to be part of the study, and the instructor facilitated my access to the data from the preservice teachers by making copies of assignments and saving their weekly university class reflections.

Early in the second semester (Block Two), I contacted the instructor and suggested adding me to the cohort's electronic mailing list, and then requested volunteers to be interviewed about learning to teach. Five volunteers became the focus participants for the study. During the second and third semesters of their program (Block Two and Three) I interviewed these participants three times. My understanding of this subgroup of preservice teachers' development became deeper than the understanding I developed of the group as a whole because of these repeated in-depth interviews.

The willingness of the participants to share a part of their learning was the single most important part of the research. The stories of other preservice teachers who were not so open to
discussing their learning are of course missing from the study, which means I am only hearing and am only able to tell part of the story of a cohort of preservice teachers learning to teach.

Later I introduce the cohort with scenes from each Block of their program. The instructor of the course is also a part of that narrative. Each of the focus participants are also introduced narratively.

Data Collection Processes

The data collected over the three semesters were vast. Table 2 depicts the time line for data collection over three semesters. The data were also layered. Later in this chapter I return to an in-depth discussion of the layers of data. Some data were collected from all participants, while other data were collected only from the five focus participants. Due to the change in circumstances of my own graduate program, the ease of gathering data changed. I no longer could copy everything I wanted, I only had access to the documents that I knew about ahead of time. The data collected on the whole cohort diminished considerably. The observations of the preservice teachers in the field were much more restricted, as the time I had scheduled was the only time I could make it. There were no impromptu observations of the participants. Everything was scheduled well in advance. The first months of data collection were much more contextualized than the last.
Table 2: Data Collection and Timeline

| Phases of the Study
Field Experience and Coursework | Data Collected |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Block One – EDEC 4010 – Spring 2002 | 25 participants:  
Journals from all members of the cohort re: their field experience  
Reaction papers to reading assignment  
Electronic mailing list responses to questions  
Other written class reflections |
| Block Two – EDEC 4020 – Fall 2002 | 25 participants:  
Written reflection sheets from university class time  
Statements of teaching and learning (assignment from instructor)  
5 focus participants:  
2 interviews with each participant, one before the field experience and one following the field experience  
Researcher:  
Field notes from two observations of the university classroom |
| Block Three – EDEC 4030 – Spring 2003 | 25 participants:  
Written reflections from each university class  
Critical incidents reports from the field experience  
Revised statements of teaching and learning (assignment from instructor)  
5 focus participants:  
Interview following their field experience  
Two observations of each participant in the field  
Portfolios demonstrating use of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards  
Researcher:  
Field notes from two observations of the university classroom |

I made a decision after the second semester of collecting data from this cohort of preservice teachers (Block Two) that I would follow these preservice teachers through their entire program. While continuing the collection of data I began my review of literature on preservice teacher learning and field experiences. The literature review revealed a gap in understanding early field experiences. Although I would follow the cohort through their entire program for early childhood teacher education, I made the choice to include only the early field experiences for this study. I also made the choice to include university coursework from their
early childhood classes. The reason for this is two-fold. One, I wanted to understand learning outside the context of methods courses. In my autobiographical narratives I mention that I felt that was missing in my own teacher education program. Two, I was already overwhelmed with data collected and did not want to negotiate more data from other courses in their program. The early childhood course provided time for the cohort to make sense of their learning in other courses, so I made the choice to include only that course in the study.

I provided a brief overview of the data collection process and next I describe the types of data collected for the study.

*Interviews*

Interviews are conversations with a purpose, says Dexter (1970) (as cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In my study the purpose for the conversation was “…here-and-now constructions of persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns, and other entities; reconstructions of such entities as experienced in the past…” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 268).

The interviews were informed by phenomenological theory. “Phenomenology is interested in elucidating both that which appears and the manner in which it appears….Phenomenology attempts to get beyond immediately experienced meanings in order to articulate the prereflective level of lived meanings, to make the invisible visible” (Kvale, 1996, p. 53). The interviews conducted with the focus participants attempted to go beyond the experiences they described and make meaning of those experiences as they talked. With this approach to interviewing I used open-ended questions, with the task being to explore a participant’s response to a question, and reconstruct an experience (Seidman, 1998).
experience was at the heart of my research, phenomenology became a natural way to explore those experiences from the perspective of the preservice teachers.

For each interview I had a list of questions to help me keep on track and to focus the conversation. They were guiding questions but not the only questions asked, and were not addressed in every interview either. For each interview the interview guide changed as I refined my interviewing skills.

*Interview One*

The first interview with the five focus participants at the start of their second semester of teacher education (and before their field experience) was scheduled through email. I had my name and email address added to the electronic mailing list that was monitored and used by the early childhood instructor and also by the academic advisor for the program. I asked for volunteers and received responses from five members of the cohort. I emailed each of those participants and scheduled a time to interview them.

I interviewed them September 14, 15, and 16th, 2002. The interviews took place in the building where a majority of their courses were taught. The preservice teachers were all aware of my changed role from instructor/researcher to researcher due to my observations of their university classroom. These observations are mentioned later in this section and used for writing the narrative of the cohort. The research question at the time was: How do preservice teachers make sense of their experiences and learning in a university early childhood course and field experiences as they become teachers?

Guiding questions for the interview were:

- What did you learn about teaching in your teacher education course so far?
- What did you learn about learning in your teacher education course so far?
- What has been an important learning experience for you in this course?
- What has been an important teaching experience for you in this course?
• Describe something that happened this semester that has shaped your idea of what learning and teaching is all about?

Other interview questions after observing the university classroom were:

• How do your classroom norms work?
• What did you bring for the brown bag bio? Can you tell me about them?
• What do they mean to you in terms of teaching and learning?
• Michael (the instructor) called your class a community of learners, can you tell me a little more about that, and what that means to you as a becoming teacher?
• Can you tell me about an example news article from "media watch" and what that means to you as you learn about teaching and learning?
• Tell me about your "Bull’s Eye". What is in your "comfort zone" as you think about heading out to the school? What are your areas of "risk and caution"? What are your "danger zones"?

I transcribed four of the five interviews completely. As one of the interviews did not tape, I have only notes from that initial interview.

Interview Two

The second interviews followed Block Two's four-week field experience. Again, I made arrangements to meet the five focal participants through email. All five continued to be interested in talking to me. The interviews took place November 16-17th, 2002. The research question guiding the interview was: How do preservice teachers make sense of their learning in their courses and field experiences?

Interview questions guiding the interviews were:

• I would like you to think of a time in your field experience that you learned something and describe it.
• I would like you to think of a time in one of your courses that you learned something and describe it.
• Tell me about a link you made between your course learning and your field experience.
• You told me about your comfort zones in our first interview. What are your new comfort zones?
• What are your new risks/cautions?
• What are your new danger zones?
• Tell me about something you still feel like you need to learn.

All five interviews were taped and then transcribed fully.
Interview Three

The third interview followed the field experience for Block Three. Three interviews took place on March 30 and 31st. One interview took place on May 2nd. They were all held in the university building where most courses are taken. The research question at the time was: What is the role of early field experience in preservice teacher learning as they negotiate their changing role of student to teacher and learner to teacher?

The guiding questions for this interview were:

- Tell me about a day during your field experience that you remember particularly well. Tell me why you remember it.
- Tell me about a time that you felt like a student during your time in the field.
- Tell me about a time that you felt like a teacher during your time in the field.
- Tell me about a time that you felt like you were learning during your time in the field.
- Tell me anything that has happened since your field experience that makes you feel like a teacher or a student.
- Tell me about your goals for learning during your student teaching.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. In summary there are three interviews with each of the five focus participants (except one interview that did not record). Each of the interviews had a different focus as I learned how to interview and as I refined my research and interview questions.

The evolution of the interviews and the interview questions provided a window into my own understanding of preservice teacher learning. As I began to learn more about my participants, I continued to learn about how preservice teachers learn to teach. It was through the reciprocity that I narrowed my focus. My first research question was so broad that I struggled in the interviews to find focus. I knew that I wanted to research preservice teacher learning, but my early questions, such as “tell me about something you have learned in a course so far?” Took me down many conversational paths that did not interest me. Using the university observations as a basis for interview questions, such as “tell me about your brown bag biography” helped me to
know more about my participants and their understandings of concepts and activities in their university course, but did not specifically lead me to what I was interested in researching.

Later my interview questions became more connected to my research questions. As my focus turned to the early field experiences of preservice teachers, my interview questions became more focused on experience too. In my second and third interviews the questions led me into more rich descriptions of events during the field experiences. In the first interviews, I had participants telling stories of their own time as a student, and some of their own teachers, which is consistent with the forward, backward ideas underlying my methodology. Once again, that information was important for me to complete a better portrait of my participant, but did not necessarily contribute to my understanding of what they were learning in their field placements, especially as it related to university coursework.

The evolution of my research is demonstrated in the evolution of my interview questions. As I refined my skills as a researcher, so my interview questions were refined. I learned as I conducted this research, not just learned about my participants and their learning to teach, but learned how to research too.

**Participant Observations**

A major advantage of the interview is that it permits the respondent to move back and forth in time – to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future, all without leaving a comfortable armchair. A major advantage of direct observations, on the other hand, is that it provides here-and-now experience in depth….Observation is a powerful tool indeed. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 273-274)

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) so eloquently state and which coincides with Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) directions of inquiry, observation is a powerful tool for a researcher.
Observation allows the researcher to use himself/herself as a means for collecting data and using any notes, thoughts, reflections, and comments as data also.

First, observations take place in the natural field setting instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; second, observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview. (Merriam, 1998, p. 94)

For research that is aimed at understanding the process of learning to teach, observing the preservice teachers in the university classroom, and the schools, is the natural setting. It provided a firsthand account of phenomena so that I was not limited to my participants' reports of events and could contextualize their narratives in actual knowledge of the contexts they described.

Observations were conducted on the whole cohort during their university classroom time and observations were also conducted with the five focus participants as they were in their field experience during Block Three. In the university classroom, my role was that of observer although I participated in some of the group activities and discussions. For example, the instructor was a colleague of mine, and occasionally invited my participation when questions arose during class that I could answer. On the first day of class in the second semester, I participated in some of the community building activities. I was after all, a former member of the community, as their former instructor.

Most of my observation time was spent taking notes. In my observations at the schools my presence was always noted by the preservice teacher, mentor teacher, assistant teachers in the classroom, and even by the students. My role was primarily to take notes, but many times I became a part of the discussions or the activities that were being conducted. In the classrooms where I visited to observed the interns, I was usually introduced, by the intern, as a friend or as a
former teacher. The students in the classes were often curious about what I was writing down. Sometimes I was asked to tie a shoe or read a word for a student that I was sitting next to. After observing one participant read a story aloud to a class, I shared the name of another book by the same author. My presence was noticed in every classroom I entered.

*University Class*

As I was the instructor for the cohort at the onset of the program in Block One, I have field notes and my own research journal with data from the initial semester in the program. Later in Block Two and Three, I visited the university where the cohort met for EDEC 4020 and 4030. These were the course numbers for the early childhood courses in Block Two and Block Three. I visited during the Block Two semester on two occasions. I was there for the first day of classes on August 19th, 2002 and on November 18th, 2002. I spent the full two-hour duration of the class observing. In Block Three I visited the class on two occasions. I visited on February 17th, 2003 for four hours, and I visited on April 1st, 2003 for one hour. During each observation I took notes on a legal pad, noting times, actions, some discussions, and some of my own initial thoughts and reflections. Immediately following the observations I expanded the field notes and typed them on the computer.

*Field Experience Observations*

I observed each of the five focus participants in their field placement two times during Block Three. They were in the field for only four weeks so the observations took place on the first day of their placement, February 18th, 2003, and in the third week of their placement, on March 7th, 2003. The purpose of the observation was to see the roles the preservice teacher took in the classroom.
For the first observation of the participants, only three of them were with their assigned class when I went to observe. One of the school systems involved in the program had a remediation week of teaching scheduled during the field time for the preservice teachers. Two of the focus participants were assisting in that program, but not with their assigned mentor teacher. One participant's schedule was such that I did not observe any classroom time, just playground time and a little of lunch. I did two participants in their assigned classroom with their assigned mentor teacher. Those observations lasted for one hour each.

For the second scheduled observation, the purpose was to see if the role the student teacher took in the classroom had changed. It was in the third week of the four-week field assignment. One preservice teacher was not at the school as he was sick, so there was no second observation of him in the school setting. All others were observed for one hour each.

**Documents**

During all phases of the program, documents were collected. Merriam (1998) describes this as mining data from documents. Documents may be produced for other purposes than the research, but they may shed some light on the research questions. Most documents collected as data were *personal documents*.

Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world. But because they are personal documents, the material is highly subjective in that the writer is the only one to select what he or she considers important to record. (Merriam, 1998, p. 116)

The purpose for using personal documents was to provide another way to hear the participants’ voices. Gallego (2001) notes that data from the preservice teachers is of primary consideration when making conclusions about the role of early field experience. The personal documents used
as data for the study were field experience journals, university classroom written reflections, written assignments for university courses, and even a final portfolio demonstrating use of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in their field experiences.

The other type of documents used as data were *public documents*. These would include information about the schools, syllabi for the courses, and information on the teacher education program at the university. The purpose for using documents such as these was to provide rich context for describing the field experiences and the university classroom.

*Summary of Data by Participant*

Table Three summarizes the data used for each participant. Generally the data sources across participants were the same; the only variation was in the amount of observations or interviews.

Table 3. Summary of Data By Focus Participant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jake</th>
<th>Anna</th>
<th>Vicki</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Becky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews:</strong></td>
<td>2 (in Block Two)</td>
<td>Interviews: 3 (2 in Block Two and 1 in Block Three)</td>
<td>Interviews: 3 (2 in Block Two and 1 in Block Three)</td>
<td>Interviews: 3 (2 in Block Two and 1 in Block Three)</td>
<td>Interviews: 2 (1 in Block Two and 1 in Block Three)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations:</strong></td>
<td>(Block Three)</td>
<td>(Block Three)</td>
<td>(Block Three)</td>
<td>(Block Three)</td>
<td>(Block Three)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekly reflections:</strong></td>
<td>(Block Two and Three university class)</td>
<td>(Block Two and Three university class)</td>
<td>(Block Two and Three university class)</td>
<td>(Block Two and Three university class)</td>
<td>(Block Two and Three university class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Portfolio:</strong></td>
<td>(Block Three including NBPTS standards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Block Three including NBPTS standards)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Data analysis is constant and ongoing, beginning with initial data collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 1998; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once I began collecting data in the spring of 2003, I began data analysis.

It would be tempting to view this overall process of analysis and interpretation in the move from field texts to research texts as a series of texts. However, this is not how narrative inquiries are lived out. Negotiation begins from beginning to end. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132)

I searched books and articles to find a method to begin my analysis of the vast data corpus I had compiled. As I read, I continued to write narratives, and began preliminary analysis in my own journal. I turned back to Clandinin and Connelly's book *Narrative Inquiry* (2000). They do not have a step-by-step analysis section; instead I found the things they were saying should happen as you begin to move from data collection, to field texts, to research texts were all things that were happening as I made the same move from data collection to writing research texts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say, "as we make the transition from field texts to research texts, questions (such as Who cares? and So what?) reemerge" (p. 120). In my journal I write, "I took the day off from writing because I am not sure what to write next. I must keep my questions in mind. I am still stuck on analysis. What is analysis here?" (researcher's journal, 10/27/03).

Another rereading of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) connected my thoughts about my own research as I struggled with the use of narrative inquiry as a method. They write, "Another question of justification that reemerges as we make the transition from field texts to research texts concerns the question of why we selected narrative inquiry for our inquiry" (p. 123). My own journal reflects this same concern when I write, "Narrative Inquiry: where a story displays
the data. How do I do that when I have participants with very different stories to tell?" (researcher's journal, 10/29/03). The most important thing I got from rereading the Clandinin and Connelly text was their focus on experience. I returned to the three dimensions for considering experience: interaction, situation, and continuity, and used these concepts in my analysis process.

In every qualitative research class I heard the same refrain, "there is no easy way to do analysis. It is messy." Hubbard and Power (1999) say, "the murkiness of data analysis is what scares any researcher" (p. 117). Each researcher may have to find his or her own way through the data into analysis. Hubbard and Power continue by saying, "you just need to trust your ability and find an analysis process that works for you" (p. 118).

Once all the data were collected I stepped back from data for a while. As I worked on the first three chapters of the dissertation I stayed away from reading, rereading, or organizing the data. Then in order to get back into the data, I reviewed all the weekly reflections sheets from all the participants in the university class. During class periods on campus, each preservice teacher wrote a reflection of the time spent together. The instructor saved those for me to use for my research. Most of these were dated and were signed. If the reflection sheet was not signed then I could not attribute it to a specific preservice teacher. I used a spreadsheet with headings to organize the data (see Appendix A). The fields included in the spreadsheet were, pseudonym, narrative chunk, category, data source, date, and Block. I excerpted chunks of data from these reflection sheets and typed them on the computer into a spreadsheet under the field narrative chunk. Narrative chunks that were not included were reflections that did not relate to learning to teach, university teacher education course, or field experiences. Some of the categories I identified were field, community, connections, learning history, National Board of Professional
Teaching Standards (NBPTS), peers, reflection, and religion. I used the data and analysis process to help write the situation and context narrative pieces.

Next, I began with the focus participants. I needed to introduce those participants and use data to do so. In order to organize that data I designed a spreadsheet with the following headings: participant (pseudonym), narrative, data source, category, property, date, and block (see Appendix B). I read through the whole folder of data I had from each of the focus participants. Each folder was in three parts, one for each semester (Block) of the program. Then I selected chunks from all the data sources to include on the spreadsheet. Chunks selected related to providing background information for introducing the participant, descriptions of events in the field or in the university class, descriptions of processes in learning to teach such as reflection, and interactions between people both in the field and in the university classroom. Not all data were included on the spreadsheet.

As I entered the narrative chunks of data onto the computer sometimes I would assign a category. But many times, I would print out the data sheets and reread the narrative in order to decide what category to assign. Some of the categories I identified were role, peer, students, reflection, community, culture, evaluation, and mentor teacher. Some of the data crossed the categories; for example if the narrative chunk related to both the mentor teacher and the role the preservice teachers felt he or she took, I used both categories to code the data.

Once all the data were entered onto the spreadsheet, I wrote introductions to the participants using the categories. Later I used these categories to analyze the data on the focus participants' early field experiences. I used the coded narrative chunks to find support and examples in both my narratives and in my analysis.
I wanted to tell the “whole” story of one preservice teacher in her early field experiences. I felt if I broke apart her interviews, observations, and reflections into chunks, it would be harder to tell it as a complete story. I did not review her data in the same manner, with spreadsheets and categories. Instead I wrote her narrative chronologically using all the data. I read, reread, and wrote field texts to tell the narrative of one preservice teacher as she progressed through early field experiences in her teacher education program. Telling the story of one participant’s learning to teach may help to focus the issues and assertions I am trying to bring forward. By examining one participant closely, yet not losing sight of the context for that learning, I hope to provide concrete examples. June’s story stood out as a particularly provocative. Later I draw a more in depth analysis of her story.

The next phase of data analysis, involved a closer look at each Block of the program. As I began analysis I realized that I had different data for each Block. In Block One I had data collected from the whole cohort as my research focus at the time was on the whole cohort and my interactions with them as their instructor. In Block Two as I refined my research interests I involved focus participants in interviews, but at that time did not include participant observations in my methodology. Finally in Block Three, I added participant observations and included the critical incidents in the data collected as I understood which course assignments would produce rich data. As I learned the research process, and as I focused my questions, the data collection and data analysis were affected also.

The description of my analysis process leads to my unique perspective of viewing this cohort's learning to teach in multiple layers. Next I explain in detail this layered look at the data collected over three semesters of an early childhood teacher education program.
A Layered Look at the Data

The data collected over the semesters from the cohort was vast. I have made a graphic representation of the data (see Figure 3). The outer circle represents the cohort. The data collected from the whole cohort represents the learning of the group across the three semesters of their early field experiences. The next layer is the five focus participants. Through interviews and observations I begin to focus on what the preservice teachers were learning from experience. The final layer is the inner circle, the story of one participant as she learned to teach from her early field experiences. In order to share how the process of learning unfolded I began with the contextual information from the whole cohort, the outer layer, then I shared the focus participants’ learning, and finally one story provided a more complete picture.

All three of the layers became part of the dissertation. Later a narrative from each layer is presented. The narrative pieces played an important part in my analysis. Once the narrative pieces were written I began further analysis of the preservice teachers' learning to teach. I returned to the categories from Dewey (1938) and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) views on experience. I chose to begin the process of making sense of the data by using their principles of interaction, continuity and situation. Table 4 shows my initial thoughts on analysis and connecting analysis to Clandinin and Connelly.

I found connections between these three principles, and the all data coded in earlier sessions with data organization and reorganization. Some of the categories are headings from the spreadsheet organization of data I had conducted earlier. Many of the categories related to community or the context of where the preservice teachers were learning. I placed these under situation. Some of the categories had to do with the relationships the preservice teachers had with students, mentor teachers and peers so I placed these under interaction. Finally, the
categories that dealt with themselves learning, and their personal reflections I placed in *continuity*. From these broader categories I began analysis of the narratives and their experiences in these terms.

![Figure 3. A graphic representation of the layers; whole cohort, five focus participants, and single story.](image)

Data: journals, responses to reading, researcher’s journal, critical incidents (Block Three)

**OUTER LAYER:** 25 participants: Cluster A cohort (Spring 2002 – Spring 2003)

**MIDDLE LAYER:** 5 Focus Participants (Spring 2002-Spring 2003)

**INNER LAYER:** one participant - June (Spring 2002-Spring 2003)

Data: Interviews (3), reflections, portfolios, email, observations
I have explained how my analysis began and how I proceeded through my own system of making sense of the data. In the next section I acknowledge the limitations and potentials of my study.

Table 4. Chart Representing the Connection Between Dewey's Principles of Interaction and Continuity and Clandinin and Connelly's Situation and the Themes Related

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATION</th>
<th>INTERACTION</th>
<th>CONTINUITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community/Context</td>
<td>Relationship/Roles</td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NBTS</td>
<td>• Peer</td>
<td>• As learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Portfolio</td>
<td>• APs</td>
<td>• Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NSRF</td>
<td>• Instructor</td>
<td>• Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connections</td>
<td>• Mentor Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rituals</td>
<td>• Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Norms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limitations and Potentials of the Study

Any choices made by researchers are made knowing the limits and possibilities those choices bring. As a researcher who has chosen narrative inquiry I must acknowledge those limitations and possibilities.

Ownership and Voice

Honoring the voices of my participants is crucial, particularly because preservice teachers' voices are rare in the teacher education research literature. In the end I am the one who has made the choices of what to use in telling the story of learning to teach and my choices are influenced by my own personal history, beliefs and biases related to teaching and learning. The retelling of another's story is always selective, partial, and in tension (Britzman, 1991). In order to try to keep the participants at the center of my research, I presented the work in various stages to the participants in order for them to check my interpretations and analysis of their words.
How I Wrote the Narrative Pieces

My goal is to make explicit my process for writing the narrative pieces I have included in the dissertation. I acknowledge that no one else will be able to replicate this process, but maybe if someone can learn from my thoughts, or at least realize that it is okay to try anything.

Writing the narrative pieces that are included as part of this dissertation was part of my data analysis and part of my data presentation. The pieces that are included are: my own autobiographical story as learner, preservice teacher, and as researcher, the narrative of the Cluster A cohort, the narratives of the focal participants and their “conversation,” and finally the narrative of one preservice teacher within this cohort. I explain how I wrote each of these narratives and why I think they are important to include as pieces of my final research presentation.

My own autobiographical writing is a combination of journaling I have done since the onset of my doctoral studies. Most courses I enrolled in encouraged using a researcher’s journal. Although the place, form, and regularity of the journal varied, I have all these “journals” on the computer. Some of the writing was turned in as I took qualitative research methodology courses. Some of the writing was for my own sense-making as I read articles or books. Some of the writing was turned in as assignments for courses. All the writing was dated. For one section of my autobiographical narrative I referred back to a journal I kept in my own teacher education program. I have been told that it does not matter how fancy the journal looks, it can be a spiral notebook, a legal pad, or a beautiful journal with space to draw. I can say that having my journal from college in a separate notebook, helped me to hang on to it for all these years. The narrative pieces that are not part of the data collected for the study are in italics in order to separate my stories from theirs.
The narrative pieces on the cohort were the first narrative pieces I wrote about the data. I wanted to capture snapshots of each field experience, and of the university course on campus. I felt the way that I could do that was to present “scenes” from each Block. For these narrative pieces I drew on my own observations, weekly reflections from the cohort and some interview data. I wrote more scenes than are included in this section. I chose these scenes because I felt they revealed some of the assertions I wanted to bring forward from the data.

**Member Checks**

Following the narratives about the cohort I wrote the narratives introducing the focus participants. For these narratives, I used all the data I had on each participant. I wanted to bring out the individuality of each participant. I felt that one participant in particular had an interesting story to tell. Her story was strong. As I wrote introductions I felt that I needed to say much more about her. I made a choice to write her as a complete story. Once again, I used all the data to tell her story. Once I had written these pieces I sent them to the participants to read as a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I wanted to see if I had portrayed their stories in a way that they felt was accurate. We discussed them, and I made a few changes to the narratives. Barbara wanted me to remove some of the “likes” and “you knows” in her speech. Jake thought he sounded “goofy” but liked that I had included some of his funny moments in class. June helped me to understand some of her story better. For example, she told me why she chose to dance her Christmas present to the cohort.

Once I felt I had introduced the participants and shared some of their narrative of experience, I had to find a way to make a narrative of the data as a whole corpus. The last narrative piece I wrote was the conversation. I had to find a way to juxtapose the focus participants' words on certain topics. I attended a session at an interdisciplinary qualitative
research meeting where data from a variety of participants in a study was presented. Members of the audience took the role of the participants and it was read aloud (Hudson-Ross, Bisplinghoff, Butchart, & Gilbert, 2003). The data I present here in the narrative of a conversation is presented in a similar manner. I used interview data and some early written pieces the focus participants had done. I kept the words they used. I did cut out the “likes,” “uhs,” “you knows,” and “kind ofs” from the narrative. I wanted to maintain their own words for the presentation of the data on the three topics I had chosen: seeing teaching, relationships with mentor teachers, and reflection.

Writing narrative pieces began as a way to make sense of the data, then became a way to introduce the reader to the participants and the context of the study, and ended up being a way to present the data. As with most of my research process, it was something I learned as I did it.

Wakefulness

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) caution researchers to remain wakeful about decisions they make in the field and about writing field texts and research texts. In an effort to maintain wakefulness as a new researcher, I have made every effort to maintain a researcher's journal, and to record my thoughts behind decisions I have made in the process of collecting data, recording data, and analyzing data. The journal became a resource for me to use as I wrote my methodology section, as in an effort to be wakeful I recorded my thinking at various stages of the research process.

Proposed Evaluation Standards

Narrative inquirers often propose their own criteria for judging research work and as a doctoral student before me had done (Rayburn, 2003), I offer my evaluation standards. Editor Ruthellen Josselson (1993) writes about evaluating narratives as she compiled a book The Narrative Study of Lives. She included breadth of material, coherence, and aesthetic appeal as
criteria for considering narratives. In her introduction she cautions, “story cannot stand alone but must be linked to some theoretical context or previous knowledge” (p. xii). I believe her words mean that the story of these preservice teachers learning to teach cannot stand alone. It is not sufficient to only tell the story. I must also connect their story to my theoretical understanding of experience and learning to teach. My narratives have breadth to consider the complexity of learning to teach, they are coherent as the layers build on one another, and the variety of narratives should have aesthetic appeal. These narratives are a part of the study. I have used Dewey (1938) Britzman (1991) and Clandinin and Connelly's theories to link my narratives to a framework.

As the reader moves into the narratives and the analysis of those narratives I propose these standards to be used to judge the research work. These standards are based on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) *Narrative Inquiry* and Jossellson (1993) *The Narrative Study of Lives*.

(1) Justification: Have I presented a case for the need for the research, and for the use of narrative inquiry?

(2) Phenomena: Have I presented narratives that focus on the research questions?

(3) Breadth: Have I presented enough data that the reader feels they understand the complex contexts of these preservice teachers learning to teach?

(4) Coherence: Do the narratives add up to a complete and meaningful picture?

(5) Aesthetic appeal: Are the narratives presented in a way that make sense and allow the reader to make meaning from the stories?

In this chapter I have provided background on my choices for using narrative inquiry to research the learning of these preservice teachers. I have also provided background on my own learning to let the reader know my subjectivities and connections to the research. I enumerated
the sources and reasons for those sources in my data collection. I ended the section with a brief description of the layered format. The transparency of my research process and thinking as a researcher provides an important context for the reader who is evaluating the meaningfulness of my claims and conclusions.

So far in my writing I have tried to answer *why* I have conducted the research by providing personal and research based arguments. I have also answered *how* I have conducted the research, by providing in-depth discussions of my methodology. In the next few chapters I present *what* I studied through the multiple and layered narratives as well as analysis of those narratives, and I conclude by telling you *so what*, or *why* the study has meaning for me and other researchers and teacher educators.
Earlier I described a “layering” of data with a graphic representation (Figure 3). The layers include the whole cohort of preservice teachers, the focal participants, and at the center, one participant’s narrative. In this section of the dissertation I present the layers with narratives. The first narrative I illustrate is the narrative of the whole cohort of twenty-five preservice teachers as they progress through the first three semesters of their teacher education program. Their narrative includes background to the multiple contexts of their experiences. Then I share the narratives of the focus participants, with introductions and a conversation that presents some of the assertions I bring forth in my data analysis. Finally I relate the narrative of one participant and her early field experiences. All participant names are pseudonyms, as well as the names of the schools and any names mentioned throughout the narrative.

The presentation of preservice teachers in this manner allowed me to examine the contexts and situations of the cohort in their early field experiences. It also provided ways to explore the interactions of the focal participants as they enter the field. And finally it enabled me to focus on one participant through the continuity of story. I feel I kept my theoretical framework of experience and learning firm in my presentation of data and carried it through data analysis.

Narrative of Cluster A

The story begins as the twenty-five young undergraduates entered Basset Hall for the first semester of their teacher education program in the spring of 2002.
Basset Hall

Basset Hall was not the most welcoming building on campus. Three sides of the building are surrounded by asphalt road or parking lot. Buses and cars spew exhaust that mask the words “College of Education” recently added to the “Basset Hall” sign. The stark bricks and simple rectangular shape imply an institutional setting.

Unmoving escalators provide a false invitation to glide up to the first and second floor, and from there stairways hide behind walls and doors. The four elevators that move up and down the floors, open up and leave the rider wondering which way to head down the hall, when both directions look the same? The building is oddly symmetrical and it is unnervingly easy to wander in circles. Classrooms generally ring the outer walls of the building and then at the core are windowless offices and other smaller rooms.

The third and fourth floors of Basset hold claim to the offices that dominate the lives of the Early Childhood Education majors. The Department of Elementary Education and the School of Teacher Education both coordinate and complicate the lives of the twenty-five young women and men that make up Cluster A. During the four semesters that the preservice teachers take courses in the program, they have attended classes on virtually every floor of the seven floor building, and have taken courses in many departments within the College of Education. Before entering the program the preservice teachers have completed courses in many departments: Educational Foundations, Educational Psychology, Educational Technology, Child and Family Development, and Special Education. From the 1st floor eatery, to the 2nd floor curriculum materials library, to the plush conference room for the Dean of the College of Education, the building becomes an integral part of the students’ lives for the next few semesters.
The classrooms of the building mirror the range of courses that are taught within their walls. Scattered desk-chairs formed in circles, conference tables with comfortable armed rolling chairs, rows of slender desks with chairs attached on swing-out arms, rows of desk-chairs where instructors can roam the aisles, glass-plated table tops with chairs pulled up to view a computer slide show, lab benches with stools that swirl, rows and rows of computers on tables with chairs set for sharing a computer. One would hope that the classrooms reflected the range of learning taking place within the walls of the building, and equally one would hope that the classroom chosen for a particular course would reflects its need.

Cluster A

Twenty-five undergraduate students began the elementary teacher education program in the spring of 2002. This cohort is named Cluster A. There are twenty-three females and two males in the room, no African American students, no Asian students, and no Hispanic or Latino students. They range in age from twenty to twenty-two. All but one of the students is a resident of the state, and many have come to the state university on a scholarship provided by the state for any student that maintains a ‘B’ average. Some of the members of the cohort are now in their fourth year of college, due to the required courses needed before even entering the teacher education program. They still have two years ahead in the program.

Cluster A also refers to the group of five schools in the university area school districts where the preservice teachers are placed for their required field experiences. The state teacher certification board requires that they have experiences in school settings serving diverse populations of students, so the cluster of schools reflects that socio-economic, ethnic, linguistic, and geographic diversity. Placements are structured so as to ensure that by the end of their
program students have been to at least two of the schools in the cluster and they have experienced a variety of school settings.

*Block One On Campus*

In the first semester in the program I was the instructor for the early childhood course called *Orientation to Early Childhood Education*. The syllabus describes the course as “a translation of theories about how children learn into ideas for application in the classroom. Bases for developmentally appropriate practices are examined in light of the students' own experiences as learners.” Additional courses that the students were enrolled in together were a mathematics methods class called *Children’s Mathematical Learning* and an elementary mathematics course required by the state for teacher certification entitled *Measurement, Geometry and Problem Solving*. The first semester in the program is referred to as Block One.

Spring semester 2002 begins in room 419. It is Thursday morning, 8:00 am and I expect there will be late-comers due to the first day of classes, traffic and bus problems. I send the students on a mission as they enter the classroom. Projected on the screen is a list of students to meet, as they talk among each other.

- Someone who traveled over break.
- Someone whose name begins with the same letter as yours.
- Someone who has a family the same size as yours.
- Someone who has seen the same movie (recently) as you.
- Someone who has the same favorite color as you.

I am the instructor for the first class on the first day of their entry into the early childhood program. Class begins with business: announcements, introductions, and
checking attendance. There are some groups of students talking among themselves while others wait at their seats with notebooks open.

*Selected Scenes from Room 419 Spring 2002*

*Scene One.* Each group had been chosen by me, the teacher, and each group had a different assignment, chosen by me, the instructor. Each group was placed in a different location in the classroom, by me the role model for teaching.

The Sparrows were placed in the back of the room and assigned an outline of the week’s reading assignment. The Cardinals had to work in pairs in the middle of the classroom and were assigned the task of creating three questions based on the reading. The Eagles were paraded to the front of the classroom and assigned the activity of creating a visual image of the reading from the week before.

“Sparrows, get to work, no talking while you are working on that outline.”

“Eagles, you take your time to come up with creative ways to share the information from that article, I know that the rest of the class is anxious to see your work.”

As the clock shows 8:35 we wind down student work time, and the Cardinals share their questions with the class, the Eagles show off their picture representations of the text. We run out of time for the Sparrows to share their outlines.

I close the charade with a smile emerging on my face.

“I’m sure glad I was an eagle.”

“I wanted to be an eagle.”

“I didn’t want to be a sparrow.”
Even with the discussion that followed class, one student left asking if I wanted her outline from the reading. I wondered if I should tell her what the class was really all about. (4/2/02, researcher’s journal and reaction papers, Block One)

Scene Two. On the board in the classroom it says, “Draw a pencil sketch of a family.” As I begin the class a few minutes later to allow time for the students to finish up their drawings. One student comments, “I hate it when you (I think she means teachers in general) ask us to draw something and then don’t allow us to do it well.” Her family sketch included a careful depiction of even her dog, with a bow on her head.

I shared some journal entries from the previous week’s visits to the school.

- This made me feel sorry for the children. Some of them look like they are doing fine, but others you can tell don’t get much attention at home.
- One thing I have picked up on is that the parents who read to their children or with them at home are vital to their children’s success.
- I reminded myself that many of these children come from families at or near the poverty level, and they need just as much (if not more) love and attention than the students in the middle or high class schools.

We talked openly about the assumptions we make about families. On the flipside of the their family portrait, they redrew a family (4/23/02, field notes, Block One).

Block One in the Field

During the first semester of the early childhood teacher education program, all the students were placed at one school an hour a week for ten weeks. Each student worked in one classroom in the school for the ten weeks. They were asked to work with small groups of students on reading tasks, based on a reading program that the school used.
All the preservice teachers of Cluster A were placed in the same school with eight first and second grade teachers to assist with a tutoring program. The students were required to attend their field placement for one hour a week for at least ten weeks. There was no formal evaluation of the field experience for the preservice teachers and the students' activities in that field placement by any university personnel. However, the students wrote weekly reflections about their experiences and those were read and graded by the instructor. Most of the participants spent at least 12 hours in the schools. All the names of the preservice teachers, cooperating teaches and schools are pseudonyms.

*The Field Experience Site*

Farlow Elementary is in a school district with a student population of 10,885. Farlow is only 4.5 miles from the university. The school has 440 students with 88.6 percent of those students eligible for free or reduced lunches. Sixty-three percent of the students are African American, 23 percent are Hispanic, 11 percent are European American, 0.2 percent are Asian, and 3.5 percent are multi-racial.

One university student intern described her classroom,

> The class seems to be rather diverse. There are, from what I can tell, three Hispanics, two [W]hites and the rest of the class is made up of [B]lack students. There seem to be a few more boys than girls in the class. Some of the students seem to be seven or eight, the typical second grade age, but a few are older. Some are non-native English speakers, but seem to be managing very well with their developing proficiency. (Vicki, field experience journal 2/1/02, Block One)

For their Block One field placement the preservice teachers were matched with a cooperating teacher based on their own course schedules coinciding with available times.
Our students worked in pairs or by themselves with a group of five to eight students at a time on prescriptive lessons in reading. During a brief orientation session at the school, the preservice teachers were shown the instructions for conducting a lesson. One student described the routine,

We went over some sight words and spelled them out and took turns reading the words out loud. Then we read through the book. Our time was cut short and we really did not get to discuss the book in great detail. (Candy, field experience journal 1/22/02, Block One)

Another student wrote about the nature of the program,

A problem I have seen so far in my first two weeks is the repetitiveness of this reading program. The children seem to be bothered and bored completing the readings. I know it is a good program and teaches more aspects than just reading, but the children seem to get bored easily with its repetitiveness. If I was the classroom teacher, I would try to create other projects and activities to go along with the program. (Susan, field experience journal, 1/29/02, Block One).

After the first two weeks the preservice teachers made their visits to Farlow Elementary, the faculty of the first and second grade held a meeting to discuss the difficulties surrounding the reading program and effectively using the interns at the school. The teachers decided to leave it up to each teacher if they would continue to use the interns in the prescriptive reading/tutoring program, or choose to use them in another manner. All the interns were invited to come to the meeting. Some of the teachers continued with the reading program, others adapted it to suit their needs, and some discontinued use of the program altogether.
Farlow Elementary was undergoing a transition. Under pressure from the state department of education due to test scores, the school had begun implementation of a reform model known as America's Choice. The America's Choice School Network is the National Center on Education and the Economy's (NCEE) comprehensive, research-based design for schools and districts using standards-based education. Through professional development and assistance, schools implement comprehensive programs of standards-based education and training. NCEE targets schools with low-income and minority youth (National Center on Education and the Economy [NCEE], n. d.).

_Selected Scenes from Block One Field Experience_

_Scene One: Karen describes a scene during her first visit to Farlow._

When I walked into Farlow Elementary School, I expected some chaos, even some behavior problems. What I didn’t expect was to walk into a room where all of the children already had SST groups and were being tested for Special Education programs. I didn’t expect to walk into a first grade classroom, and have to go over kindergarten rubrics. I didn’t expect to sit with a group of seven children and sound out every word, even ones like ‘at’ or ‘is.’ I didn’t expect to see children who obviously could have used an extra year in kindergarten. I didn’t expect to see a child asleep when I walked in, and be told to leave her like that.

When I walked into Farlow, I was looking forward to getting into the minds of these kids. I was looking forward to seeing what they knew, what they could teach me. I expected to have those two or three students who knew all the sight words and wanted to help the others. I expected to see that a majority of the students were on the level of first grade. I expected a challenge but not like this. (Karen, field experience journal 1/24/02, Block One)
Scene Two: Mary describes her last visit to Farlow Elementary.

Today was my last day visiting Farlow and I had a really good time!! When I walked in Mrs. Wayne was reading a book about flowers and pollen. This part of the class usually goes on while I’m trying to read books individually with the children, so I was glad to have all the kids together at once. I sat back and listened to the children read, and I could tell that the teacher was reading a little slow for the children’s patience. One girl was rolling her eyes and leaned over to tell me they had been reading the same book for 20 minutes and were only half way done.

Another girl was mumbling to herself the words of the book and was way ahead of the rest of the class. I learned through this that, as a teacher, I must pay a lot of attention to my student’s needs and pace. Some of the children talked among themselves because of boredom, which would then cause Mrs. Wayne to stop reading and fuss at them.

I did like when we got to the part of the book about pollen. Mrs. Wayne took the children outside to find pollen on cars so they could see what it looks like. Of course the kids ran around a little and wanted to play with the flowers on the ground, but I kind of just played with them and had a good ole’ time. When we came back in the classroom, I surprised the students with my Bearded Dragons (lizard things). We played with them for about ten minutes, and then I gave them some M&Ms. All the kids came and hugged me, and I almost got a little teary-eyed. It’s sad to have to leave them, but I know that I learned things from Farlow that I will take with me through my journey of learning to teach and as an actual teacher. (Mary, field experience journal, 4/17/02, Block One)
Block Two on Campus

The second semester of the program the students carried a load of classes that included;

Decision Making for Planning, Teaching, and Organizing Early Childhood Education

Classrooms, and four methods courses in Language Arts (Children’s Literature and Oral Language), Mathematics (Mathematics Teaching and Curriculum in PreK –5th Grade), Reading (Reading Instruction for Young Children), and Social Studies (Early Childhood Social Studies).

The second semester is referred to as Block Two.

The instructor for the teacher education course is a fellow graduate student in the Department of Elementary Education who taught this cohort of preservice teachers for two semesters. The fact that he is the instructor, my peer and my friend, perhaps allows me access to the class in ways that may not have occurred with other instructors. He actively engaged me in discussions prior to the classes I observed and also after each observation. Those discussions allowed me to clarify anything I may not have understood without interrupting the class time. Our common interest in teacher education and teacher learning surely helped us to find rich data within any of the assignments completed by the preservice teachers. His willingness to allow me access to the student’s regular reflections of class time demonstrated to me a professionalism that I truly admire.

Jake strolls into class in Room 417 August 19th, 2002 at 8:00 am, “How cool is it to know everyone in your class on the first day of school?” The class is EDEC 4020 or “Decision Making for Planning, Teaching and Organizing in Early Childhood Education.” Some students are obviously missing on the first day as seven of the chairs carefully laid out in a circle are empty. Apparently the class location changed, so the instructor asks me to find the mis-located students. I find the group looking a little unsettled but happy to be in the company of other similarly
confused but familiar faces. I am no longer the instructor for these preservice teachers, and my presence is a little puzzling to some of them. I explained, as we walked to the elevators, that I was here in a new capacity as a researcher.

Class is obviously in session as we enter. The class is silent as we return, and the instructor merely nods to those of us entering and reentering the circle of chairs. The students’ eyes wander from papers on their desks to each other. The instructor makes a comment about gaining weight over the summer. A student tells about her new kitten. Another student shares her new dog story. And one shares how nice it was to know where all her classes were, and who was in them. Silence, for 30 seconds. The instructor closes “connections.” You can almost hear the relief in the room, flooding the silence with noise. The instructor asks the students, “How did you feel when you did talk? Why did you join in? Let’s talk about the silence.” June says, “It drove me crazy!” Laughter brings relief and questions follow as the instructor explains the protocol called, “Connections.”

We will begin our class time together with a 10-minute period called Connections. It is a way for people to bridge from where they are or have been (mentally, physically, etc.) to where they will be going and what they will be doing. It is time for individuals to reflect—within the context of a group—upon a thought, a story, an insight, a question, or a feeling that they are carrying with them into a session, and then connect it to the work they are about to do. It is a time for us to recognize that we come together with a shared goal (becoming professional teachers) but may bring with us unique and compelling issues. It is not (emphasis in original) a time for dialogue. It is a safe zone in which group members may choose to share with the understanding that their comments are valued
without need for explanation. We will take turns facilitating this experience. (4020 syllabus, 8/19/02, Block Two)(see Appendix C)

Other class routines are discussed. A ‘parking lot’ is where any business that cannot be handled at the time will be placed. Students sign up for “media watch,” bringing in a newsworthy article related to education, sharing a summary of that article and opening the floor for discussion of that article. Time will be set aside each period for “daily business,” and any announcements for the cohort can be made at that time. On the first day of classes, the instructor shares a scholarship opportunity with the group. The instructional time for the period will always incorporate a “read-a-loud.”

Selected Scenes from Room 417, Fall 2002

Scene One.

“I will throw this cute little giraffe stuffed animal to someone, and say your name as I toss it.” Eyes darted between Michael, the instructor, and the circle of 25 preservice teachers, curious to see how this stuffed animal was anything to do with teaching.

The giraffe flies through the air and lands safely in the hands of Kendall, just after Michael says her name. The giraffe rests for a moment, Kendall says, “thank you Michael” before she calls out, “Susan.” Susan says “thank you Kendall”, and calls out ”Miranda” as the giraffe takes the next leg of his journey zigzagging across the circle, name after name, catch after catch, thank you after thank you, name after name. As the giraffe lands safely in Michael’s hand to end his flight, smiles and giggles emerge from the group.

The game is not over. Michael adds a stuffed bear to the circle of tossed animals. The path of the two animals flight is the same each journey, but it becomes increasingly difficult to navigate the flight paths, as you look for clear passage. In the end there are four animals flying
across the circle and names being called. Giggles turn to laughter, and control is increasingly
difficult. As the last animal safely lands in Michael’s hands, Jake chimes in, “I am just digging
this because I know that my roommate is sitting in some classroom doing real estate law.”
(8/19/02, field notes)

Scene Two.

“Connections are open.”

“Let me just say, I am glad to be on the winning team.” A football game the
weekend preceding was on their mind during the Monday morning class.

Michael shares his concerns and thoughts about his brother’s eye surgery, and as if in
deference to a more serious topic, a student gets up to close the door. The room is so quiet that
you can hear pens writing on paper.

“One minute left for connections.” A student enters the classroom, finding a chair
quietly in the midst of quiet.

“Are there any process points?”

“I would feel uncomfortable going first.”

“I wanted to respond to you about your brother’s surgery.”

“Does anyone want to lead connections next class?

In reflections from the day’s class meeting, four students mentioned the pace of
connections. Comments such as “connections was slow, not many talked today, and there was a
lot of silence.” Another student commented, “kind of odd that connections was so quiet today,
most of the time, Mondays are talkative, everyone trying to catch up from the weekend??” One
student noted, “Connections was very quiet today and it was very relaxing. It’s funny how when
we started connections the quiet was ‘bad’ but now it is ‘nice’. It’s funny, isn’t it?” (Field notes 11/18/02 and student reflections, Block Two).

Rituals

The instructor used what he had learned in a National School Reform Faculty coaches training session, to build a community of learners. Some of the rituals used during university time were structures designed by the National School Reform Faculty such as connections (see Appendix C). Other rituals were part of the routine set up by the instructor who based time in the classroom on what he had learned from another professor involved in the National School Reform Faculty and its mission to facilitate communities of learners. Providing rituals every day gave the group a way to feel comfortable with each other and a way to learn from one another. Some of the rituals were: connections, media watch, read-a-loud, daily business, sharing reflections, and debriefing.

The National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) was created in 1995 as a professional development initiative of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (n. d.), then housed at Brown University. Many of the educators involved in this initial phase of development were familiar with Ted Sizer’s work within the Coalition of Essential Schools (n. d.). The Coalition work was a foundational piece on which the NSRF model for Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) evolved. In June 2000 funding from the Annenberg Institute was discontinued, and the NSRF united with Harmony Education Center (n. d.) in Bloomington, Indiana.

Connections…what everyone cares to share. At the beginning of Block Two there was a sense of unease about the time spent in connections. Questions about what was appropriate to talk about, trying to fill the silence and not responding to each other came up during debriefing (field notes, 8/19/02, Block Two). When it came time for the university class to be suspended for
the field experience members of the cohort were concerned about not having that time. “I’m
going to miss connections and I’m going to miss being around all of my colleagues” (weekly
reflection from university class, 9/25/02, Block Two). Late in Block Two Karen noted,

Connections was so important today. After yesterday I think we all had huge amounts of
stress. It is great to know that not just one person understands – everyone does. With that
it mind we will make it through this semester. (Karen, weekly reflection from university
class, 8/21/02, Block Two)

One preservice teacher summarized what the connections time means to the cohort. “It is
neat to see what a special time for our class this has turned into. I look forward to hearing what
everyone cares to share” (weekly reflection sheet from university class, 10/30/02, Block Two).

Media watch…it makes you aware. Members of the cohort were assigned a day of class
in which to bring in news articles from any source to present to the cohort and then lead
discussion. The articles generally focused on education issues, but ranged from merit pay for
teachers to SAT testing practices in high schools, child care practices to local school system test
scores. The syllabus stated,

Class members will share responsibility each class period for updating the group
regarding educational issues reported through the news media. The reports can be
international, national, or local in nature. The goal is to stay informed regarding public
perceptions of education.

The cohort expressed appreciation for being kept aware of the field of education.

First of all …it makes you aware of all the things that are going on ….if you’ve got two
or three articles a week…there’s so much news in education. So we’re getting at least a
decent perspective or what’s going on….So that’s good just to be aware and also to know
what we are going to be facing as education progresses when we enter the school in a few years. (Jake, interview lines 265-271, 9/14/02, Block Two)

Another aspect of media watch was the connection between what they were doing in class and what was happening in the schools. “I enjoyed media watch today. We’ve been talking about theories so much lately that it was nice to hear about something that wasn’t so abstract” (weekly reflection sheet from university class, 9/4/02, Block Two).

Read-a-loud...even though we’re grown ups. The read-a-loud ritual is not listed on the syllabus as part of the requirements, but the instructor began the course with read-a-loud each class period they met. He chose a piece of children’s literature to share with the cohort. One preservice teacher commented, “I’d love to hear you read more often. Listening to you helps me learn and see how to be a good story teller” (weekly reflection from university class, 9/4/02, Block Two). Another student said, “It’s nice to be read to, even though we are ‘grown ups’” (weekly reflection from university class, 9/4/02. Block Two).

The first book they heard from Michael was *Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes (1996), but the lists of books he read grew too long to make a complete listing. The preservice teachers expressed gratitude for the variety of books they were exposed to during the course. “I absolutely fell in love with the *Antics* (Hepworth, 1996) idea. I look forward to giving this a try in my classroom” (weekly reflection from university class, 4/15/03, Block Two). Some reflected on the value of some of the books and using them in their class.

I'm still trying to figure out how I feel about the Faith Ringgold (1991) book that we read today. Throughout the book, I kept thinking, "I will never read this book to my class," not because of controversial issues presented in it, but because of the style. The illustrations weren't appealing to me, and I thought the "lovebird"
aspect was hokey, and I thought that it was an awkward transition from looking through the streets of Paris to meeting the little boy's family in some dream-like state. I didn't like it at all...but yet, I know that at least one other person liked it because a) it was published and b) it won an award. If definitely makes me wonder where to find the balance between enthusiastically sharing books that you like and think your students would like, and bringing in books that you aren't connected to because you think students would connect to it. (Anna, weekly reflection from university class, 9/16/02, Block Two)

_Daily business…my wires are fried._ Daily business was time set aside at the beginning of the period together to attend to announcements, information dissemination, and procedural things. The preservice teachers knew they had a time to share any announcements, and daily business time was kept as short as possible. On the bottom of reflection sheets and across the corners, were scrawled dates to be remembered, such the beginning and ending dates for the field experiences. Sometimes the members of the cohort shared activities that they were participating in, and invited others to watch. Sometimes Michael shared information on scholarships and opportunities during that time, and a website address was on the reflection sheet as evidence. One day a reflection sheet said, “Whoa! My daily business wires are fried.” (June, weekly reflection from university class, Block Two)

_Sharing reflections…I had no idea._ The instructor had the members of the cohort write reflections on NCR paper every class period. They kept a copy and turned in a copy. Towards the beginning of every class period the instructor read excerpts from those reflections. One student responded to the ritual,
Some of the reflections you read today have really disturbed me. Maybe I am just oblivious to what has been going on in the classroom. I had no idea people had problems or felt uncomfortable. I wish there was something I could do to eliminate this problem. (weekly reflection from university class, Block Two undated)

He usually picked something from every member’s sheet. Sometimes he picked items he would address in daily business, sometimes he picked thoughtful reflections about the previous class period, sometimes he picked material that he would cover in class that day. For example, I’d like to have a discussion in class about how to be a positive light at your school….Maybe we could talk about ways to make the teacher’s lounge/lunch table talk a get away from the students and negative parts of the day. (Mary, weekly reflection from university class, 10/30/02, Block Two)

Sharing reflections was his way to keep learning relevant, and to make sure he was addressing the students' questions openly. As the researcher I was made aware of which reflections Michael had chosen to read to the class because he would underline them.

*Debriefing…share responsibility.* Following every class meeting the instructor asked two students to debrief the class meeting of that day. The syllabus stated,

As members of this class, you share the responsibility of constructing a learning experience that is meaningful to the group. Students will sign up to debrief each class experience with me. This is the time for you to offer me helpful feedback about the work of the class period and the overall progress of the class in meeting the needs of the group. Please plan to spend an additional 10 to 20 minutes with me after class for this purpose when it is your turn to participate.
During debriefing time the preservice teachers brought concerns about the material, assignments, and program issues to Michael's attention. They discussed them together and Michael used those ideas to further plan the class’ journey.

The instructor had a definitive plan in mind to develop his university course as a community of learners. Using tenets of the National School Reform Faculty, he used rituals to provide a space for the preservice teachers to take chances, discuss, practice, question, share, and support one another.

After six weeks of coursework on campus students went into the field for four full weeks. At the conclusion of the field experience for the cohort, the preservice teachers returned to the university campus for classes. They had five classes on campus to finish out the last five weeks of the semester. During that time the field experience was revisited and discussed as the preservice teachers addressed the National Board of Professional Standards (NBPTS) and how they impacted student learning in their time in the field. Their culminating portfolio was to present the standards and how they had impacted student learning in the field experience classroom based on those standards. The portfolio had to have artifacts to show evidence of student impact. Some preservice teachers included video–tapes of what they had done, others had photographs, and student work.

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

Michael stated in the purpose of the course, “The 12 standards for the Middle Childhood Generalist certification of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) will be used to guide all work over the semester.” The preservice teachers were expected to compile a portfolio at the end of the semester. One student writes during in Block Two, “For a long time I didn’t quite understand all the standards but they are becoming clearer and clearer. What a great
The portfolio...digging through these standards. The portfolio became a difficult assignment for the cohort as they struggled with making sense of the standards, and finding evidence of meeting those standards in their own early field experiences. The portfolio was to include a summary of the standard, artifacts supporting that standard, and a description of the preservice teachers' incorporation of that standard into their practice. For some members, the standards represented a challenge to be met, and others struggled with applicability to their own experiences in the field.

The standards stress me out. I feel like I have to do all of these things. I mean I know I need to, but it’s stressful. Every time I read them I have to reread them because I feel that I need to memorize them or something. (Jenna, undated weekly reflection from university, Block Two)

Another student wrote, “I wish you would share what you think are key terms regarding the standards. I am interested in what a professional thinks” (weekly reflection from university class, 11/25/02, Block Two).

The standards became the basis for instruction in the university class as the cohort brainstormed ideas for how to meet standards with key terms and how to show evidence of them in practice. For Michael these were the link between teaching practice and student learning. The preservice teachers responded to his instruction. “Digging through these standards and writing down key words really helps me to break them down and make them easier to see how they apply to me” (weekly reflection from university class, 11/4/02, Block Two). Another student said, “These standards make so much more sense when we discuss them as a class. It is nice to
have the chance to hear a variety of ideas about how to show evidence/growth in supporting them” (Kelli, weekly reflection from university class, 11/6/02, Block Two).

*Block Two in the Field*

During the second semester of the program, the first six weeks of the semester were spent in university classes. The next four weeks all the preservice teachers were assigned to a classroom with a mentor teacher in one of four schools in the cluster. During that four weeks all university classes were suspended and the instructors become the university facilitators that observed the students as they worked and learned in the classrooms. Once the four-week field assignment was completed, they all returned to the university classroom and completed the course work. These last weeks of the semester included discussions of the experience in the field.

Expectations for what needed to be accomplished in the field ranged from a view that requirements were very open-ended to a view that they were clearly spelled out. June said,” They gave us the requirements and you look at it, and you are like, well, this isn’t very much” (June, interview 2, lines 150-151, 11/17/02, Block Two). Jake agreed with June, “I kind of feel like this semester the requirements are minimal. It’s much more like get from it what you want to get from it” (Jake, interview 1, lines 375-376, 9/14/02, Block Two). Anna noted that, “they wrote up a list of all the things, all these assignments we needed to complete and I was surprised, really, with how specific it is with what we have to do” (Anna, interview 1, lines 422-424, 9/15/02, Block Two).

The preservice teachers of cluster A were assigned a mentor teacher in one of four schools for their three field placements. Four Fridays were spent in the classroom before the preservice teachers go there for the four-week all day, every day field experience. The schools were in three different school districts in suburban and rural areas close to the university.
The Schools

The schools that the preservice teachers in Cluster A were assigned to were Baker Elementary, Walker Elementary, New Road Elementary, and Canton Elementary. New Road and Canton were in the same school district (all pseudonyms).

*Baker Elementary.* Baker Elementary is thirty-three miles from the university, the farthest that the preservice teachers had to travel for any of their field experiences. There were just over 500 students enrolled in the school. Thirty-seven percent of the students at Baker were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Eighty-one percent of the students were European American, ten percent were Asian, three percent were African American, two percent were Hispanic, and the remaining were multiracial.

*Walker Elementary.* Walker Elementary is three miles from the university, providing the shortest commute for the preservice teachers. There were over 550 students enrolled in the school. Almost fifty-five percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunches. The ethnic diversity was: sixty-one percent African American, thirty-two percent European American, three percent Asian, less than one percent Hispanic, and almost three percent multi-racial.

*New Road Elementary.* New Road Elementary is fourteen miles from the university campus. There were approximately 500 students enrolled at the school. Fifty-nine percent of the students at New Road were eligible for free or reduced lunches at the school. The ethnic make up of the school was: eighty-five percent European American, eleven percent African American, two percent Hispanic, one and half percent Native American, and less than half of a percent Asian. No students were recorded as multiracial.
Canton Elementary. Canton Elementary is in the same district as New Road Elementary. It is seventeen miles from the campus. There were 631 students enrolled in the school. Forty-five percent of the student were eligible for free or reduced lunch. The ethnic diversity of the school was: almost eighty-eight percent European American, five percent African American, almost four percent Hispanic, one percent Asian, and less than one percent Native American or multiracial.

Selected Scenes from Block Two Field Experience

The students entered the field in the fall of 2002. The preservice teachers were not there on the first days of the school year, but they visited their assigned classroom on Fridays early in the semester. Their field experience was four weeks long and they completed it before Thanksgiving Break.

Scene One. Barbara discussed an important event in her time in the school, a third grade classroom in New Road Elementary.

There was this little boy. He was a brilliant, smart boy but always got in trouble. And he couldn’t ever, I mean he was so excited to answer a question, and he was so eager that the teacher had to calm him down all the time. And I remember my first day in the field, she was asking them questions and he yelled out an answer. She told him to pull a card, that was their discipline system, green, yellow or red card. And then another girl yelled out an answer and the teacher just accepted it. That was after she made sure everybody raises their hand, she accepted it. I knew immediately he noticed it because tears just started streaming down his face. I just looked over at him and it really upset me because he was crying. His feelings were hurt. Later I noticed that he wrote in their ‘Oops’ book, because they write in it whenever they have to pull a card and why they pulled it. I noticed that he wrote, “I didn’t raise my hand to speak, but
another yelled out and she didn’t have to pull a card.’’ So he was very mindful of these things. I think for me, discipline is one of the management things in my target area. I just noticed one aspect of it is consistency. Even though it’s hard to say because he was always yelling out. It was just so soon after he pulled his card, it was even a bigger slap in the face because he felt like he was being picked on. I focused a lot on discipline in the classroom just because I was very interested in it. (Barbara, interview 11/18/02, Block Two)

Scene Two. June shared a time in a fifth grade classroom at Walker Elementary.

I’ve heard a lot of my peers complain that they didn’t have the incredible experience I had. I learned more in a month than I’ve learned in three years at this university. I felt so blessed that I was put with this teacher. She has only been teaching for twelve years, and she’s fifty-two right now, so she didn’t get her degree until later in life. A lot of my peers complained that their teachers didn’t set the rules and they felt like they were crossing over some line. But my teacher, at the beginning of the year must have set expectations. The kids knew her expectations, and they knew they were high. That she was challenging them, and that that was she was there for them. She let me take the total part in that too. She told me, “I don’t see you as a student teacher. I see you as a teacher, and I want you to have control over this class also.” So she gave me freedom to implement her things also. There was never any questioning. She never questioned what I did. She never made me feel burdened by it but those kids knew when they walked into the class, what she expected of them. And I think seeing that was, wow! I told myself, I have to be able to do this in my class because her class just ran smooth as a bell. Every day. She rarely had discipline problems, except from the occasional outburst or whatever. (June, interview 11/18/02, Block Two)
Block Three On Campus

The third semester in the program the students were enrolled in Integrated Curricular Practices in Early Childhood Education. They took a methods course in Language Arts titled Whole Language Teaching in Early Childhood Education alongside a Reading methods course titled Reading Assessment and Teaching Young Children and a science methods course titled Science for Early Childhood Education. They were also enrolled in another mathematics course required by the state certification board called Algebra and Problem Solving. The third semester is called Block Three.

This course labeled EDEC 4030 is a logical progression from the past semester's campus days of EDEC 4020. More than the numbers lead students from one course to the next, described in the syllabus as “a study of the methods to thoughtfully select meaningful content and create curriculum that integrates subject matter.”

Once again Michael was the instructor for the cohort of preservice teachers learning about teaching and learning. Some rituals established in the previous course continued through this semester also. “Connections,” “Media-Watch,” and “Daily Business” all remain a part of their regular routine. The class now meets every Tuesday for four hours, which is a change from the way scheduling was been carried out in the past. Instead of meeting twice a week for two hours, and the same for their Science Methods course; they met only once a week for four hours for each course. It was understood to be a temporary arrangement by both departments in the college, but both professors seems to enjoy the length of time with their own material. One student notes in one of the weekly reflection sheets, “Are we ever going to get that second break you always talk about?”
There are some differences between the two semesters. One is that the students are responsible for the rituals of the class. A group of three students is responsible for beginning the class with connections, discussing the media watch articles, taking care of daily business and even presenting the read–a–loud for the day.

As the preservice teachers took responsibility for the class and began to do the read-a-loud ritual themselves, the reflection sheets had support statements for those readers. “Lynn did a great job with the read-a-loud. I love hearing her talk. She has such a pleasant voice to listen to. Excellent book!” (weekly reflection sheet from university class, 1/28/03, Block Three). Some reflections even discussed the role that the read-a-loud allowed them to step into. “Tricia did such a fantastic job with the read-a-loud today! It’s so neat to see more of a glimpse of our classmates as teachers instead of almost teachers“ (Anna, weekly reflection from university class, 1/21/03, Block Three).

Accountability Partners

After Block Two some members expressed concern that the community that had been established had crumbled after their first field experience. The syllabus reads, “In response to your desire as a group to use your time in the field wisely, accountability partners have been assigned that took into account your personal strengths, grade levels, and school placements. You will meet your APs weekly before you start the field in order to plan field activities and their embedded standards.”

On the day they were assigned their accountability partner some members of the cohort responded, “I think accountability partners is a great idea,” and, “I think the accountability partner aspect of class will be very beneficial. Contributions to the profession…we need each other” (weekly reflection from university class, 1/14/03, Block Three).
Later one preservice teacher gave a specific example of how her accountability partner (AP) helped her.

At first I was feeling kind of unprepared to meet my teacher today. Then when we met our AP and shared ideas it really helped. Now I am looking forward to my new carpool and starting my relationship with my teacher. (weekly reflection from university class, 1/28/03, Block Three)

Selected Scenes from Room 430

Scene One. We now turn to “Manny Primary Days” says Michael as he turns on the TV balanced atop the large audiovisual cart. The video is a clip of a lesson that the preservice teachers in Cluster A had planned together in an earlier class. The topic was transportation. Michael had taken the carefully planned lesson to the first grade classroom and carried out the plans.

As the preservice teachers prepare to watch the video, Michael asks them to keep in mind, “What are the students learning?” A noisy video full of first grade voices, scooting chairs, sneezes, and one teacher voice, fill the Basset Hall classroom. As the children captured on tape follow directions and listen to lessons created by the anticipating watchers in the university classroom, a sense of chaos emerges.

“So, what would you do the next day, if this was your classroom,” asks Michael.

“Call in sick,” snips Barbara.

“I know it must have been hard to show that tape to us. You had to keep reminding the kids what to do. “

“I really see how important classroom management is.”
“I really see how much work is needed to plan a multi-day unit. If kids aren’t used to it then they need rules to go by and keep them on task and engaged.”

“I think you gave an example of how to handle ‘craziness’ in a classroom and how to really get students to think about what they are doing.”

“Well, I think the children really didn’t understand the roles of people in transportation. And when we asked them to portray roles, they just acted out the vehicle.”

Vicki tries to bring the group back to a discussion of learning. (field notes and reflections from 2/17/03, Block Three)

**Scene Two.** The classroom was arranged with all the tables in a large rectangle with a large similarly shaped hole in the middle. A gap at the end of the table allowed access to the center of the room. The preservice teachers were around the outside edges of the room, papers, folders, pens scattered all around the tables, while they caught up on the week’s events.

“Everybody stand up and make a circle in the center of the room. Our morning meeting today will begin with a different ritual. I will say good morning to someone and then clap a rhythm. You all repeat my good morning to that student then my rhythm also. Then that student crosses the circle doing any kind of ‘groove thing,’ and points to a new class member. I will then say good morning to that student, and clap a rhythm, and you repeat that after me. And this will go on until every member of the class has been greeted. Does anyone have any questions? Let’s try one.”

Clapping beats, repeated names, and many sounds of laughter may have confused anyone passing in the hallway. Each student had a new rhythm for his or her morning welcome. There was no doubt that the students were having fun. As the beat dies down,
Jake fills the room with his voice, “I do not need to graduate. I am complete after seeing Bruce do his thing in the circle.”

“So, let’s think about this with a classroom. What would you do with this?”

The preservice teachers share their ideas about grades levels, and ways to use the morning greeting ritual. Sensing that the discussion is over, and her greeting ritual has been a successful teaching lesson, June leads the cohort into the next phase of their rituals, the read-aloud. In her role as leader this week she has chosen *The Dance* by Paul Richard Evans (1999). (field notes, 4/1/03, Block Three)

*Block Three In the Field*

Block Three’s field experience functioned in much the same way as Block Two. All the interns are at a different school as they were in for the Block Two experience, but other things are familiar. The syllabus refers to Block Three field experience and says, “Your field experience will provide an opportunity to show initiative, self-direction, and goal-setting in learning as much as possible about one classroom.”

Often Michael discusses having “the conversation” with your mentor teacher. He encouraged the preservice teachers to discuss their roles in the classroom. He wanted them to have opportunities to try the things they wanted to try in the classroom, but he felt that the students needed to take the responsibility to begin that discussion. Without asking, he felt that they may not be able to try things out. Anna comments about her conversation, “I feel deflated after having the conversation with my teacher –I really need to work on my attitude so I can salvage some meaningful experiences from the field.” Kendall shares what happened for the last field placement in Block Two,
Last time I told my teacher what I had to do and then I was a teacher assistant. This semester when she says ‘sure, try it’ I am going to run with it. But I think we need help, about how to have that conversation with our teachers.

Selected Scenes from Block Three in the Field

Scene One. Erica’s writes about her field assignment for Block Three in a pre-kindergarten classroom. The classroom had a special education student named Ted who was mainstreamed. My early observations of Ted alarmed me to some extent and my immediate reaction to him was to avoid any close contact where I might feel threatened. The first day of class, to my disgust, the child had his hands in his pants. I watched as the teacher calmly told him that he was not making a good choice. He was sent to disinfect his hands. I watched him throw several temper tantrums that were triggered by various students in the classroom. My mentor teacher informed me that these outrageous outbursts were a world of improvement for the young child. He always sat next to me at lunch and I would cringe when he sat down. I noticed the [other] children were extremely standoffish to the boy and I began to feel sorry for him. Even though I had fallen in the same trap as the rest of the students in the classroom by avoiding him, he hugged be every morning. I was intrigued by this and my attitude about him changed. Without even realizing it I began interacting with him throughout the day. During my third week during morning message something significant occurred. The students take turns reading the letters in their name. Ted read his for the first time. He was so proud of himself he started jumping up and down. He ran and gave me a hug. It brought tears to my eyes to see his excitement for his great accomplishment. (Erica’s critical incident writing, 4/1/03)
Scene Two. Susan sets the scene for us in her classroom.

Sharon is a girl that I worked with on an individual basis with her reading. The teacher suggested that I work with her because she was on a higher level in reading, which is what I needed since I was in a kindergarten classroom. After several days of working with her, I found that she needed more help than maybe any of her teachers knew about.

One of the things I had Sharon do was read a book. I did a Running Record with her. She did great. Sharon read with a 97 percent accuracy rate. In the next few days, I did a word identification test. She could hardly identify any of the words on the list. Other assessments indicated that she could not read individual words, but had few problems when reading a book. Some of the assessments included words that were in books she could read, but when not in context, she could not read them. She struggled with words by themselves.

Something else that she struggled with, during my time with her, was rhyming. She had no clue what it meant for words to rhyme. I gave her several examples of rhyming word pairs. When I gave her the rhyming word pairs assessment, she guessed whether the pair rhymed or not. She would say that ‘cow’ and ‘milk’ rhymed, but ‘ran’ and ‘fan’ did not. She did not understand the concept of rhyming.

Seeing all of these events happen worried me. She was in the high-level reading group, yet she could not even read the word ‘dog.’ Why could she read books so well, but when it came to individual words, she could not read them? Had none of the other teachers discovered this?

I came to the conclusion that she could read the books I asked her to read with almost 100 percent accuracy because they were memorized. They were the leveled books that teachers use in the classroom to teach reading. She had read the books I used for the Running Record
before. I noticed that she would look at most every picture to figure out what the text was saying. She must have had a great memory to be able to remember what each page said.

I talked to the teacher about this. She said that she saw this as a sign of intelligence. The fact that she had such a good memory was great, according to her. She also told me that Sharon had a hard time writing anything. She always just copied things off the walls in the classroom.

The ‘phenomenon’ just blew my mind. I decided to do more practice with her words. I wanted her to write ‘dog,’ and she wrote ‘dok.’ I knew that this word had been in at least one of the books we read, so I just did not understand how she could not even sound it out to spell it.

When I brought up the fact that she couldn’t identify two words that rhymed to my teacher and the paraprofessional [they] were surprised. They could not believe that she would not know what rhyming was, because they had worked extensively with rhyming throughout the year. This made me think that she just wasn’t pointed out as a student needing individual attention. She had ‘slipped through the cracks.’ (Susan’s critical incident writing, 4/1/03, Block Three)

The final semester of the program involves student teaching and a follow-up course called Special Topics in Early Childhood Education. The last semester is referred to as Block Four. Block Four was not included in the research study for reasons mentioned in my methodology. For the purposes of this research, the narrative of the Cluster A cohort ends at the completion of their early, pre-student teaching field experiences. The conclusion of their early field experiences ends the story being told in this dissertation but begins the subsequent story of student teaching. The layer I reveal next is the narrative of the focus participants as they progress through their early field experiences. The next narrative narrows the focus of the lens from the twenty-five members of the cohort to five focus participants. Through the focused lens and with
the narrative, the stories of particular preservice teachers learning in their field experiences emerge.

Narrative of the Focus Participants

In a two-part narrative I introduce the focus participants, and present a conversation between the focus participants.

Introducing the Focus Participants

Vicki, Anna, Jake, Barbara, and June are the focus participants. I first met them as their instructor. I taught the initial teacher education class that they took as they began their teacher education program. When they entered Block Two in their second semester of the program they responded to my request for interviews. Of the twenty-five members of the cohort, these five volunteered. As they entered Block Three, they allowed me to continue following their learning with interviews after each field experience and observations in their field placements. Each of these five participants allowed me to read their writing, talk with them about their experiences, watch them as they taught and learned, and even pester them for more information.

In this section I introduce you to four of the focus participants. Later, I tell the story of one of the participants in depth. I use words, theirs and mine, to introduce these participants. The end result is an introduction where I have chosen what to share with the reader about these preservice teachers. I have used their words to help share aspects of them. My hope is the reader can begin to know them before I tell you about their learning as preservice teachers.

Vicki

Vicki is a European American, raised in South Georgia. Her journey to become a teacher has not been direct. Vicki enjoys discussions about a wide range of topics, and feels that she
brings a different perspective than most of her cohort. Her experiences outside the university from travel to girl scouting add to her perspective.

Vicki began her field experiences in a second grade classroom at Farlow Elementary. For her Block Two field experience she was in a second grade classroom again but at Walker Elementary. Her Block Three experience was in kindergarten at Baker Elementary. She wants to teach fourth or fifth grade for her student teaching. “I’m leaning towards the older students in fourth or fifth grade because [although] I recognize the merit in teaching all the social stuff, I really want to get down to content and study skills and things like that” (Vicki, interview 1, lines 225-226, 9/15/02, Block Two). As Vicki made choices about her own learning and teaching, she also talked about her own experience as a student.

Vicki’s memories of school related to the positive influences of her school community and the message that people really cared about children.

One of the most influential people in my school career was actually my elementary school principal, Ms. Harper (pseudonym). She was an amazing soul who had the ability to make everyone feel they were absolutely awesome. She not only knew every student at the school's name, but she also knew who they were and a little bit of what was going on in their life. She knew every student's parents and other involved family members by name. She knew what every student did after school and how they got home. She seemed to try to talk to each student every day. I know that not a day went by that I did not talk to her. She knew my name, where I lived, my little brother, my parents, my grandparents, how I did in school, who's class I was in….She seemed to know everything about me. With all the things that I now realize principals have to do, I am amazed that she walked
my brother across the street to our neighborhood every afternoon. She immediately insisted on doing it when she found out that we walked home alone. It's amazing that I never remember her being in a bad mood or being absent from school. She was there every day making everyone feeling special. (Vicki, electronic mailing list response, 5/3/02, Block One)

*I'd Never Really Thought About It…Vicki’s Journey to Become a Teacher*

Vicki has not always wanted to be a teacher. Her path to teacher education was not direct.

I started at a community college back in high school, and I think I was originally like a math major or something. You know, but then I took calculus and I was like, I don't like this, I hate it. You know, don't like it. Went to French, always been really interested in languages and language development and acquisition and all of that. And from that I'm actually taking the ESOL [English as a Second Language] classes and I'll be certified to teach that...I came up here as a chemistry major and then realized that I am just too much of a people person to sit in a lab or stand in a lab and run test tubes all day. …I was never the little girl that grew up and said I want to be a teacher. I think a lot of people are and they do, they later become teachers, but I'd never even really thought about it (Vicki, interview 1, lines 372- 383, 9/15/02, Block Two).

Although Vicki chose not to major in the sciences or math, she feels strongly teachers need content to work with children.

Here’s my soapbox. I think there should be more requirements outside of these education classes before they even enter Blocks. I think that we should be
encouraged to take higher sciences and maths and especially those, because it is something that kind of the personality of these beginning teachers, these becoming teachers, don’t seem to gravitate towards. These seem to be more the literature focused people. (Vicki, interview 1, lines 172-176, 9/15/02, Block Two)

Vicki has chosen education as her major and feels comfortable with the content knowledge she has in math and science. Vicki shared her academic life with me and her cohort. She also shared her life outside the university and away from the early childhood teacher education program.

**Interesting Dynamic….What is Important to Vicki**

Vicki’s interests outside education and the university spanned travel and girl scouting. Vicki was actively involved in girl scouting and had a troop of girls from the university town.

I feel really comfortable with the students. I actually know a couple of them, I know some faces from a couple other things that I, two of them I’ve had in Girl Scouts and, and the rest I kind of see around so I feel very comfortable just within their community because I just feel like I've already kind of been taken in. (Vicki, interview 1, lines 127-129, 9/15/02, Block Two)

She shared her concerns about being a scout leader and then changing roles to teacher among the same girls.

I know one thing that I was really worried about coming into this block was the fact that I knew some of the people already in the class. I thought it might be kind of [an] interesting dynamic because they know me in a different situation. I’m Miss Vicki, you know instead of Miss Shelly. So it is kind of, are they really going to
accept me as a student teacher as opposed to a girl scout leader. It’s a very different relationship. (Vicki, interview 1, lines 295-299, 9/15/02, Block Two)

Vicki shared with the other members of the cluster, both her experiences as a girl-scout leader and her cat companions, but what she did not share with them was her trip to Mexico. I asked about her trip when she hinted at it early in our first interview.

Vicki became excited when she had a chance to discuss her trip to Mexico. In the summer between Block One and Two, she took a summer semester abroad program to Mexico. There she experienced new and challenging things that encouraged her to continue down the path of education.

…I went to Mexico and it was awesome. It was amazing, the kids were great. The home stay family was great, and I knew no Spanish, and it was amazing. That was the best part, was that I didn’t know any Spanish cause it's like I got to experience what so many experience when they come here but still realize that I’m not even experiencing half of it because I’m volunteering to go. It’s my choice. I know I am leaving in five weeks. (Vicki, interview 1, lines 428-432, 9/15/02, Block Two)

Her trip to Mexico, and her interest in language led Vicki to take the courses for English as Second Language (ESOL) certification. “[I’ve] always been interested in languages and language development and acquisition and all of that. And from that I’m actually taking the ESOL classes and I’ll be certified to teach that“ (Vicki, interview 1, lines 372-378, 9/15/02, Block Two).

Well, I Can Talk…Vicki’s Views

Vicki came into the teacher education program with strong views about political issues, personal issues, and teaching. “Lumping everyone who is ‘different’ merely gives the dominant culture an excuse to dehumanize them and write them off. It is easier to deny a group of people
otherwise undisputed rights, when one sees them as ‘other’” (Vicki, written reflection after reading an article on language diversity in the classroom, 2/12/02-Block One). She was a student who was active in discussions on language diversity, race, and gender issues. As her instructor in the initial course for the program, I knew her as a willing participant in class discussions.

Ok, well, I can talk about things without getting upset about it if somebody disagrees with me I’m really good at having really rational conversations about things that I feel really strongly about. So it's kind of making me feel more comfortable to express myself and to take those risks within the class that has been brought up by other people by these outside voices in these media watches.

(Vicki, interview 1, lines 88-91, 9/15/02, Block Two)

Vicki felt comfortable expressing her views about things that she felt strongly about, and did so in her writing as well as during class time. For a writing assignment Vicki expressed her beliefs about religion. In a university classroom with many self-professed Christians, her views often differed.

As an individual who does not claim any specific religious beliefs, I realize that in truth I have philosophical values (although not religious), which can easily be infringed upon by inappropriate religious practice (i.e. in the schools). For example, I am personally offended by the pledge of allegiance as it assumes a universal god, which I do not believe in, however I feel pressured to say it when I am in the schools because belief in some kind of god is seemingly expected.

(Vicki, written reflection after a reading assignment about religion and schools, Block One, 4/9/02)
I Still Don’t Know How I Feel About This…Vicki Must Repeat The Block Three Field Experience

Vicki was the only member of Cluster A that did not meet the requirements for moving on to student teaching. It was a difficult time for Vicki and she struggled with viewing the positive and negative elements of the decision.

Well [it was] something of a mystery to me. I am not really sure how it came about honestly. …I still don’t know how I feel about this...I will be joining the next cluster behind us…Well, yeah, I have been up and down about it and I mean at first I just felt just really surprised. Like, oh, you know, I felt like normally in anything else you are told beforehand things like that. You know, if he had told me earlier he could have told me why and I could have done something to prevent it….So I mean, really, I think I will benefit from it…I also feel like maybe I am getting an opportunity that everyone else isn’t. So I am, I have taken a positive look at it and I am glad, I need that time. (Vicki, interview 3, lines 86 -187, Block Three)

Vicki met with the university facilitator, program head, the cluster coordinator, and had a member of the cohort as her recorder and support. The outcome of the meeting led to Vicki repeating the Block Three field component. She passed all the university course requirements and will not attend university classes with the new cluster of students in Block Three, but will join the group as they head to their field assignments. At the time of my last interview with Vicki, she spoke softly about her experience, and at least once she looked close to tears.

Anna

Anna is a European American raised in Tennessee and Georgia. Anna's views towards teaching changed as she encountered some situations in her early field experiences.
Anna began her field experiences with a second grade classroom at Farlow Elementary. For her second field experience she was in a fourth grade classroom at Baker Elementary. Anna chose to do her student teaching overseas. She was placed in two different first grade classes, for five weeks each, in Auckland New Zealand.

*It’s Like a Juggling Act…Anna’s Views on Teaching*

When Anna began the program she described what she thought being a teacher was like.

I think being a teacher is like having a lot of jobs wrapped into one, policeman, parent, sometimes an actress, and all this besides the actual task of passing on knowledge. It’s like a juggling act - something always in the air, a balancing trick, and about 50 balls to handle all at the same time! But it’s so great when you pull it off. (Anna, in class writing, 1/22/02, Block One)

It didn’t take long before Anna changed some of her ideas about teaching. Only two months later, when asked to add or change her description of what being a teacher was like, she wrote

Teaching is like a juggling act: trying to balance perfectly all of one's duties and handling the realities before him or her, all with the artistic grace and style that is derived from one's ideals. Classroom management, students' backgrounds, curriculum, and activities are all balls that are involved and cannot be changed or ignored, and it is up to the teacher, depending on their experience and philosophies, to determine the fluidity and beauty of the juggling. (Anna, in class writing , 3/5/02, Block One)
Even as Anna describes some of the issues she thinks she will encounter while teaching, she focuses on the emotional side of teaching.

*Save the World Single-Handedly...Anna Talks About Emotional Teaching*

In Anna’s writing and interviews there was often mention of how emotional teaching was, and how hard that is for a teacher.

Personally I want to be an educator because of its connection to the roles of nurturer and caretaker, two roles that I feel very deeply embedded into my personality. But how could I educate when the basic needs of a child aren't begin met? My mind is already racing ahead to scenarios of wearing myself out as I try to save the world single-handedly. (Anna, written reaction to an article on homelessness, 4/1/02, Block One)

Later as Anna encounters students in her field experience she tells how it affects her.

Because I was so tired all the time, and I said, I thought to myself, if I am this tired from thinking about this one little girl and racking my brain trying to think of what it is that she needs and how these people can get it to her, what I can do in the short time I am here to help her, and it was just exhausting, I mean it was on my mind all the time and I thought about it when I was doing my own thing, like I would be eating dinner and thinking about this little girl and thinking what can I do to help her and the motive and my intentions were good, but I realized if I am a teacher, I am always going to run into students that are going to break my heart and I have to learn to just do the best that I can for them and not stretch myself so thin that I feel like this all the time or I won’t be a good teacher. (Anna, interview 2, lines, 41-48, 11/17/02, Block Two).
Remember Why God Called You To This….Anna’s Beliefs and Teaching

Anna felt called to teach; her faith and Christian beliefs were important to her. In a letter to herself as she began her second semester of the program, she referred to her faith.

Dear Anna,

How strange to be writing to yourself –do you (or I) utilize first or second person? We’ll go with first. (What an odd, rambling, & totally unnecessary introduction!)

Anyway, onto the topic at hand: what kind of teacher do I want to be? I believe, first and foremost, that I want to be a teacher who loves her students—not just make them feel loved or pretend that she does, but truly adores them. Of course there will always be the students that not only don’t love you back, but test every button there is to push, but if you can’t see them in all the wonderful things that the Lord loves on at least a mostly-consistent basis, then you need to reevaluate yourself.

Remember that you are teaching not just to pass down lists of facts & figures, but to expand horizons of the children you work with; to help them to discover, explore, and develop their gifts and talents; to be creative and enthusiastic about your lessons. Remember the ideals that you have right now—they will serve you later!

Don’t let it get mundane –make a concerted effort to keep things new and fresh while developing the ideas that have already worked. Yeah…that’s basically it.

When you find yourself hating your job or being annoyed by your students, which will inevitably happen on some days, try to step back and remember why God called you to do this in the first place.

Anna (Anna, letter to herself, 8/19/02, Block Two)
Anna’s initial thoughts about what teaching was all about, and how emotional it can be to be a teacher are all important to consider as I describe her learning to teach. What is also important is her belief about why she is in a teacher education program.

*Jake*

Jake is a European American. In this way he is like most of the members of the cohort. Unlike most members, he is male. In the teacher education program, there are typically far more females than males. Generally each cluster has one male a semester, which means that being in a male in this program, you are literally surrounded by females. Jake addresses his class as “hey there girls and guy.” Jake did have one other male in the class, which was unusual. In this case when two males entered the program, a male instructor in the program asked that they be placed together, rather than one in each cluster beginning that fall. So Jake did have some male companionship in his university classes for two years.

*From a Male Perspective….Jake Talks About Being a Male in Education*

I was glad that Jake was one of the preservice teachers who volunteered to be interviewed and observed for the study. He provided a perspective that I do not think I could have seen any other way. The fact that the instructor, Michael, was male also, made an interesting dynamic. Jake’s weekly reflection sheet often had messages that showed his appreciation of Michael’s teaching. One day he wrote, “I feel blessed to be growing so much through the daily routines of this course. Plus the instructor is straight RAD” (Jake, weekly reflection, undated). At another Jake wrote “MICHAEL FOR PRESIDENT,” across the bottom of his reflections sheet.
Not only was his perspective unique as one of two males in the cohort, he also felt his role as a male in a classroom was important.

From a male perspective as opposed to a female perspective understanding that as much as all the curriculum is important as, you know, the assessments and the tests and all that, have to be done. The fact that I can be a male that goes into an elementary school and cares about kids who don’t have males or who don’t have dads is just as huge as that curriculum to me. (Jake, interview, lines 547-552, 9/14/02, Block Two)

A male in the teacher education program was unique and his desire to teach kindergarten was also unique. But Jake had other ways to be unique also.

He Still Wants Me To Use My Music….Jake Tells About Music in His Life

Jake was a musician and like other members of the cohort openly shared that he was Christian. In the language arts methods course he wrote a paper on how he writes music, with much of his inspiration coming from bible verses.

Returning to the idea of a crossroads between occupation and profession in which I am forced to dwell, He [God] already takes me there. To MUSIC…to WRITING…to PERFORMING…to SHARING. I am floored by this monumental revelation, that in all of my imperfections and failures he still wants me to use me in music! (Jake, writing about writing music for a final project in a Language Arts methods course, 4/03, Block Three)

Initially Jake wanted to do his student teaching overseas so he applied to do his student teaching in Australia. In April before he was scheduled to go, he decided to refuse his opportunity to teach in Australia. He writes,
Reflecting upon one of the hardest decisions of my life, I realized that going to Australia for ten weeks would in no way strengthen the passion (the pursuit of understanding Christ in me and sharing it through music) I live for and a trip across the ocean would only become the antagonist of everything I am currently learning. …Everything I am trying to achieve in music would be halted, and even pushed back, if I went to Australia and I would return to the tragedy of starting from scratch in building a fan base, writing music, forming a band, etc.

Secondly, I had to seriously weigh the positives and negatives concerning my growth as an educator. Although teaching in a foreign country would look elegant on a resume and seeing kangaroos is a dream of mine, second grade is not where I want to be. (Jake, email, 4/15/03, Block Three)

Jake’s weekly reflections sheets allowed me access to his thoughts on the class. Every week Jake wrote his initials in the corner of his paper, which was the signal to me, that his ideas were available to me for consideration in my research. Not every member of the cohort added their initials every time.

Sometimes (when we are lucky) we get a small glimpse of LOVE, the humility in which we were created. THEN: things like education, pop culture, relationships, daily routines…all of a sudden these consumers of our hearts and minds become irrelevant. In THAT moment, truth dominates reality. (Jake, weekly reflection from university class, 9/11/02)

After another class Jake wrote, “First - I thought I knew everything I needed to be a teacher. Then - I realized there is a lot to know. Now - I am not sure I know anything at all”
Jake’s communication with the instructor through his reflections were connected to his feelings about the cohort.

Although his reflections show comfort in the community and in what he is learning in his field experiences, he carries a concern about translating these ideas into his own classroom.

Mercy … I am in love with ANTICS (Hepworth, 1996), but I am also scared that I'll forget it by the time I have my own class. My greatest fear is that everything I am excited about now, all the things I love because of their non-traditional approach, everything that is RADICAL will get lost in my transition into a real classroom. When the door is shut and no one is looking…will I remember? Will I be radical like I'm called to be? Or is it all just a fantasy? (Jake, weekly reflection from university class, 4/15/03, Block Three)

**The Perfecting Community Known as Cluster A….What Jake Thinks About the Cohort**

Jake had strong feelings about the community that formed as a result of the cohort being together in the teacher education program. After their Block Two field experience he wrote, “Help! We’re back it’s good to see everybody. And I am excited about learning from everybody’s experience” (Jake, weekly field experience, 10/28/02, Block Two). As Block Three begins in the university classroom, Jake writes, “What a joy to have a community where I am encouraged, comfortable, and challenged…it would be a tragedy if we could not grow in such a place” (Jake, weekly reflection, 1/14/03, Block Three). As the cohort entered student teaching, the format of ten weeks in the school, and four-week follow-up, changed also. Jake expressed his opinion about the community to the cohort,

Hello everyone…I think we should all think about the whole "meeting during student teaching" thing…and then after we think we should all say "why yes, that is an excellent idea!" What a great opportunity we have to change the system,
hopefully for the better, and also escalate our own experiences. Not to mention it would be the bomb to have less class in november and december. (Jake, electronic mailing list, 7/30/03, after Block Three)

Later, as the discussion continued on the list serve, Jake posted another message to the cohort.

hey ladies and gentleman…I think it is a good idea (did I say that already). I mean let's be serious here for three seconds, when else are we gonna all get together? At Mexicali? Just like all the other times when it was kendall, tricia, mary, kelli (pseudonyms), and some margaritas. This will be an excellent time for us all to meet weekly, without exception, and continue to share our lives with each other through the unstoppable force, the perfecting community known as cluster A.

(Jake, electronic mailing list, 8/11/03, after Block Three)

Jake is a strong supporter of the community that was built during their semesters together, and admirer of the instructor for the course. His perspective as a male in the program was also unique.

Barbara

Barbara is a European American female just as most of the cohort that began that Spring of 2002. She described it “as I look around at many of my peers [I see]- white, middle class, females” (Barbara, written reaction to reading White Teacher by Vivian Paley (2000), 2/12/02, Block One). She is self-described as opinionated, and often worried that she talked too much, both in the university class and with me during interviews. I think you come to know Barbara by understanding her family connection to teaching, her ideas of who she wants to be as a teacher, and where her challenges are in learning to teach.
Never Want to Get Too Comfortable …Barbara Describes How She Wants to Be A Teacher

Barbara describes teaching as “an uphill climb that does not get easier” (Barbara, in class writing, 1/22/02, Block One). And even while she describes teaching as she begins her teacher education program, she makes similar remarks at the end of her third semester.

I never want to get too comfortable in teaching, that is when I know that I don’t need to do that anymore because if you are comfortable, and I am not saying you are comfortable teaching this lesson because you have taught it for so many years, well then maybe that is the time you need to think, let’s toss it out and do something new. I mean, I just think you should never get too comfortable, if that makes sense. (Barbara, interview 3, lines 1111-1115, 3/31/03, Block Three)

The Way I’ve Seen My Mom…Who Influenced Barbara’s Ideas About Teaching

Often discussions and writing in Barbara’s data turned towards her mother’s classroom. Her mother is a kindergarten teacher and has been for many years. Barbara visited her mother’s classroom on a number of occasions during the program, but was cautious in her comparisons to the classrooms she was placed in for her field experiences. “Just the way I’ve seen my mom growing up, she influenced a lot of the way I think about teaching and learning” (Barbara, interview 2, page 18, 11/18/02, Block Two). Even when Barbara struggled with differing ideas of teaching with her mentor teacher she remembers what her mother told her about the experience. “Well, just go into it knowing that you’re going to come out learning something one way or another. I mean, you’ll learn something about yourself” (Barbara, interview 2, page 20, 11/18/02, Block Two).
Barbara will have the English as a Second Language (ESOL) endorsement on her teacher’s certificate as she graduates from the university. She took courses prior to joining the teacher education program that meet the endorsement requirements. “You take language acquisition and culture, which culture is beneficial but the methods class it was awful” (Barbara, interview 3, lines 195-200, 3/31/03, Block Three). She struggled with students in her field placement that did not speak English as their native language. Her struggles were with how to help them.

There is one little boy in our classroom that speaks no English whatsoever. He mopes about the class and seems to always be so quiet. The only interaction he gets with others is from his friends that can speak Spanish to him. He is in the low group and I believe he does not know much at all of what is going on in the classroom. This is why this article is important to me. Not only would speaking to him in his native tongue help him throughout school, but it would also mean so much more. This little boy would see that he is important and that the teacher does care about his differences and that she is trying to embrace his culture, the very thing that he is made up of and defined by. I am sure that part of the reason he mopes about the classroom is because of the fact that he thinks no one cares about him. I know that I would certainly feel this way in a similar situation. (Barbara, written reaction to a reading assignment on language diversity, 4/9/02, Block One)

She writes about a young boy in her Block Three field experience that gets in trouble because he does not understand the new rules she has explained. When he begins to cry about a punishment
Barbara realizes what has happened and makes a decision to remove his name from the list being punished with silent lunch. She writes in her reflection,

I feel like the biggest donkey on the face of the earth. Barton has suffered severe embarrassment, as well as confusion, at the sake of my doing, I was so upset. Initially my behavior plan was not intended to work the way in which it did on this starting day. I thought that by giving these students a “warning” because of not bringing materials, they would be taught a lesson about taking care of themselves. This was really not the case. I now feel differently about this and that is a “whole other” epiphany in general. (Barbara, written reaction to her critical incident presentation, 3/31/03, Block Three)

Barbara is concerned about teaching students who are English language learners.

I don’t feel I could if you handed me an ESL class today. I would, I don’t know what to do. I would have to read up so much more on it to even begin to understand how to work with that. (Barbara, interview 3, lines 195-200, 3/31/03, Block Three)

I Don’t Like to Be Boxed In…Barbara’s Views on Teaching

During the course of the research my interviews and Barbara's writing showed two perspectives. On one hand, Barbara needed order and routine, and on the other hand she needed room to make her own choices about teaching.

And she [the mentor teacher] had a table where there were just piles and piles of junk all over it. So, that was one thing I tackled with my teacher we got her in order. We got her organized cause I just could not stand it. A lot of disarray. (Barbara, interview 2, page 2, 11/18/02, Block Two)

But Barbara also needed room to make her own decisions and not be tied down to prescriptive lessons.
I have a hard time following [a plan] myself, I am a creature of habit in a lot of ways but something so prescribed drives me nuts. I don’t know, maybe it is because I am claustrophobic, I don’t like to be boxed in. I don’t want to be boxed in by something and say, I don’t want to look back and say well this was my lesson but it didn’t work.

(Barbara, interview 3, lines 769-775, 3/31/03, Block Three)

To sum it all up she describes her lesson planning style.

I'm very organized but sometimes with the lessons I don't put forth as much planning time as I should. Like, I'll have everything ready to go, but as far as mentally prepared I don't think I'm always….cause I'm physically prepared and everything is ready to go. And I can do this lesson and I have my books ready. I'll have the elements ready but then there's sometimes when I get to do the lesson and I'm thinking I didn't really think this through. (Barbara, interview 2, page 25, 11/18/02, Block Two)

Barbara is very aware of what she is learning in her experiences and in her classroom. She takes time to tell stories about her experiences, compares her experiences with her mother’s classroom, and begins to make sense of the complexity of teaching in her own style.

A Few Words on These Introductions

Vicki, Anna, Jake, and Barbara, now you know a little about each of these focus participants. I also tell the story of one more, June. As I write these words about my participants, I worry that they will be remembered as I have presented them. I must remind you the reader, and myself the researcher, that these introductions only capture a moment. Through them I begin to share the participants and how their unique experiences in life, and in learning to teach, have shaped who they are. Creating coherent portraits of these participants is not an easy task. They have changed over the course of the years together and in the program. It is important to me to
share those changes. It is also difficult to tell the whole story. I want the reader to understand these participants, as I have been fortunate to know them, and to do that you must know about them as they learn to teach.

A Conversation Between the Focus Participants

This three-part conversation is a juxtaposition of narrative from all of the focus participants, all at different times and on topics that I explored later in analysis. In the conversation the researcher's voice appears to set the scene or explain transitions or omissions in the dialogue between characters. These participants did not speak in dialogue in the manner it is presented here. I have used my narrative privilege to place their voices together in this way.

Part One: I Want to See It

The scene. In an ideal setting, five preservice teachers sit down together in comfortable chairs to have a conversation about their early field experiences with a researcher who is interested in what they are learning and how they are developing.

RESEARCHER: Why don’t you tell me a little bit about learning to teach.

VICKI: I feel really comfortable with what I am teaching but maybe not as much in how I'm teaching it. Methods are great. I think it all sounds great in theory and I understand it in that way, but to actually go out and implement, I'm scared to death of it. I have no idea how to actually set it up and go out there and do it and actually work. I mean there's a lot of great ideas but, you know, a lot of it is just theory. (Vicki, interview lines 177-186, 9/15/02, Block Two)

JAKE: I think more than anything just ideas and the experience itself, of seeing why this teacher is effective, what is it that she does? Like how does she hold discipline? How does she communicate reading is important? How does she model it? For all the subjects I guess but
especially reading, because that’s so huge for me. (Jake, interview lines 403-406, 9/14/02, Block Two)

ANNA: There's been just so much debating about, not so much debating, but really discussion of just learning styles and theories and how children learn and just a lot of particulars, that is very abstract in a lot of ways. And so since we've talked [about] so many abstract things it's very difficult for me to connect them to a very tangible experience. I was so thrilled on Thursday in our reading class she demonstrated what a guided reading thing was because if she was to say, 'You do this and this and this and it does this for the child and all that stuff.' I mean I don't [think] it would have connected in my head. But to see her do it I mean that's so great. I really feel like I'm going to learn a lot more when I get to the classroom. (Anna, interview lines 300-306, 9/15/02, Block Two)

VICKI: Yeah, we have our little joke now in our cluster, about we just want to hear how to do it, just tell us exactly what to do. Which is impossible. You can’t tell us what to do in every single situation. I think there are certain tips, sharing experiences [that] can be helpful. [For example] I had a student kind of like that, this is what I did, oh this is what I did, okay maybe I should try this. I think examples, just giving us that much more to pull from, since we don’t have twenty-something years of experience. I think [this] is where the mentor teachers come in, when we start teaching. (Vicki, interview lines 712-717, 11/17/02, Block Two)

JAKE: There are parts of me half way through the field experience that are like man, screw school, I could just teach now. I still kind of feel that way, but at the same time I think maybe, I think it is just a maturation process. Just like anything else, and when I am in Block Three, I am going to say oh yeah I am so much better than I was in Block Two. But I can’t really see that now because I don’t know. (Jake, interview lines 406-410, 11/18/02, Block Two)
ANNA: Oh, I'm definitely hands-on. I have to experience something. I am a very fun oriented learner. I have the worst time sitting in front of a text, it takes me hours to get my reading done. (Anna, interview lines 221-222, 9/15/02, Block Two)

JAKE: For me personally, I am totally a visual learner. Everything, all the way through high school and college before elementary ed[ucation] and even now, everything to me. I learn in, when I am in class, I learn so much more from a lecture than I learn from reading an article or whatever. When I was in the field experience or when I was in my pre-professional experience, it was all about soaking up everything. I just feel like I retain that a lot more. So the other reflecting for me is just reflecting on the things that I think are important and reflecting on the things that are kind of plugging into like my philosophy, and where I am going and who I think I want to be as a teacher, and who I think I want to be growing into. (Jake, interview lines 480-497, 11/18/02, Block Two)

BARBARA: This whole semester has been one of great change for me. I am a very opinionated person, and I have said several things in the past that I have had to change my opinion on as a result of some experiences this semester. This is fine, I will admit when I am wrong. I just now have a better understanding of what I think about teaching and learning from a first-hand, insider's view. I have seen with my own eyes how all children learn in different ways. I tested my patience several times when I felt that a student was not trying to understand because he was not 'getting it' the way I was showing him. I see now that my way is not the only way, and from now on, I might as well throw my assumptions out the window. (Barbara, final reflection Block One, 5/3/02)

ANNA: I feel very strongly that I need to have experienced it first whether it was in my own school experience, or whether in my classes here. We're just modeling them for some
setting up situations so that we can experience them. I think that if I've experienced it, I'll be a much better teacher for it, just because I can relate to my students and say, “I know what you're going through, let me show you.” You know, “Here are some things that I saw or things that you might try to remedy the situation.” The suggestions that I would give wouldn't necessarily come from a book or something that I have read but things that I had tried in that situation or things that I had seen my peers try. And so I just, I mean if nothing else, for you to empathize (laugh) with the student and what they're going through. I think that's really important. (Anna, interview lines 107-118, 9/15/02, Block Two)

JAKE: I think it's just a slow maturation process where I pick up a little bit here a little bit there, a little bit in this one reading, and then a little bit from one class discussion, and then a lot from the experiences that we're doing. So to me it's more of just as time rolls by and as we continue to engulf ourselves in all this stuff that we're doing. It just comes. I guess like when you're learning to ride a bike. Maybe it's like little by little you get more and more comfortable and then all of a sudden you don't need the training wheels anymore but you're still kind of slow. And you're riding around your cul-de-sac but then a year from now you're riding up your street and over. And then a year from then you're riding your bike to school, if that makes any sense. (Jake, interview lines 584-593, 9/14/02, Block Two)

ANNA: I think there [are] always things to learn, but that is the big one, right there. It is just being familiar enough with everything so that it is second nature and not always trying to. You know how it is. You play piano a little while and at first it is like okay, wait, this one is this note, which means it is this note on the piano, and after a while it is just coming naturally. I guess it is the same way with teaching or with anything. So I am just waiting to get past the thinking-about-it-phase and to the doing-it-phase. I am really ready to be there right now. I am
tired of having to analyze every small thing and think about the really small things, because thinking about the small things there are so many small things that just occupy my thoughts so much when I am in the classroom. (Anna, interview, 409-414, 11/17/02, Block Two)

RESEARCHER: Give me an example of something that you are expected to think about, some small thing.

ANNA: Transitions, controlling one student’s behavior while still trying to teach the rest of the class. Thinking, well what did they teach me about handling this. Just being able to do it without thinking about it.

RESEARCHER: I am trying to decide whether you think that you can already do it and you don’t want to have to think about it any more, or whether you want to get to that place.

ANNA: I want to get to that place.

RESEARCHER: How is that you think you are going to get there? How do you learn how to do that?

ANNA: Keep doing it. Keep doing it until I am familiar with it. Practice, practice, practice, as my piano teacher used to say.

RESEARCHER: Where do you think that practice comes from? Is it the field experience? Is the reflective piece what comes after or during or ongoing part of that learning?

ANNA: I think it is. I think it is part of it, because you don’t learn anything unless you think about it. (Anna, interview lines 418-439, 11/17/02, Block Two)

RESEARCHER: You have all told about how “seeing teaching” is an important part of learning to teach for you. This “seeing” means different things to each of you though. It may mean watching a model lesson like Vicki described, it may mean watching a teacher interact
with her students, it may mean watching a professor show you ways to set up your classroom. I see all of these as ways you want to “see teaching.”

*Part Two: The Mentor Teacher*

_The scene._ After a brief break the researcher continues the conversation as she allows the preservice teachers to settle back down in their comfortable chairs.

RESEARCHER: What can you tell me about what you feel your role is in the classrooms you go to for your early field experience?

JAKE: I am definitely a visitor. And I have to respect [that] there’s a certain place, you know, a line that you can’t really flirt with. I don’t know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate and so that may be a little hard. (Jake, interview lines 295-297, 9/14/02, Block Two)

JUNE: We kind of developed a partnership more than this is my student teacher this is my mentor teacher. It was like we were working together to see what we can do best for this class. She made me feel so welcomed, instantaneously. It was like, what can I do for you? And when you start off with that type of relationship you feel like your vulnerabilities kind of go away in a sense. (June, interview lines 279-283, 3/30/03, Block Three)

BARBARA: I was there for her, I was her policeman, I guess in a lot of ways, I was there to help people [stay] on task, make sure they were behaving properly, and I would sit with them at the silent lunch table. But when it came to doing assignments, she wanted me to [do the] minimum. She was like, ‘Well now what do you have to do?’ And I [said], ‘This, but I would really like to do writing workshop everyday.’ And [she said], ‘I can’t give you that much time….’ The whole time when it came to relinquishing any [of] her lessons, I felt that she didn’t have the confidence in me to be able to teach the lesson the way she could. I don’t know why I
felt that way about it, because she never came out and said that to me, but [that’s] the impression that I gathered. (Barbara, interview 2, 11/18/02, Block Two)

ANNA: The teacher actually stopped her lesson and, irritated, said, "um, ya'll are being a little loud over there!" Then, directing her words to me specifically, said, "They don't all need to be reading at the same time. They need to take turns going around the table, each reading a page." I don't know how I was supposed to know that, but apparently I was, and the little boy grinned and said, "We told you so." I was frustrated with the teacher for doing that, because with that one remark, correcting me in front of the entire class, she unintentionally labeled me as a student, and therefore, someone who does not deserve the respect of the teacher. (Anna, field experience journal Block One, 1/24/02)

VICKI: I realized that it is her classroom, not mine. It was so hard. (Vicki, field experience journal, 3/8/02, Block One)

BARBARA: She had a table where there were just piles and piles of junk all over it. So, that was one thing I tackled with my teacher we got her in order. We got her organized, cause I just could not stand it, a lot of disarray. (Barbara, interview page 2, 11/18/02, Block Two)

ANNA: I think the overall attitude that I had was, if the teacher is in the room, then I am the student; even if I am up front and you know, if my professor is there and my mentor teacher, and they are watching me, I am still the student. I am never fully a teacher. There were four days when the teacher was gone that I did feel like a teacher because I was in charge. I was in charge of making things happening, of making executive decisions. But when the teacher was there, I felt that every thing that I had to
do, or every thing that I was going to do, I felt like I had to run it past her. I couldn’t just
do it. That included my lessons and every thing else. I mean I really did feel very much
like a student every time that I was watching her teach or even when I was in front of the
classroom and she was there. I felt like I was playing pretend. (Anna, interview 3,
3/31/03, Block Three)

BARBARA: In a way I was proving to myself, I'm a hard-headed person, and I
have to sometimes prove to myself that things can work, and they did. And so I didn't feel
bad at all and I told her all about it and so it wasn't like I was doing something secretly
but it was like I had this power unleashed on me when she wasn't there, cause she wasn't
sitting in the back of the room, you know, watching every move. And I didn't have to
suggest everything I wanted to try cause a lot of what I suggested to her, she's like, 'I
don't know, you know.' So I never felt like I really got to do what I wanted to do with
them. (Barbara, interview page 8-9, 11/18/02, Block Two)

JAKE: I talked to [my mentor teacher] at the end of our experience and I
expressed to her my appreciation of the flexibility and the freedom that she gave me to do
whatever I needed to do and she relayed back to me that she remembered how important
it was when she was doing her student teaching that, if she hadn’t had that freedom, like
there is a lot of things that she might have missed out on. So it actually, it actually
worked out really well with her. But it was still kind of a thing where there were certain
things that you just didn’t, there were certain things that I just didn’t know if I could
really ask her about or talk to her about, and sometimes I would just do them and then
sometimes I just wouldn’t do them, depending on what it was. (Jake, interview lines 329-
336, 11/18/02, Block Two)
VICKI: [Using the tape and book] is what [my mentor teacher] told me to do. We had a good relationship but I still feel like this is her classroom, which it is. So I didn't want to say, "This book is horrible.' You know. I didn't realize it was [as] bad as it was until the tape started and I was like, oh goodness. (Vicki, interview lines 28-31, 11/17/02, Block Two)

BARBARA: It is kind of a paradox because we are being told you are burgeoning teachers, you are teachers. This is what you are. But then in so many ways we are just a college student, just going through the hoops. You look through the [field experience packet] and this is what you have to do. I mean it puts limits on you. I came to resent those things I had to do every day. But I know I want to make an ‘A’ in the class. I had to do them to get the ‘A’ and the rest I can learn my own way of doing things. (Barbara, interview lines 557-636, 3/31/03, Block Three)

VICKI: I think that it kind of established my role as the teacher. I think they have accepted me but not necessarily as like a full teacher yet and this was pretty late into the experience. So I think [during] this activity where I had control, kind of laid my position as a teacher. So I think they really respected me more after that point. I wish I had done it earlier in the experience. But I think because I am so young and I am only there part of the time, they know I am going to school, I think they are just like okay, you are an adult but you are just a teenager, kind of. You are like my older sister, kind of, so I wasn't quite the same status as the teacher and I actually kind of had a rude awakening with that because I thought they respected me as a teacher a lot more than they did. I guess at that point I realized, okay, I am not a full-time teacher yet in their eyes obviously. (Vicki, interview lines 136-151, 11/17/02, Block Two)

BARBARA: [I felt like a student] when I was teaching my lesson sometimes, or when she would be out of the room is when I felt most confident, because she wasn’t sitting in the
back. It was different for me than last semester when my teacher sat in the back. I didn’t feel scrutinized as I did this time, and I don’t know why but I feel like she watched me the whole time. I kept thinking I hope I am doing this right, I don’t know. When I would give their spelling test, she would walk out of the room. I felt like a teacher and that is funny that giving a spelling test I felt that way, because I don’t even want to teach that part (Barbara, interview lines 255-260, 3/31/03, Block Three)

VICKI: I feel like our mentor teachers are a great resource for us, and that we should use them. Not use them, but use them to the best amount that we can or the best way that we can. I think that is always kind of [a] gray spot, a risky spot for me going in. They are our peers but they are still like the age of my mother, so it is kind of different. It is like there are certain things that I would talk to my mom about it, I am very close to my mom, but there are certain things that are just kind of, I don’t know. (Vicki, interview lines 608-612, 11/17/02, Block Two)

JUNE: [My mentor teacher] told me I don’t see you as a student teacher. I see you as a teacher and you know I want you to have control over this class also. So she gave me freedom to implement her things too and there was never any questioning. She never questioned what I did. She never made me feel burdened by it. (June, interview lines 11-113, 11/17/02, Block Two)

ANNA: I mean I really did feel very much like a student every time that I was watching her teach or even when I was in front of the classroom and she was there, I felt like I was playing pretend almost and she was watching (Anna, interview, 3/31/03, Block Three)

JUNE: [After one of my lessons in math] she told me ‘this is why I take student teachers, because you challenged me. You bring these new ideas from your classes into the classrooms.’ (June, interview lines 384-390, 11/17/02, Block Two)
ANNA: There was a day that there was a sub who had been a sub for three days and it was like her third time doing this and she didn’t know what she was doing and she didn’t know the kids and I suddenly became very protective. Whereas before I was a visitor and a welcomed visitor, but it was her class and her kids. As soon as she left there was a sub who was supposed to be in charge. I said, Look you can sit in the back and read a book if you want I will take over everything because I know what we are supposed to be doing.' And they became my kids and I was so much more at ease. I didn’t care if the sub was watching. I was very much more at ease. I was more confident in making my decisions and the kids responded well to it. They asked me about stuff. It wasn’t until after an hour had gone by that one of them finally said, 'Who is that lady in the back?' I was like. 'Oops, sorry, I should have introduced you to her,' (Anna, interview, 3/31/03, Block Three)

JUNE: I think the three of us [mentor teacher, parapro, and I] had a team teaching type method that worked great. It ended up working great for us. She never made me feel inferior to her and maybe that’s why I respect her so much now. She saw me as more of a partner. She saw me as a teacher more than just this little student coming over for four weeks. (June, interview lines 184-206, 3/30/03, Block Three)

ANNA: So, it is a huge goal of mine, to be on the same plane as my teacher, and part of that is seeing myself as a teacher instead of a student. I wonder if that will be easier during student teaching. I really have a difficult time conceptualizing myself as a teacher instead of a student, because they are physically in the room and because I know that I am in that position to learn more than I am to teach. Every activity that I am teaching is so that I can learn and so I feel in, not subversive but a submissive position. I have noticed that there are some people in our class who are very proactive about the relationship with their teacher and that they see
themselves as, I would even venture to say equals. They see themselves as equals of their teacher and not in a cocky way, but just I want to learn, this is what I want to learn. (Anna, interview, 3/31/03, Block Three)

JUNE: I didn’t even ever have to ask the mentor teacher, ‘I wish the para-pro would step back a little.’ I mean she saw me as a teacher too. (June, interview lines 41-42, 3/30/03, Block Three)

JAKE: [I said it before in our conversation but I will repeat it here], there are parts of me that, even halfway through the field experience, there are parts of me that are like, screw school. I could teach right now. I still kind of feel that way. But at the same time, I think maybe it is just a maturation process. (Jake, interview 2, lines 406-416, 11/18/02, Block Two)

BARBARA: I think we are all antsy to make that jump. I guess in some ways people don’t think we are ready, and in some ways we are ready to unleash and do all these things. You keep getting pushed down just a little bit more about what you want to do, and you think okay well, I hope I am not disenchanted when the point comes along and then I think, 'Well, I don’t have time.' I mean I don’t suspect that I will because I have seen that in teachers [who say] ‘you can’t do that that is just idealistic, that won’t happen in a real classroom.’ Well it can. They don’t write books about it because it can’t work. I mean it can. (Barbara, interview lines 484-490, 3/31/03, Block Three)

RESEARCHER: You have taken on different roles in the classrooms of your early field experiences. You have been partners, policemen, visitors, and even an interruption. The ways that you described your relationships with your mentor teacher help me to understand how you developed as teachers.
Part Three: Reflection

The scene. After another short break, the conversation begins again.

RESEARCHER: I heard the word reflection in your conversations and in your classroom on campus. I read it in your journals and reactions. I was hoping you would be able to talk about what reflection means to you.

VICKI: [Here's an example.] Something happened today in Ms. Turner’s class that bothered me. The class had just finished reading a book about Wilma, who won the gold medal in track. They were told to take one of the gold medal shaped papers and write what they could win a gold medal in and why they could win it on the back. Charlotte and I walked around and helped the students spell things and asked them what things they were good at. When they completed this they were to wait until Ms. Turner called on them. She was seated at the back table with glue and glitter. She took the students' medals, spread a little glue on it, sprinkled it with glitter, put a string through the hole at the top and sent them back to their desks. The students did not get to do any of the fun part!!!! I was astonished. What she was doing goes against many of my beliefs and values as a future teacher. Charlotte and I were on the other side of the room and I could not help but whisper to Charlotte about how the students didn't get to do anything. There is no way that Ms. Turner heard me, but right then she asked if one of us could help her. I figured that I deserved it for saying something, so I went. It was so hard for me to do everything and not even let the children pick up glitter color. I thought about letting them do it, but I realized that it is her classroom, not mine. It was so hard. (Vicki, field experience journal, 3/8/02, Block One)
ANNA: Much of what I have learned has come as a result of reflecting on hectic classroom experiences to see what was really going on while simply attending to keep things calm. (Anna, final reflection Block One, 5/6/02)

VICKI: I think that before this semester I had the false belief that I had nearly fully developed my beliefs and analyses of several issues. I thought that I knew how I felt on many issues and that I had considered every point of view. I am beginning to realize that my beliefs are not static and that many of them probably never will be. (Vicki, written reflection, 5/3/02, Block One)

BARBARA: On paper I can "see" my ideas, I can vent in an irrational manner and return to that reflection and later make some rationality out of it. My ideas flow better as I sit and write, and I feel like I can make my point with the paper -- with no outside opinions hindering my speech. Also, as I read everything that I have written, I see a picture of myself forming. I think, "Yeah! That is what I believe!" I see one big idea, and one that I can constantly modify as I have new expectations. Writing my thoughts also enables me to see my own personal growth over time. ... I am able to "work out" my conflicts on paper, without sounding like a buffoon while trying to get my point across to someone that has not had the same experiences as mine, one who would really not understand anyway because of this fact. It is in this way that I am able to identify what I do believe. It is all laid out in front of me, without my having to dig deep to say what I really mean. Writing is personal, and I feel that my whole person is shown best in this way. (Barbara, final written reflection Block One, 5/3/02)

VICKI: I think that the learning comes from realizing your own thoughts, values, and whatever you are talking about. Whether it is behavior management, or prejudice, or censorship, or whatever is the topic. Going from your thoughts and taking into account all those other
professional articles. It is the more professional thought, whatever I think, [rather] than others’ thoughts on it and actual experiences with it. Like with the behavior management; this is a real-life example of what happens, this is how I feel about it, and so how do I reconcile these two. In trying to reconcile all the different sides of it, learning occurs. I think that challenging my own thoughts about it, trying to figure out other people’s thoughts about it, actual experiences, and reconciling, that is where it [is at]. [When] you start revising and getting to the point where you can actually implement, it is the evidence of that learning. Getting to where you can say, 'This is how I feel about it, this is how it has changed, this is why, and this is how I think I want this to change in my classroom. This is the behavior that I want to change. These are the ideas that I want to give to my children.' Taking that and saying how I am going to do that, and then looking back again at resources and other people, and going to others and finding out what I want to do. This is how I am going to do it, and then trying it, and then going to the classes again. I think it [is] how we grow and we learn, so I guess continual reflection and revision and trial and error. (Vicki, interview lines 572-587, 11/17/02, Block Two)

JAKE: I mentioned that it was cool that every time that I read, I'm picking up little things here and there about what I'm going to be able to use as a teacher. Everything that we do, every activity we do, I pick out something, even if it is something small. We're always growing and you'll never stop growing. I think that’s huge because as you experience more, as you do more, and obviously I'm only in the beginning as a student learning this stuff, but you'll just always be learning. There's never really the perfect teacher, it doesn't really exist. (Jake, interview lines 160-170, 9/14/02, Block Two)

JUNE: All of our classes are so discussion oriented that you are constantly having to reflect on it. What you think about education? What you think about how you would
do this? How this teacher did this? How this person did this? Or what would you have done differently? Those questions are constantly running through your head. And it is so funny, because now I apply those when I teach dance. I will be sitting in class teaching dance and thinking, 'How could I have taught that step differently?' So it has made me a better dance teacher. I see a difference in my dance classes. (June, interview lines 997-1002, 11/17/02, Block Two)

JAKE: To me there are two different kinds of reflecting. There is reflecting that is required, which is papers. We had a ton of stuff post-field and a lot of it was exactly the same; review a lesson, give a short summary, and reflect on what you learned or how you learned or what went well or what didn’t go well. Blah, blah, yeah, yeah! There is a lot in general, not even from the field experience, from what we are doing in class, from reading, and from activities and from whatever. There is a lot of that, required reflecting where you have a write “x” number of pages [in a] paper about what you think or what you learned or whatever. Which is okay, I don’t mind that, it is good, sometimes it is good, and sometimes it is just busy work.

The other kind I think, for me personally, I am totally a visual learner. I learn so much more from a lecture than I learn from reading an article or whatever. When I was in the field experience or when I was in my pre-professional experience, it was all about soaking up everything. I feel like I retain a lot more and so the other reflecting for me is just reflecting on the things that I think are important, and reflecting on the things that are kind of plugging into like my philosophy, and where I am going, and who I think I want to be as a teacher, and who I think I want to be growing into. (Jake, interview lines 480-497, 11/18/02, Block Two)

ANNA: I think because I’m in the practice right now of knowing that I am going to have to report on it later. My mind is very aware of things and that reflective state
because I know that I am going to be asked that later. So I guess I am a little more attentive than I would normally be, but I mean, it is definitely good practice. (Anna, interview lines 198-200, 11/17/02, Block Two)

BARBARA: As a teacher you have to be reflective and thinking. If [something is] not working [you have] to do something better and not stay in this routine habit.(Barbara, interview, 11/18/02, Block Two)

RESEARCHER: I hear how each of you has your own ideas about what reflection is. What I do hear is that you have different ways of reflecting, whether it is on paper, or in your mind, whether it is for a class or for yourself. Some of you reflected on specific situations and allowed us to understand your thought processes, and some of you explained what it means to reflect for you personally. For a term that is thrown around so often in teacher education, I think it is important for me to understand how you view reflection.

The narrative of the five focus participants ends here. After introducing you to the participants I shared some of their ideas about learning and their field experiences in a conversation. The lens narrowed to share those specific topics. The next narrative is a story of one preservice teacher.

June’s Narrative: A Story of One Preservice Teacher in her Early Field Experiences

I will tell June’s story as if, you the reader, were listening to her. Much of the data collected was from interviews or her own writing and therefore I chose to use her first person narration of the story of her time in the field during her early childhood teacher education program.
June’s Story

My family doesn’t think I should teach. In fact they give me a lot of crap for choosing the field of teaching (interview 2, line 674, 11/17/02, Block Two). They aren’t sure it is the career for me. They think that I should pursue a career as a dance educator. You will hear me tell you about dancing again when you hear me tell you about my field experiences. I came to the university from Ohio where I graduated from high school. I moved away from the cold weather and my family. It didn’t take long before my parents and younger brother and sister moved down south too. So even if they don’t think I am right about teaching, they followed me here.

Dance has Been Part of my Life for Years

I have taught pre-ballet for three to six year olds (index card 4010, Block One). I’m not saying that teaching ballet is anything like teaching school, but I have learned a lot from that. It’s completely different than teaching in a classroom because there is a set vocabulary and you have to look at kinesthetic development, you look at body development, you look at muscle awareness, eye hand coordination. It is a whole different level of teaching. But there is no way I won’t bring dance into my classroom. It has been too much a part of my life. I can’t see taking twenty years of dance training and shoving it under the rug and not telling my students about that part of my life. (interview 1, lines 375-387, 9/16/02, Block Two)

When I started the teacher education program I did it because I didn’t like the dance education faculty. I didn’t want to have to take classes with them. Besides, I have been teaching dance for long enough now, I don’t think I need those classes. I don’t think I need a dance education certificate. I can do whatever I want without having to take those classes. But I do like teaching, so here I am. (interview 1, lines 391-395, 9/16/02, Block Two)
My experiences with dance have always been non-welcoming. In dance you do it, and you do it again, and again, and go over it again. You are always pushing yourself, pushing yourself. Which for dance, is appropriate, but for learning in a classroom, it is not. If you are pushing forward there is no time to sit back and think about it. It would let my students down if I didn’t give them room to grow and learn from opportunities. I love to learn and that is why I am in this field. And I think that is the whole point of education isn’t it? (interview 1, pages 15-17, 9/16/02, Block Two)

I still feel the dance. The lights are always bright. Glaring in my periphery or often times directly. It is as if you forget that you are laying in the sun and you flicker open your lids only to be greeted with sufferable whiteness that brings you pain and flinching, but you are grateful for its appearance none the less. When my eyes pan an audience I am filled with hesitation but enraptured knowing that their eyes are the beams of sun I crave. I may be moving quickly, the music humming an endless rhythm of eight counts. My head reeling in insufferable memorization and timeliness. Each step is calculated and executed. But my being, my essence is undeniably raptured with my connection to these chosen audience members. I can still feel each flash from their photographs, from their electric eyes as they search to focus their lenses and not miss one perfect moment of our established relationship. Now my role has changed. As I teach dance, no longer am I receiver of the love – the dancer. Now I am the giver – the director. I am teaching these girls how to bare their soul—how music can enter through las orejas and be released through el corazon. (ELAN paper, spring 2003, Block Three)

Block One

For Block One, our early childhood classes were only two credits, one credit for the class and one credit for the field experience. We were introduced to the school with an orientation one
morning, where they described the reading program we were supposed to help with. We even got to see the classrooms and teachers before our first visit. But that was where the organization ended. I was assigned to a second grade classroom at the same time as Stephanie, another girl in our cohort. We were to work together.

*I gained more in that one hour.* Our first field experience in the teacher education program was so frustrating. The school we went to was so disorganized. The teacher for my class wasn’t even there most days when I was there. One day when there was a substitute, the students came back from PE and were madly out of control. I knew something was different. Immediately the substitute came screaming at the kids to sit down and shut their mouths. I was even scared of her. I remember thinking to myself that I wasn’t even going to be able to tolerate five minutes of this woman, let alone seven hours. When I was telling the class goodbye, one student came up to give me a hug. He wouldn’t let go. He told me that, I should stay and that “They didn’t want to have that substitute for the rest of the day.” He even asked me if they could all go with me. When I was walking out of the school that day, I finally felt better about this class, not discouraged like I had been in the past. I felt as though they saw me as a teacher. (Journal from Farlow experience, 3/5/02)

The reading program that we were supposed to help with was boring and the students misbehaved when they were in their groups working with me. Thank goodness that by the middle of February they reevaluated the program and allowed the teachers to use that time however they wanted. So then I worked one-on-one with a student. The school had gotten the standardized test scores back and she pinpointed some students for assistance. (Journal from Farlow experience, 2/19/02)
I was frustrated by a lot of things at Farlow. I almost quit the program (interview 2, line 620, 11/17/02). It just didn’t feel right. It didn’t feel like we were seeing the things we were talking about in classes at the university. How could we learn to teach in ways that we didn’t see at Farlow? I wanted to see a classroom where the students were learning and were treated like valued members of the learning community.

I went to see another classroom at Farlow. My instructor for our early childhood class said, “Yes there are teachers who teach differently at Farlow. And yes, there are teachers who teach the way we have been reading about.” So I went to visit a recent graduate of our program who taught fifth grade. The children completely respected her. I think this is due to the fact that she never raised her voice at the kids for the hour that I was there. She was certainly firm with them. This clearly made a difference in the discipline of the class. They responded to her instructions and seemed almost upset if they were reprimanded for not doing so. This was an environment for learning. The kids would ask each other questions or help each other out with problems and additionally they were not fearful to ask the teacher for help. I gained more from this one hour than I did the rest of the semester. (journal from Farlow experience, 4/16/02)

I realized I wasn’t completely prepared to deal with diversity. For whatever reason, I struggled in an educational setting. That wasn’t the only thing that I struggled with. I realized I was completely unprepared to deal with diversity. The group of students I worked with consisted of five African American girls and one Hispanic boy. I am by no means a prejudiced person and I have worked with children from different ethnicities and races at camps and other venues. It isn’t that I felt the children acted any differently than White children that I have worked with. It isn’t that I was intimidated by their color or speech. Rather, I found I had trouble responding to their questions and comments on race and the differences between them and myself.
One comment hit me rather hard. One of the girls in my reading group at Farlow was continuously attempting to play with my hair. After repeated attempts to get her focused on the reading, she was frustrated because she wasn’t getting what she wanted. She turned to me and said, “Miss Devon I want to play with your hair because I don’t have pretty White girl hair to play with.” Slam! I wanted to grab her and say that each person has their own beautiful quality but I froze…unable to say or convey how I felt to an eight year old and make her understand. I learned that this eight-year old girl can see that people are different and she has learned how to recognize distinguishing qualities in individuals. (Journal from Farlow field experience, 1/22/02)

One of the other preservice teachers said that she didn’t believe that the girl had any racial connotation behind the statement. That she was just being a curious girl that wanted to play with my hair. I agree this could be the issue. After all, little girls enjoy playing with makeup and doing tasks that deal with beauty. However, I think that maybe the question now should be: Do you address the racial issue or do you just assume that she is being a ‘typical’ girl? I wanted to respond to my peer. The little girl in my class specifically said ‘White’ hair,’ which she doesn’t have. If she would have said, “I don’t get to play with anyone’s hair,” I might not have felt so sensitive about the comment. Yet, I feel that I made the mistake of not responding to the comment at hand. Not responding to the differences between us. I think that even though it is easy to assume she could have been making a mindless comment, it is also a possibility that she wasn’t. That in fact she was recognizing the differences between a White female and a Black female. (reaction paper to reading White Teacher (Paley, 2000), 2/10/02)

After that incident I was almost scared. I felt I didn’t know how to deal with racial issues. I came into the program secure in my identity (final exam 4010, 4/23/02) but found I have so much room to grow. And I was left with questions. Was I ever taught about differences in race?
Am I really prepared to answer questions regarding differences in race if I am insecure in my own identity? After reading Paley’s (2000) *White Teacher*, I was happy to know she struggled with it too. She doesn’t throw it under the table, but deals with it. That is what I need to understand. Yes, there are differences among us. The important thing is to recognize those differences and utilize them to create the best environment for the kids. (reaction paper, 2/10/02)

I would honestly say I was very scared about teaching Black students. I’m not scared to admit this because I haven’t ever really taught them. I grew up in a completely white suburban atmosphere. When I was around Black children I was uncomfortable and that was a problem. I had to know how to relate to them. So over the summer I did a lot of reading. I am obsessed with Vivian Paley. I just think that she has a self-awareness of what she did wrong and how to fix it. And that’s my goal. I hope that I can look at my students, particularly my Black students and ask myself, “How am I relating to them? What am I doing? How can I make it better?” So I was scared about that. I really was. It’s not like I haven’t been exposed to the community but when I got around kids I was scared they were looking at me saying, "This is a White teacher who has no idea how to relate." So as I began the Block Two field experience that was my biggest fear. (interview 1, lines 205-211, 9/16/02)

*Block Two*

Block Two had a different structure for us than Block One. We had a new instructor, we had classes on campus for a while, then we went out to the field for a while, then back to campus. It was a little strange to have that type of schedule because our friends who weren’t in the program didn’t have the same kind of schedule. It was nice, though, to know all the people in our class. Our cohort was together for the second semester.
Sturdy, like an old weathered tree. Maybe it is the perfectionist in me, but somehow I earned the role of taking care of the cohort. I am not sure exactly how it started. I know I volunteered to be on the advisory panel at the beginning of Block Two, maybe that is where it started. (weekly reflection sheet, 8/28/02) I know that I felt embarrassed when no one came to class prepared to discuss the reading assignment (undated weekly reflection sheet). But now they think I am sturdy like an old, weathered oak tree. They say, “June is stable, June always has it together, we can always count on June to have assignments finished.” What they don’t know about me is that I throw myself into papers and perfection because I cannot excel as a dancer, and I am determined to be the best damn teacher I can be. They don’t realize that I throw myself into papers and perfection because if I have no time to spend with dancer friends then they will not see my jealousy. I live in fear that I will fail at being an educator like I did being a dancer. (ELAN paper, spring 2003)

Did I ever do this? I went into Block Two with apprehension, but I had a lot of questions too. I wanted to finally see how this is done and what I can do too. Fifth grade, that’s what my assignment was. I was very intimidated going into fifth grade. I had worked with fifth grade teaching dance, but never in an academic setting. The first day I walked in the classroom they were doing subjects and predicates and I remember thinking, did I ever do this? It was very overwhelming at first, all the content. They were learning about the civil war and battles of this and that. I would have to go home and study. I would have to read over everything they were doing the next day just to make sure I knew it.

I learned quickly that you can’t talk down to them. There is a level of maturity, and you have to foster that maturity. They are growing up and they are independent, they are at the stage where they love their teacher but they are not their best friends. They don’t want hugs, they don’t
need the same love that the young grades need. It was a different way of interacting and I loved it. When I came out of that experience I knew I would teach fifth grade in a heartbeat. The interactions and the discussions you can have, the wide variety of things you can do, I loved it all. (interview 2, lines 70-86, 11/17/02)

I had such an incredible experience in Block Two. My mentor teacher was amazing. She let me take part in setting expectations, challenging them. She told me, “I don’t see you as a student teacher I see you as a teacher.” She gave me freedom to implement the things I needed to. (interview 2, 11/19/02)

_It was just a differing of opinion._ I did a reading lesson on prefixes and suffixes and it was horrible. Well, I didn’t feel comfortable with the content at all and it was kind of throwing it at them out of the blue. It was something I had to do for a class. The idea behind it was we would talk about what a prefix is and how you add it to the front of a word and how it changes the meaning. Then I gave them this worksheet and I guess I didn’t really explain the worksheet. It was kind of complicated and we were running out of time. I didn’t explain it well enough, so it totally flopped. They were all freaking out and it was kind of funny. I just laughed at myself afterwards. You have to be able to time manage and if you see that you are running out of time, don’t assign it for homework because they don’t know what they are doing and that is what I did. But they surprised me. They came in the next day and they knew what they were talking about. If you looked at their work you wouldn’t know, but if you talked to them they knew it. They definitely knew it and they could verbally tell me what was going on but they weren’t able to write it.

I got evaluated that day on that lesson and it was a discouraging evaluation. My mentor teacher loved it. She thought it was a good lesson and my UF (University Facilitator) just didn’t
agree with the worksheet. She didn’t think it was appropriate. It was just a differing of opinion on what was good for them. I totally respect the UF. I take constructive criticism great. I want to learn from this, but it was somewhat discouraging just because I felt like she hadn’t sat in there with those kids for the last month and know what they need. So, for me, it was just a varying of opinion and then it just brings you down. Any person who gets told they are doing wrong can take it with a grain of salt, but it is still going to bring you down a little bit. I know for me I want to do such a good job. I just work hard and I want to do this. So, I don’t think it was a total flop. I mean the kids did know the material and they were able to answer them. The frustration that I saw in them at the end of class was not there the next day. It was like they had gone home, they had sat down and they had had time to think about it and were able to come back. That just made me feel better because their attitude was totally different. (interview 2, lines 169-217, 11/17/02)

Success is their enthusiasm. I had good lessons as well. Let me tell you about my math lesson. It was supposed to be only a couple lessons, but it turned out to be six days of math. We had to do children’s literature and problem solving and they were supposed to be two separate lessons, but I kind of just intertwined it all. I read the book How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World by Marjorie Priceman (1994). For the first part of it, I designed problems that dealt with where she traveled within the book, like she goes from Italy to France and France to here. They divided into groups and I gave them each a problem and it was a division problem and they had to decide if one person traveled a certain amount of miles in one day or if one person traveled this many miles and another person traveled the same miles and they want to go for an equal amount of days, who would travel more miles per day. They had to be able to explain, they couldn’t just do the calculation. They had to be able to explain it and then estimate it and then do the long division when they were there.
It was very progressive and I made sure the first day that I read the book and then I modeled a problem together because they had never worked in groups and they had never problem-solved for long division yet. I was observed that day too and there is no way that class would have any prior way of knowing how to do it. So I modeled it out and then they got in their groups. They were just exploding, the math discussion and they would be able to look and if someone did something wrong, they would say, "No you do it this way." I had given them key words they needed to focus on when they were talking in their groups. It was just awesome. It was amazing.

Then the rest of the week, they had to design their own trips. I gave them a huge map of the United States, because we thought if we go around the world it could be forever. They had to design a trip from Atlanta to somewhere else and decide everything, the days, the miles, how long they were going to take, and then they traded off papers and solved each other’s problems. Then the fourth and fifth day we dealt with gas prices and gas mileage and they had to decide how that would affect the costs and what the differences would be and then we charted it all on the sixth day. We put it on a chart and looked at what factors could have been changed to make it equal or why did one group cost more in gas than another group. Success to me is their enthusiasm toward the topic and I saw that.

They would talk to me about it outside of class. They were taking it home. I thought maybe I was doing something right here because this is amazing. I wasn’t expecting that. I know that they are doing it themselves, they are taking what they know and applying it, instead of me saying this means this and this means this. I wasn’t doing that. I taught probably less amount of time in those six days than I probably did in my two reading lessons. I remember thinking,
“Finally, this stuff that we learn in class actually works.” (interview 2, lines 293-350, 11/17/02) (portfolio, spring 2003)

*Walker Elementary was excellent for taking care of that.* One of my fears going into Block Two was what my reaction was going to be to teaching Black children. I don’t know what I was thinking. I was at Walker Elementary and that was excellent for taking care of that. Most of the schools that we are placed in are predominately white and here is Walker, with 56 percent African American. In my reading class there were 19 students and 17 of them were African American. I went into this field experience thinking that you have to teach them differently. I don’t know what I was thinking. They are just kids, it doesn’t matter what color they are, it is just about knowing their background and how to help them. There is definitely a cultural difference. They are raised differently than I was in my White middle class neighborhood. There are differences and I have to acknowledge them, but I was comfortable teaching that class. I did not even think about it until we had to look back at our fears after the field experience, and I wondered why I had said that was fear. I have moved on. (interview 2, lines 591-606, 11/17/02)

When I look back at the experience I had at Farlow and how tough I thought it was, I now know it wasn’t a Black or White issue. It was a teaching issue. After that first experience I would have turned down a job at a predominantly Black school, I don’t think I would now. I do not consider myself a prejudiced person, I am just hell bent on being a good teacher and if I can’t help those kids, then I don’t want to be in that classroom. It all comes back to what is best for the students. (interview 2, page 20-21, 11/17/02)

*It’s hard to be with the same twenty-five people.* Our cluster came back from our Block Two field experience and it was Complainfest 2000. You would have thought the world had dropped down and we all died. Everyone was complaining and didn’t want to do any work. I
thought to myself, “Wow, we had totally fallen apart.” I felt that community was demolished in four weeks. I put a lot of expectations on myself and I wanted my classmates to put those expectations on themselves too. When I saw them slacking off or not being their best, it frustrated me. I worked my butt off and I did it because reflecting was what was going to make me better. It was going to make me a better teacher and it was going to be what helped those kids. I wanted my classmates to see that and I am sure that a lot of them did. But there were some who rubbed me the wrong way.

Here is the perfect example. One day, we walked into Michael’s class and he had wanted us to read two chapters out of a book. There were three of us who had read the chapters, out of 25 of the cluster. He asked point blank who had read the chapters raise your hand. I did and three people raised their hand. I was so embarrassed for our class because I thought that was a good book. *The First Six Weeks of School* (Denton & Kriete, 2000), that is a good book. It has so many ideas in it and he totally adjusted his lesson plan for us. I thought I would never have been that kind, I think I would have had to ask the class to leave. He just adapted to us right there on the spot, and I wrote on our reflection sheet that I was totally discouraged and embarrassed for the class.

I was a student liaison when we were out in the field. I would write notes and reminders about things that we had to do. I just want everyone to do so well. I know we are all going through this horrible semester and I give and give and give and when you don’t get it back, I guess when there is not a lot of support back is when you feel like, “What am I doing this for?” It made me learn that I have got to not impose my views on my peers. And so after we got back from the field, I stayed very quiet in class. I always have talked a lot in class and it is because I usually have really thought about the material and have some valid opinion. But I found myself
not doing it when we got back because they would look at me and I thought they were thinking
“She is such a snob, she is doing the reading, she is kissing butt to the teacher.” That is what I
felt, and there were things said behind my back. And since we had been back from the field, I
haven’t said much in class.

It is hard being with the same 25 people, I think. And we all knew each other, and we
knew how each of us acted in class. People started getting a little irritated with each other. We
needed a break. We really needed our Christmas break. We needed time away and to relax and
come back refreshed I think. (interview 2, pages 24-27, 11/17/02) At the end of the semester
celebration I danced a Christmas present to the cohort. Everyone always asked about my
performances and where I danced. It never worked out that they could see me dance. So one day
I just asked Michael if I could dance for the cohort at one of our classes. I thought I did a pretty
poor job but they liked it. (field notes from discussion, member check, 10/9/03) It was nice to
hear to hear my cohort’s positive comments in the reflection sheets when Michael read them
aloud. Deirdre said, “I loved June’s Christmas present to us. She’s a beautiful dancer.” (Deirdre,
weekly reflection, 12/9/02)

As my second field experience ended and my third one was on the horizon, I looked for
clarity. I looked at next semester as a bridge to student teaching, more methods or more concrete
ways. I really wanted to watch more video of teachers. I just felt like we talked about stuff but
we never see it. It is not like that doesn’t make it valid, but when you are reading an article, and
study after study, it is all great and good, but I don’t know what it means. There wasn’t enough
time in our classes to go over everything we read and then there is no application of the reading.
Well, there was to some extent, but not enough for me.
So looking towards the next semester I was looking toward the start of being ready for learning exactly how to put a lesson together and then bring it to a close. I walked away from some classes and it was almost too much information. I didn’t know what to do with it. So I was looking for a way to organize it all. If I could have picked two things I wanted to focus on, it was ways to structure a class and behavior management. I feel like we had nothing on behavior management. If we could have a behavior management class that would benefit me. I wanted to read more Vivian Paley. When she tells her stories, she tells her own personal reflections. It is so neat to hear from a teacher’s perspective, real life class experiences. (interview 2, 11/17/02)

Block Three

Block Three was structured a lot like Block Two, with classes on campus for a few weeks, then the field experience, and then returning back to campus. I was glad to begin the next phase, and happy to hear that Block Two was considered the most difficult and it was behind me. This time I was placed with a kindergarten class at Canton Elementary.

Accountability partners have been assigned. In Block Three we were assigned accountability partners. Michael paired each of us up with someone who would be at our school for the field experience. He affectionately called them AP’s. That confused some people. They thought we had a meeting with the assistant principal when it was really just a meeting with our partner. I think he got the idea from a discussion we had. I remember being so frustrated with the loss of community after we went to the field last block. I mentioned the way our church holds each other accountable by having a partner. Next thing I know, it is part of our community (field notes from a discussion, member check, 10/9/03). When it came out in the syllabus it read like this:
In response to your desire as a group to use your time in the field wisely, accountability partners have been assigned that took into account your personal strengths, grade levels, and school placements. You will meet with your AP’s weekly before the field in order to plan field activities and their embedded standards. During the field, it is expected that AP’s will connect often to provide support for you NBPTS work. I highly encourage you to participate in peer observations to collect data for your partner. Peer observations are most valuable when they are focused on a specific question that a teacher is wondering about. If your AP work is of a high caliber and has impacted your work with students, it will be appropriate for Standard 11: Contribution to the Profession. (syllabus 4030, spring 2003)

My accountability partner was Tandy. For my portfolio on the National Board Professional Teaching Standards I wrote that I wanted to better myself as a teacher and open myself up to modifications in my teaching. I wanted all of this because it would help me to tailor my instruction and methods to my students.

Tandy observed me in Block Three two times. She came to see me teach a science lesson and a music lesson. The science lesson was an exploration of feathers and furs and we had agreed that she would write general observations, in addition to specific comments and quotes on my redirection and praise of the students. The music lesson she observed was a combination music and dance lesson on tone color. For this observation I didn’t want to know what she was observing specifically.

Tandy wrote down all the times I redirected the students during the science lesson and all the ways I praised the kids. I said things like “Listen for a second.” “Sit down please,” “Have a seat please,” “Don’t shout out please,” and “Stop touching each other” in order to redirect their
behavior. This is how my praise went, “Good thinking,” “There’s and idea,” “Good job,” That’s a good idea,” and “Yes.” But then I said “Good” about four times in a row before I started with more specific praise like, “Those are good ideas,” “You are so smart,” and “I would love to see that sometime.” When I read over what Tandy had written down, I made notes such as, “Maybe I need to make both the redirection and praise more specific.” I said listen, but I never told them what to listen to.

For the lesson that I didn’t know what Tandy was focusing on, she chose to count the interactions I had with boys and girls. In the time she was there she counted sixty-six interactions with boys and thirty-one interactions with girls. I was stunned. My immediate thoughts were that maybe it was because the boys were more disruptive during the lesson. I wondered what would happen if we counted the positive and negative interactions. I wonder what it would look like then.

Tandy and I met and talked about the observations too. It was important to me to have a peer there to talk about these things with. She agreed with me about the things I wanted to try and do differently. She even made suggestions that I video tape a lesson and make a checklist myself. (portfolio, spring 2003)

*I told her what I wanted to get out of the experience.* I kept a journal the whole time of the field experience. I helped me to look back on the events that seemed to happen so quickly. The kinds of things that I recorded in that journal were reflections on professional readings, accounts from the classroom, reflections on concerns about individual students, maps of schools, reflections on my own strengths and weaknesses in education and personal life. One day I made a list of the qualities that I admired in my mentor teacher and qualities I would want to see in myself twenty years from now. I listed things; creates an environment of interest for learning,
talks to kids, willing to deviate from the curriculum, doesn’t complain, interested in current education research, maintains a good rapport with staff, knowledgeable of special needs characteristics, and smiles.

I listed twenty qualities the day that my mentor teacher and I had a long conversation. (Michael calls it “the conversation.”) I think it was the second Friday I was there. We went to the library for two and half hours and talked. We talked about where I was, what insecurities I had, the students in the class, and I told her what I wanted to get out of this experience. I felt so relieved because now I knew about the class and she wanted me to be a part of it. (interview 3, lines 286-297) I realized after our conversation, that we were going to be a team and I couldn’t wait to be a part of it. (portfolio, spring 2003) Later my statement about teaching and learning had a lot of those same qualities in it. Later I wrote, “The curriculum is implemented by assessing the individual needs of the students and using techniques that target their individual needs as learners. (statement of teaching and learning, spring 2003)

_Criss cross applesauce…A scene from my Block Three field experience._ It’s a Friday and four students wear T-shirts that have Canton Elementary logos on them. I sit in the rocking chair with the same shirt on as those four children. Eager kindergarteners scattered around the rug in front of me settle in for a story.

“What's it about?”

“Barn animals, we’ll read it in a minute,” I answer. “Everyone sit criss-cross applesauce.”

“Cock-a-Doodle-Doo, Barnyard Hullabaloo (Andreae, 2002) by Andrew Wooo… I can’t say his name. Wolci…ski?”
I laugh and the children join in. It is a difficult name to pronounce. I begin the story with a strong voice. Throughout the story, I let the students finish my sentences, and share making sound effects for the barnyard animals that make the ‘hullabaloo.’

When the read-a-loud is completed, we transition to a writer’s workshop activity. The students eagerly begin drawing pictures and writing words reminiscent of the farm story they just heard. Writing workshop winds down. The children line up for lunch and I take them to the cafeteria for lunch. I was relieved the time went well as I was thrown into this at the last minute. (researcher field notes, 3/7/03 and personal journal 3/7/03).

*I structured lessons that involved dance.* For this kindergarten class I planned and taught a thematic unit on ballet. I told you that you would hear about dance later in my story and now here it is. Dance is never far from my life, and I brought it to these kindergarten students for a week. For each subject area I structured a lesson that involved a variety of dance elements; math to choreograph dances, reading books about ballet, making shapes with our bodies, tap dancing syllables, painting pointe shoes, listening to ballet music, creating sculptures after seeing Degas’ dancer, and using prop bags at center time. At this school we don’t have art, music, or PE. The kindergarten teachers are responsible for it. We read A Day in the Life of a Dancer (Hayward, 2001), The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, and Tap Dancing by Mark Thomas (2001). A drummer visited who shared making beats that dancers have to dance to. Another visitor tapped the syllables of words in her tap shoes. I even had another dancer dance the sugar plum fairy dance from The Nutcracker.

I reread my journal from one day of the unit. I had written, “I taught my tapping lesson today and I think it went amazing. The kids grasped word sounds in parts. My comfort with the kids now has made teaching them easier. The kids wrote thank you notes to the dancer and they
were beautiful. I find it interesting that when they are writing for others at this age, they are more meticulous. They wanted to spell every word correctly and color in the lines. I was impressed with their work.” (portfolio, spring, 2003) I felt successful in both teaching, and in my learning from teaching. I was really glad that I had a mentor teacher who had allowed me to take on so much teaching and that I had brought my own interests into the classroom to share with the students.

Am I doing this for the kid or the assignment? One thing I struggled with during that field experience was the assignment we had to tutor an individual child in reading. We had to do that every day for the whole field experience; assessments, instruction, reflection, and recommendations. I feel like we didn’t get to feel like a teacher because we have these assignments that we have to build in. It’s not like we really get to look at the kids and say, “This is what I want to do with them and this is where I want to start.” We have this list of things we have to do and that is where the student in me comes out and I start to feel bitter. I fabricated things I didn’t do because I didn’t think they were right for the child. (interview 3, lines 61-66). It was a lot of work and it was frustrating.

The worst part was that is was frustrating for the child too. It got to the point where Samantha was in tears because she was so frustrated with what we were trying to do. I was thinking it was me, picking the wrong activities for her to do. She just didn’t want to be pulled from the class. She would guess words and she really wanted to be with her friends in centers. So in the last couple weeks I had gotten to the point where I had a pretty good idea of her level. So I sat down in the computer lab and just made up a running record for the last tutoring sessions. (interview 3, lines 99-108) Here are some of my journals from that time.
Samantha was able to identify 7 out of 15 words in Form A and 8 out of 15 in Form B. She was recognizing basic sight vocabulary as well as simple words that could be sounded out. (personal journal 2/26- included in portfolio, spring 2003)

Samantha was more attentive today than last week. We went through each card individually to discuss the sound. I think that I was naïve in assuming her recognition would come faster that it did. (personal journal 3/3 –included in portfolio, spring 2003)

Samantha is not here today. I might need to call the instructor for READ to see what I should do. This reading assessment crap has me all in a twitter. (personal journal 3/10 included in portfolio, spring 2003)

So I have to admit I have stopped tutoring my reading child. I DON’T CARE. I am actually very relieved and she is too. I don’t have to pull her out of centers NOW. I guess I will just make up reflections for the class. Isn’t it sad to work with a child for the sake of a professor’s assignment? (personal journal 3/13 – included in portfolio, spring 2003)

Do I feel bad about it? Not really. I wish I did, but it just didn’t work. I wish we had looser guidelines. I see the importance of the assignment because we are taking an assessment and analyzing. But the confinement of it caused me to resent it, because I kept thinking, “Am I doing this for the kid or am I doing if for the assignment?” I have worked too hard for my 3.9 GPA and I don’t want to lose that. (interview 3, lines 116-121)

Some days were hard, I will admit. On those days I would come home exhausted from the interruptions and whining, wondering if this was what I really wanted. Those thoughts would roll off like rain on a windshield. And I would know that tomorrow can only be better. (portfolio, spring 2003 –from personal journal)
Reflecting on our reflections. Back at the university it was hard too. It became apparent that one of our cohort was not going to move on to student teaching with us. That was hard to take, and there was a lot of complaining and rumors about the whole situation. Sometimes I feel like a leader, but I don’t think I can get involved here. The weight of the responsibility of leading is heavy. (researcher’s journal after interview 3)

There is a lot of pressure in this program. Everyone has formulated an opinion of each other and I think a lot of the professors who have had us for two semesters don’t look at us as equals anymore. I have the pressure of being labeled the girl who is always on top of everything. So I know there is this expectation of me, and it has gotten a little overwhelming. (interview 3, lines 627-638, 3/30/03)

When it was my turn to run the daily routines of the university classroom, I read a book about dance, which shouldn’t surprise you. I chose to read a book called The Dance. It was by Richard Paul Evans (1999). I told the class I had chosen the book for more than the dance theme. It also has a theme of transition, and discusses loss, and so I thought that at a time of war it was a particularly strong story. Again it was great to hear my cohort’s positive comments on their weekly reflection sheets. “June was amazing reading that book. Sob! Sob!” Another peer wrote, “The story that June read was great. It was a good change.” Hearing that was important for me.

At the end of Block Three we turned in a portfolio to show how we had impacted student learning based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. You want to show you have done a good job. You want to put things in there that represent work that was good. You don’t want to focus on the struggles. (interview 3, lines 608-610, 3/30/03) I don’t want to feel bogged down by someone else’s expectations. I guess that’s going to happen regardless. You have expectations from parents, and the school district and maybe I just need to suck it up. I have
just gotten to the point that I’ve reflected so much on some of these things I don’t have anything else to say. (interview 3, lines 590-594, 3/30/03) I feel like I am reflecting on my reflections. (interview 3, line 568, 3/30/03)

Block Three field experience was important to me. I was explaining to the students that it was my last day with them and that I had to go back to school. One of them popped up and said, “But you’re a teacher, you don’t have to go to school.” So with all my insecurities about kindergarten and planning and behavior management, I couldn’t have asked for a better compliment. I will never forget that moment because it was just a change I felt come over me. It was like all of a sudden, “Yes, I am a teacher.” I may be at school but I don’t feel like a student any more. I feel like a teacher. I must be ready because these kids don’t view me as a student, they view me as their teacher, so that was a good moment for me. (interview 3, lines 22-27, 3/30/03)

I will end my story of early field experiences in the early childhood teacher education program with a letter I wrote to myself on the first day of Block Two.

Dear June,

You are a student in EDEC 4020 this fall semester 2002. And when you think about teaching proactive come[s] to mind. I can’t be specific to exactly the method I think you would organize a class, BUT I know that you would like to take [an] active part in your students’ lives to create a learning environment. It is not enough to just walk in a classroom and teach the curriculum. You want to get to know how your students interact with themselves and in their environments. It is also important to you [that you] are open to the changes in education and are
willing to be creative in developing a variety of activities. You have always believed in being open-minded—now apply it!

June

So that is my story so far. The early field experiences I have had and now I am ready for Block Four and student teaching. Bring it on!

The Narratives Must End

The presentation of the narratives from the different layers of my research ends here. I have presented the narrative of the Cluster A Cohort, the narrative of the five focus participants, and the narrative of one preservice teacher. Each of these narratives provides an ever-narrowing view into the learning of these preservice teachers learning to teach in their early field experiences. In the next chapter is an analysis of their learning as they progress through these early field experiences.
CHAPTER SIX:
DATA ANALYSIS

In trying to understand how preservice teachers learn from their early field experiences and trying to address what they see as the relationship between their university coursework and their early field experiences, I continued to use layered data. In keeping with the progression of the preservice teachers moving from one Block to the next Block, the data analysis followed the same timeline. I addressed the layers of data as I analyzed each Block of early field experiences, beginning with perspectives on the whole cohort in Block One and zeroing in more closely to examine the experiences of the focus participants of Block Two and Three. In this way the study is grounded by temporality. Each distinct Block of time is analyzed while moving back and forth to include the past experiences and future possibilities.

I took data from each Block and analyzed the early field experiences. Within each Block's analysis I viewed it with a wide angle, such as the whole cohort's perspective. Or I viewed it from the narrower perspective of the focus participants. As I refined and negotiated the layers of analysis and explored the development of these preservice teachers, the categories I used to understand the data changed. In the final section I used the narrowest lens to look at the early field experiences of just one member of the cohort. Her narrative is analyzed alone as she progresses through her early field experiences.

In my analysis I made the choice to use each Block to make a specific assertion I felt the data supported. The assertions I chose for each Block were evident throughout the data yet even more so at a specific Block in their progression. Later, in my conclusions I discuss how the
assertions drawn from each Block supported my framework for understanding preservice teacher learning.

Background Information on the Early Field Experiences

The preservice teachers in this teacher education program spent time in the field during four semesters, three of which I consider early field experiences. In Block One the preservice teachers assisted during reading time at Farlow Elementary school. During Block Two the preservice teachers were assigned a mentor teacher for the semester and spent time in that classroom for half days on Fridays followed by a period of four weeks where they went every day, all day. During Block Three they were assigned a new mentor teacher in a different school but had a similarly scheduled field experience as in Block Two. (Four half days on Fridays and four weeks all day, every day) For the purpose of this research, I examined the early field experiences only, which included any experience prior to student teaching. In earlier chapters I provided reasons for my choice to focus on only the early field experiences. Early field experiences, in the program I describe, occur during periods I refer to as Block One, Block Two, and Block Three.

Table 5. Description of Each Early Field Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block One Semester One</th>
<th>Block Two Semester Two</th>
<th>Block Three Semester Three</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Eight weekly math tutoring sessions for two students.</td>
<td>• Weekly half-day visits followed by four-week full-time experience.</td>
<td>• Weekly half-day visits followed by four-week full-time experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading tutoring with small group.</td>
<td>• Work with lesson planning and teaching reading, math, and social studies with small groups and the whole class.</td>
<td>• Work with lesson planning and teaching reading, math, and science with small groups and the whole class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The structure of Block One needs to be explained. As described earlier in the narrative of the whole cohort (pages 104-108), the limited time the preservice teachers spent at Farlow Elementary did not allow for extensive relationships to be built with their cooperating teacher or the students in those classrooms. I kept this limitation in mind. As I analyzed the data, there were also changes in the preservice teachers' activities in the classroom during the Block One field experience. They began by carrying out highly-structured, scripted reading tutoring activities and later moved to small group instruction or anything the teacher requested. The open-endedness of the changed guidelines for field activities made it difficult for the preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers to be clear about roles the preservice teachers should play in the classroom. I incorporated knowledge of the particularly challenging context for the first field experience in my analysis of the preservice teachers' narratives for Block One. The entire school's staff development program was run by the American's Choice program. The staff development meetings during the school day often involved having substitutes in the classrooms, which was often noted by the preservice teachers in their journals. All these contributing factors were part of the context of the analysis of Block One.

Block Two and Block Three were similar in their time frames and the way activities were structured for the preservice teachers. The narratives of the cohort (pages 120-123 and page 128-130) explain the structure of these early field experiences in detail. However, the context was different in a significant way for different preservice teachers. Unlike Block One where all field placements were at Farlow Elementary, in Block Two and Three preservice teacher were spread across four schools, each with a unique school culture and context. Most important to my analysis was consideration of time spent in the schools, which was four weeks for complete days. The relationships formed between the preservice teachers and the mentor teachers were very
important to consider in my analysis of Blocks Two and Three. As in the narratives, all names of participants, teachers, students, and schools are pseudonyms in the presented below. With these considerations in mind, I turn to an analysis of Block One.

**Block One**

All the participants were placed at Farlow Elementary with 8 first and second grade teachers. Earlier I provided a glimpse into the field experiences for these preservice teachers as I presented scenes from each of their Blocks of field experiences in narrative form. In one scene, Karen, a member of the cohort, wrote about her expectations for the first visit to a school for her early field experience (page 107). In another scene, Mary described a reading lesson and her final connection with the students (pages 108). In the following paragraphs I explore the differing experiences of these preservice teachers, and discuss the patterns I identified.

*Block One…From the Whole Cohort's Perspective*

Data were collected from journal reflections the participants were required to write after every other visit to the field experience school. This required reflection was turned into me, as the instructor of the course. Most participants wrote about their time during reading instruction. Many of the journal entries focused on the behavior of the students, or the activities of the students who were not in their group. The first entries from most participants described how dismayed they were at the reading levels of the students. These data represented the students' own reflections and are accounts of actual events.

The amount of data I had from the whole cohort and their Block One early field experience was vast. I narrowed down the data in order to make sense of it. For this reason I chose to examine the experiences and reflections of six participants who had their placement with the same second grade teacher at Farlow Elementary, Mrs. Wayne. The six participants
were Andrea, Anna, Candy, Erica, Jan, and Mary. Although each preservice teacher was in the same public school classroom, each came away from the experience with different constructions of the experience. In fact, two of the preservice teachers were in the room at the same time, and both walked away from the experience with different perceptions. The wide range of perspectives expressed by the six participants who all had the field experiences in the same classroom drew my attention.

Looking at Journals from the Field

I identified four categories: judging, distancing, processing and reconciling, for the journal entries from these six participants. Many of the initial responses of the preservice teachers to their time at Farlow had statements judging what they saw. They also wrote about distancing themselves from the situation. I use excerpts from preservice teacher journals to support my analysis. Later their journals begin to reflect the categories of processing and reconciling. I will clarify what I mean by those terms in the later discussion.

Judging…A non-perfect school. The preservice teachers came into Farlow Elementary School with their own ideas, understandings, and expectations developed in earlier encounters with schools, mostly from their own time in their own elementary classrooms as students. In their written responses to the classroom they visited often their statements were judging. After her first visit to the school Mary wrote, "I think this reading program is a good one, but I definitely don't like the two-things-going-on-at-once thing" (Mary, journal 1, Block One). Another preservice teacher, Jan, wrote, "My first impression was formed by Mrs. Wayne's interaction with the children. She was abrupt and hard to please" (Jan, 1/22/02, Block One). Later Jan wrote, "I don't mean to be ugly, but Mrs. Wayne is a hard teacher to work for….
would tell Candy and I to do one thing and then change her mind in the middle of our lesson" (Jan, 2/19/02, Block One).

*Distancing… only there for one hour a week.* The preservice teachers distanced themselves from what was happening in their field experience. Candy wrote, "I know the school needs good teachers, but honestly, I don't think it would affect the children one way or another if we are there or not" (Candy, reflection 3, Block One). Later Candy wrote, "Each student demanded so much attention and I can imagine that the teacher feels like she can't give all the time she wants to each student" (Candy, reflection 4, Block One). In her first journal entry Erica wrote, "She [Mrs. Wayne] told me I just had to be really firm with them. I found this to be a bit discouraging due to the fact that I am only there for one hour a week" (Erica, 2/2/02, Block One). Mary wrote, "I have to admit that I wouldn't wish to be a teacher or student in this school, but I'm glad I had the opportunity to see what a non-perfect school setting can be like" (Mary, journal 3, Block One).

Although some of these reactions were written at the end and some at the beginning of the Block One field experience, they share the commonality of having judging statements about what was happening in that classroom. Other reflections showed how the preservice teachers distanced themselves from the situation by claiming the lack of time, or lack of impact they had. These same preservice teachers in the same classroom also shared reflections that demonstrated processing and reconciling. I identified processing responses as those where the preservice teachers began to discover the influence their own actions had in the classroom. Reconciling responses included reflections where the preservice teachers moved beyond the context of the Block One field experience to imagine their future classrooms. I use the reflective journal entries to demonstrate examples of these categories.
Processing...what am I doing wrong? As the preservice teachers spent more time in Mrs. Wayne's classroom, they began to understand the complexity of teaching and the role they played in a classroom. They began to process the actions that the teachers made, the actions the students took, and what influence their actions had in the classroom. Anna made a plan for a visit to the classroom. "Next week I think I will once again open on a positive note, and briefly ask the students how they think they should behave during this time and hopefully that will help a small bit" (Anna, 1/24/02, Block One). Jan wrote in her journal during the middle of the experience, "More than anything else, working with the students at Farlow has taught me patience and the importance of classroom management. Maybe (and hopefully), things will get gradually better. I question what I am doing wrong and what I could do differently" (Jan 2/19/02, Block One). Jan was beginning to make sense of the classroom, to think of what she could do about the management of the students.

Anna made a deliberate plan for her time in the classroom while, Andrea focused on the reading lessons she was expected to teach.

The students were rambunctious and would not pay attention to the story I was reading. I know that part of the reason why I did not have the students' attention is because they told me that [they] had already read the story before, and so they were not interested in hearing it again. Even though their disobedience angered me I think what frustrated me more than anything was that I felt the students were not learning….I know that from now on I am going to have to go beyond what the lesson plan requires because the students are ready to learn more. (Andrea, 2/4/02, Block One)

Anna, Jan and Andrea all focused on what they could do to make changes, and therefore I use the term processing to describe their reflective words. Jan and Anna focused on their actions
to help manage classroom behavior, while Andrea focused on challenging students in the lesson so that classroom management becomes easier. Some journal entries reflected more than actions in the classroom; the preservice teachers projected themselves forward into imagining their actions in their own class in the future.

Reconciling….I will have to. As the preservice teachers began to make sense of this first early field experience, some began to relate what it meant to them as they thought about their own classrooms. This represents quite a different stance than the judging stance they took earlier. Some preservice teachers in this classroom demonstrated both distancing and reconciling in their responses and some only demonstrated the distancing stance. Mary wrote about classroom management.

I've noticed that Mrs. Wayne will try to control the children and correct them when they misbehave, but it just doesn't seem to work….I was beginning to worry that I wouldn't be able to handle being in a classroom where students would be acting up…but I have come to the conclusion that I will have to set the tone of the class from the get-go, and let them know what I expect of them. (Mary, reflection 2, Block One)

Andrea's last journal entry summarized her early field experience at Farlow Elementary.

Although my experience at Farlow was not always pleasant, I really did come away from that school more educated and more prepared to teach children….I learned a lot about what is important to me. It was a tough experience, but that which does not kill me, only makes me stronger. (Andrea, 4/15/02, Block One)

Andrea and Mary's journal entries demonstrated the reconciling of their experiences with what those experiences meant to them as becoming teachers. In essence their journal reflections shared what they learned from that experience.
Recognizing differences…It could have been a weird situation. In early journal entries some preservice teachers began to note racial and linguistic differences in the classrooms. Some preservice teachers avoided the race, language, and socioeconomic differences in their experiences while writing their journal reflections, and never included any references to them. Others addressed the differences. Andrea described one reading period.

The story [we read] was about a Spanish family, and there were several lines in the story written in Spanish. I let the children read each page, and when it came time for one girl to read, she had the page with several sentences in Spanish. This girl was Hispanic but not Spanish speaking. As she was stumbling over the Spanish, another girl commented on how she should know how to read it. This was not the first time I heard racial comments made between the students, but when she said this to the girl I was rather upset. I do not think the girl was too hurt by the remark, but I know it made me feel rather awkward. It was rather ironic though, because even though the Hispanic girl did not know how to read Spanish, I did. It was definitely a new experience having to deal with racist remarks, but it also was a good lesson for me to learn that appearances can be deceiving. (Andrea, 4/15/02, journal, Block One)

Andrea acknowledged a new experience in a classroom with second language learners and the assumptions made about people who look different. Mary had a different experience in her classroom.

One part of the book [I was reading out loud] talked about Rosa Parks and her contributions to equality, I asked the kids if they knew the song *Rosa Parks* by Outkast. We all kind of sang it a little, which I thought was really cute, but I noticed Mrs. Wayne was thinking, "What in the heck is she doing?" Then I told them that they wrote the song
because of her and what she did for colored people. They found this very interesting and I was happy I could make a little connection. After the book they had a few questions like why black people were called colored and why they couldn't drink from the same fountain; I answered as best I could. It could've been a weird situation because 99% of the children in the classroom are black and I am white, but I'm learning that with children, you just have to do the best that you can and they will appreciate that …sometimes they'll even help you answer it. (Mary, journal 2, Block One)

Mary and Andrea wrote about the racial and language differences in their Block One classrooms. Andrea acknowledged her classroom is a new experience for her, and Mary explained she is learning from the students who are all different from her. Not all of their written reactions to the classrooms could be categorized, and these reactions to race and linguistic diversity showed the preservice teachers beginning to understand what they meant to teaching.

Across these categories of judging, distancing, processing, and reconciling the preservice teachers made sense of their experiences in a classroom. Their early journals reflected the judging ideas they had and a distancing from the classroom (see narrative pages 106-107). Karen's initial description of the classroom she entered was full of "I didn't expects…" Some of the journals reflected processing what they were seeing and making plans for actions they could take in that classroom. Some reflections from the preservice teachers projected into the future to consider what this early field experience, the classroom, the teacher, and the students helped them to decide about their own classroom in the future. Their journal reflections also acknowledged how they began to see racial and linguistic differences among the students in the Block One classrooms at Farlow Elementary.
These journal entries are also consistent with understanding experiences with the forward-backward notion of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). The preservice teachers are moving back and forth between their field experiences and their university classroom. They use judging reflections and distance themselves from the classrooms as they begin understand classrooms and teaching. Their processing is the present, and then reconciling reflects the projection into the future and their own classroom.

The range of reactions in the preservice teachers' reflections, to one teacher and one classroom, demonstrate how each preservice teacher can walk away from a field experience with very different learning. Andrea learned a lot from the "tough experience" while Mary calls it an "opportunity to work at a non-perfect school." Mary notes that Mrs. Wayne's control of the children "doesn't seem to work," while Erica listened to her advice, "to be really firm with them." However, issues related to classroom management, learning about themselves as teachers, dealing with varying levels of students, and concerns with children's motivation were common themes that emerged for all preservice teachers.

Final Reflections on Block One

Of the six preservice teachers in Mrs. Wayne's classroom, all mentioned classroom management or discipline in their final reflections of the Block One early field experience. They left that experience with thoughts on discipline ranging from, “I have learned the importance of setting rules” (Andrea, final reflection, 5/3/02) to “One great characteristic about Mrs. Wayne’s discipline is that she backs up her system” (Erica, final reflection, 5/3/02).

Jan, Andrea, and Anna explained what they learned about themselves as a result of the field experience, “I laugh at my reactions to some of the things I encountered there with the teacher and students. My conclusion is that I have much to learn about myself as well as the
environment I am placed in” (Jan, final reflection, 5/03). Mary wrote about field experience giving her a chance to see if she was making the right choice to pursue teaching as a career.

Now I see why it is so important to get into a classroom before we actually student teach, because if my heart was not set on teaching my experience at Farlow would be very persuasive in telling me if I was in the right major or not. (Mary, journal 2/25/02, Block One)

Three of the six preservice teachers in the same classroom mention the varying levels of students. Erica wrote in her journal, “I just added to my biggest fear: how to reach all students when they are at such different levels?” (Erica, journal 4/16/02).

Anna wrote a lengthy reflection after her field experience about the “power of attitudes,” attitudes helped by creative activities, attitudes affected by student relationships, and the importance of the teacher’s attitude (Anna, final reflection, 5/6/02). Candy commented, “I believe that at Farlow Elementary, these children are unmotivated because there is not really any structure in the classroom, and they find it hard to understand why they need to learn these important basic skills when their home life does not encourage them to either” (Candy, final reflection, 5/2/02).

These themes about behavior management, attitudes, motivation, differing levels of students, and learning about themselves were carried through the first semester of the program. The questions they had left at the end of the semester related to similar issues.

*Asking Questions….How Do You*

At the conclusion of the field experience at Farlow Elementary, the preservice teachers wrote down questions they had at the conclusion of that experience. Here are some of the questions that remained.
“How can you prevent a class from reaching the point where discipline becomes an obstacle to learning?”

“How do you find ways to motivate kids to learn?”

“How do you effectively use centers and cooperative learning?”

“What do you do with the kids who struggle with English?”

“How do you effectively teach students that are on different levels?”

“How does a teacher create an atmosphere of respect?”

The preservice teachers were concerned about managing a classroom. They had questions about teaching varying levels of students. They were concerned about what teaching looked like. They were concerned with motivating students. The questions they had as they ended Block One related to the experiences they had in Block One.

*Block One ....From The Focus Participants' Perspectives*

As the focus participants began Block One they had not yet been identified as focus participants. During Block One I was gathering data from the whole cohort and no data specifically from the focus participants. Once the cohort entered Block Two and the focus participants had been identified, I was able to go back to that data and pull from their Block One field experience journals.

*Looking at Journals from The Early Field Experience*

I use the same categories, judging, distancing, processing and reconciling I identified for the subgroup of six participants, all placed in the same classroom at Farlow Elementary, to delve into the data. The focus participants' reactions and reflections showed the same patterns as the earlier analysis of whole cohort. The focus participants were placed in different classrooms. One
focus participant, Anna, was in Mrs. Wayne's classroom along with the other five whose reflections I analyzed on pages 195-204. In some cases I have included lengthy excerpts from the focus participants' journals so readers can understand the context of each journal entry.

**Judging...obviously.** The focus participant wrote reflections about their time at Farlow Elementary. Sometime the reflections were judging in their tone. Early during her placement Barbara wrote,

> When the assistant principal told us that this school was an America's Choice school, I knew exactly what that was, as my aunt has just taken a position that is strictly for that program. These students are obviously behind since they are an America's Choice school, and I do not think they are going to get any better with this reading program [that we help with]." (Barbara, 1/30/02, Block One)

Jake was in another classroom, and on his last day he made this statement, "It seems that Mrs. Colley might be burned out and also that her class knows that and takes advantage of her struggle just to make it through the day" (Jake, 4/15/02, Block One). Judging statements were written by all the focus participants about their first field experience. I selected Jake's and Barbara's reflections as examples of those types of statements.

**Distancing...it is her classroom.** As the focus participants spent time in classrooms at Farlow Elementary, they began to distance themselves from what was happening, in much the same way as the preservice teachers who were in Mrs. Wayne's classroom. Vicki described a scene where her cooperating teacher was doing all the glitter, glue, and stringing on a project the students were working on. "The students didn't get to do any of the fun part!!! [When I was asked to help] it was so hard for me to do everything and not even let the children pick the glitter color. I thought about letting them do it, but then I realized that it is her classroom, not mine"
(Vicki, 3/8/02, Block One). Vicki saw herself as distanced from ownership of the classroom. Anna reflected a sense of distance by explaining the constraints of time.

The thing that frustrates me the most about this class is that each student is in desperate need of attention and affection. I really want to be the one to show it to them, but since I only see them once a week, in a group, for twenty minutes, I am unable to do this."

(Anna, 2/21/02, Block One)

Some of the sense of distancing was related in discussions of interactions with the cooperating teacher. Barbara wrote in her field experience journal,

Thankfully Mrs. Harper was at school today, and she monitors us while we are teaching. She helps us keep the kids on track, and she will give us some help when our words don't seem to convey what we would like to say. When we asked Mrs. Harper if we were doing the teaching right, she told us not to doubt ourselves, that the kids were just rambunctious. It wasn't exactly the answer that I was looking for, but at least she was back in the room. The kids are much more on task when their teacher is there rather than a substitute. (Barbara, field experience journal, 2/26/02)

A sense of distancing arose for the focus participants in relation to sharing in ownership of the classroom and a lack of time to provide attention to students. Ownership of the classroom was Vicki and Barbara's reason for distancing herself. Anna used time to explain her distance. Each of these examples of distancing was one reaction the preservice teachers had to the early field placement. In addition to distancing, focus participants also exhibited responses that fit into the category as processing.
Processing….something actually got accomplished. When the focus participants entered classrooms, they began to recognize and better understand teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

I left feeling like something actually got accomplished. Mrs. Harper was there, and she really helped us with the lessons. She told us the way that she did “Make Words” and we were so surprised at how the children did….at least they got a “good” lesson today.

(Barbara, field experience journal, 3/12/02)

Barbara began to process what went on in that classroom, and saw the results of her actions. Barbara described her interactions with one student in particular.

Nadine had a complete turn-around with us. The reason why, I believe, is the way that we have decided to handle her. Instead of constantly getting on her and calling her down about everything, we decided to take a more positive approach. (Barbara, 2/26/02, Block One)

About another classroom, Vicki wrote, "This activity [of drawing a bird's eye view of their city] provided me with a unique opportunity to relate to the students and find out more about them personally…I really felt like a part of these children's lives today" (Vicki, 4/19/02, Block One).

Vicki began to see a role for herself in the classroom and how it affects her understanding of the children.

Both Barbara and Vicki found ways that their actions in the Farlow Elementary classroom had an influence on children. They began to reflect on what their presence meant and negotiate how they could best be a part of the classroom. I see these responses as consistent with other participants responses that fell into the category of processing. I did not find the categories to be developmental, that is, preservice teacher responses did not move from distancing to
processing in their responses over time in Block One. Instead their reflections moved in and out of categories over the entire early field experience.

Reconciling….something I'll watch for in the future. The focus participants' journals also reflected reconciling, much the same way as the preservice teachers who were in Mrs. Wayne's classroom. Jake wrote about one particular student in the classroom where he was placed.

Larry always finds himself in trouble. I am really glad I got to spend a little time with him and listen to whatever he wanted to tell me. But I wonder…will I have Larrys in my classroom? And will I be alert enough to identify that he/she needs time and attention?

(Jake, 3/11/02, Block One)

Anna wrote about a teacher's attitude. "I don't think I have ever seen her look really excited about reading time. I've never really thought about how the teacher's attitude affects the entire class. It's something that I'll have to watch for in the future" (Anna, 3/7/02, Block One)

The focus participants' journals from the first field experience mirrored some of the same concerns as the earlier subgroup of the cohort: behavior management, differing levels of students, attitude, and learning about themselves. About behavior management Jake wrote,

One child in particular struck a chord with me….Larry is one of the 'trouble makers' in Mrs. Colley's class but not because he is a bad kid. I think it is because of the way he is treated by peers, teachers, and the discipline program administered in Mrs. Colley's classroom. (Jake, 2/25/02, Block One)

Anna noted about her teacher, "The teacher scolded one student for misbehaving in plain view of the rest of the class" (Anna, 1/24/02, Block One). And then wrote about her own management by saying, "I tried to be gentle but firm in my discipline, but I don't know that it did any good" (Anna, 2/21/02, Block One).
June and Barbara both noticed the differing reading levels of students who were all assigned the same reading group. "All of the children were reading the same book, but three of the kids in our group were incapable of reading these simple books, while others in the group were losing focus out of boredom and easiness" (June, 2/19/02, Block One). "In working with these children, I see several that show great promise but that are not getting challenged at all. On the other hand, I see children that are in desperate need for one-on-one help in reading" (Barbara, 1/30/02, Block One).

Attitude was of particular interest to Anna as she completed her first field assignment. She reflected about attitude especially after watching another intern, who was in another Block, teach the class where Anna was working about the rainforest.

The kids were so excited about learning, and I've never once seen that while I was with them. I think part of it was the fact that it was something new and different, and part of it was the fact that the intern was so enthusiastic about it. (Anna, 3/7/02, Block One)

The focus participants found they were learning about themselves during their time in Block One's field experience. Jake wrote, "I would try my hardest to increase every opportunity to listen to or relate with the kids on a one-to-one basis, because I feel like that is the only place I was able to learn or affect anything" (Jake, 4/15/02). June notes that, "I learned…I was completely unprepared to deal with diversity" (June, 1/22/02, Block One).

The focus participants' journals reflected some of the same categories that emerged in earlier analysis. The judging, distancing, processing, and reconciling categories used to describe the participants' reflections in the analysis, provided a window into their initial early field experience. Although their movement was not a direct progression through each of the categories and although each participant did not reflect in a way that fit into each category these categories
were consistently evident across the participants' responses and can help us to see the ways in which preservice teachers are learning in their early field experiences.

Another theme came up in the Block One field experience from the focus participants. The focus participants discussed the diversity of the classrooms where the preservice teachers were placed. Not all the preservice teachers reflected on the differences. One focus participant commented that she faced the fact that she was not "prepared to deal with diversity," but others felt they had to "do the best you can." Perhaps the structure of the Block One early field experience did not allow the preservice teacher time to reflect on those differences in a meaningful way. The most important part of the analysis was an understanding of the limitations of this early field experience for these preservice teachers.

**Limitation of Block One's Early Field Experience**

The Block One field experience was organized to provide the preservice teachers with only loosely structured hours in the school. The limitations of this field experience were obvious as the preservice teachers did not have time to establish any kind of relationship with the cooperating teachers. The teachers were not necessarily interested in having interns in the classroom; the choice had been made by the administration to have the interns work in every classroom of first and second grade. During any week, there were many interns coming and going for short blocks of time, which may have disrupted the classrooms.

I continue to wonder about the limitations and benefits of an early field experience where little structure is provided, and little time allowed for the preservice teachers to develop relationships with cooperating teachers and the students in their classrooms. Nor does the experience allow for ample time to delve into the diversity of the classrooms and the learners. Later, as I discuss the implications of my study, I address the issues presented here.
Summary of Block One

For analysis of Block One's early field experience I looked at the field experience journals as they entered a school for their first formal early field experience. I also looked at the questions the preservice teachers were left with at the end of that initial field experience. In the analysis I made a decision to refer to the teachers as cooperating teachers and not mentor teachers as there was little chance for a relationship to be built between them and the preservice teachers.

The preservice teachers made sense of their experience by reflecting. Some of these reflections were categorized to help me understand how they were learning. Sometimes they made judging statements about what they were seeing, and sometimes they distanced themselves from the experience by claiming lack of time or ownership in making an impact. They also processed what they experienced what was happening in the classrooms and how their own actions could influence children's learning, and reconciled some of the dilemmas they identified by thinking about how their own classroom in the future might be structured. The focus participants' journals demonstrated that the preservice teachers did not necessarily move through all these categories, and not always in a linear developmental fashion. In fact, the preservice teachers moved in and out of the categories throughout the first field experience.

Across the whole cohort's experience I saw movement along Dewey’s (1938) principle of continuity. They moved forwards and backwards from past to present to future (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Experiences were described in their reflections. The experience was already a part of the past. As they reflected they moved back to the past to think about it, reflected in the present, but also imagined into the future of their own classroom. I also saw the principle of interaction, as the preservice teachers took something from each experience and then changed the
experiences to come. Vicki realized at the conclusion of her Block One experience that “my beliefs are not static and that many of them probably never will be.” The principles of interaction and continuity of experience were reflected in the categories of judging, distancing, processing, and reconciling, that I chose to use in my analysis of the data from the participants in Block One.

**Block Two**

Block Two’s field experience was arranged more systematically than Block One, was much more intensive, and was supervised. The preservice teachers were assigned a mentor teacher, had a scheduled time to be at the school each day for four weeks, and were there for four weeks full-time. They had assignments to complete while in the field. The organization of and expectations for Block Two's field experience were quite different than the Block One limited experience. The assignments ranged from: letters to the students, mentor teachers, and parents, community inquiry projects, and critical incident reports in the teacher education course, as well as lesson plans and teaching small and large groups for methods courses.

As mentioned in my methodology chapter, the data collected from Block Two of their program was different than Block One and Block Three. I negotiated learning what gave me rich data as I transitioned from their instructor to researcher. I began with only interviews and it was not until Block Three that I included observations and other data gathered from the whole cohort. As I began data analysis of Block Two I realized I had little data from the perspective of the whole cohort.

**Block Two... From the Focus Participants’ Perspectives**

As the preservice teachers began their second semester, their learning in the university classroom pinpointed their field experiences as a way to learn about themselves and about teaching. One preservice teacher stated, “I feel like we’re having to ‘undo’ 13 years of training
Focus Participants...Describe How They Learn to Teach in Block Two

As the preservice teachers had extended opportunities to watch their mentor teachers, and opportunities to watch their teacher in a variety of situations, subjects, and even locations, learning how to teach became a common thread in their interviews. In an interview before her Block Two field experience, Anna described her ideas for how she wanted to learn how to teach,

I was so thrilled on Thursday in our reading class [on campus] she demonstrated what a guided reading thing was because if she was to say you do this and this and it does this for the child, and all that stuff. I mean I don’t think it would have connected in my head, but to see her do it. I mean that’s great. So I really feel like I’m going to learn a lot more when I get to the classroom. (Anna, interview, lines 303-306, 9/15/02)

In the earlier narrative's opening conversation with the focus participants about seeing teaching (page 151), Vicki identified a gap in understanding teaching. “I think it all sounds great in theory…but to actually go out there and do it” (Vicki, interview lines 177-186, 9/15/02, Block Two). Vicki was also concerned about being able to “do” teaching it was almost as if there was something she hadn’t seen yet in order to be able to do it. Later she joked that the cohort wanted to be told “exactly what to do” (page 152) In spite of acknowledging the impossibility of being told what to do in every teaching situation, Vicki still hoped that there would be more “examples” to pull from to help them “when they start teaching” (Vicki, interview lines 712-717, 11/17/02, Block Two).
Whether as a “visual learner” as Jake called himself, a “hands-on” learner as Anna referred to herself, or a "first-hand-insider’s-view" as Barbara called it, these focus participants highlighted an interesting aspect of learning to teach; as they saw it they sought a balance between observing teaching, experiencing teaching, and actually teaching themselves. They observed teaching for the years they were in school as students, in the classrooms that they visited for field experiences, and even in the early childhood teacher education program. Anna mentioned the thrill of watching a university instructor “demonstrating a guided reading thing” (page 152). Jake was excited to see “how a teacher is effective, and what it is she does” (page 151). They experienced teaching as students all through their own school career. Anna said, “ I need to have experienced it first, whether it was in my own experience. Whether in classes here we’re just modeling them for setting up situations so that we can experience them” (page 153-154) As they got ready to enter their Block Two early field experience they were anxious to try out teaching. Jake says, “So to me it’s more of just as time rolls by and we continue to engulf ourselves in all this stuff…it just comes” (page 154). Jake likened his learning to teach to riding a bike.

I guess like when you're learning to ride a bike. Maybe it's like little by little you get more and more comfortable, and then all of a sudden you don't need the training wheels anymore, but you're still kind of slow. And you're riding around your cul-de-sac but then a year from now you're riding up your street and over. And then a year from then you're riding your bike to school. (Jake, interview, 9/14/02)

Anna compared learning to teach to learning to play the piano.
You play piano a little while and at first it is like, "Okay, wait, this one is this note, which means it is this note on the piano." After a while it just com[es] naturally. I guess it is the same way with teaching or with anything. (Anna, interview, 11/17/02)

In these excerpts of data, the focus participants discussed how they learn to teach and how important it was for them to "see teaching." They were students of learning to teach asking teachers (mentor teachers and university instructors) to show them how to teach. The dual role of student and teacher is important to my understanding of their learning to teach. Next I discuss how the preservice teachers negotiated their role in their field experience classroom with their mentor teacher and began to take on the teacher role.

*Relationships With Mentor Teachers…Block Two*

During the four-week Block Two field experience the preservice teachers entered a relationship with a new mentor teacher. The relationship had an effect on their development, and it is important to examine what they had to say about how they learned and developed in relation to their mentor teachers. The role they took, or the role they perceived to be given to them, played a part in their learning. As the preservice teachers entered this extended early field experience they began to explore teaching and their relationships with their mentor teachers. Vicki talked about both of these as she described a difficult time during her field experience.

The teacher had written [the lesson] and I found out that I was responsible [for it] the day of it. I was using these books from National Geographic back in the 80s. So those are [the] books I would have knowledge of in school, and there is a guy who does like every single tape from when I was in school, he did that. So it is this monotone voice reading this book about San Francisco and the kids did not care one bit and neither did I. And I could feel myself getting lost and I am like ‘whatever,’ and so the kids are like,
‘whatever,’ and I could not stay focused on the book. So it is like, how am I expecting them to sit and listen to this book when I don’t even care about this book. I am flipping back to see when it was published, because this is the same guy, so I guess what I learned was just about how there are a lot of expectations. If it is not interesting [to me], how can I expect them to be interested in it, because it was the worst book I ever read in my life except the ones I read back in school. It is horrible. I feel bad for making them sit here and listen to the tape. I felt like stopping the tape all together and starting on something else, we could have just talked about it without the tape, but I felt like I had to use the tape, I felt like it was the worst. [I felt I had to do it] because that is what she told me to do. We had a good relationship but I still felt like this is her classroom, which it is. So I didn’t want to say, ‘This is a horrible book.’(Vicki, interview 2, lines 12-24, 11/17/02)

Vicki moved back and forth between her own experience in school and what she experienced as an intern in the classroom. In addition to that was her concern with the relationship she must develop with the mentor teacher. She felt she must use the tape the teacher recommended but questioned its usefulness with the students.

Jake made it clear that his role was as a “visitor” (page 156) and “expresses his appreciation for the freedom she [the mentor teacher] gave to do whatever I needed to do” (page 158). At the same time he remarked that there were “certain things that I just didn’t know if I could ask her about, or talk to her about and sometimes I would just do them, and sometimes I just wouldn’t do them” (page 158).

Vicki felt that her relationship with the mentor teacher was “good, but I still feel like this is her classroom” (page 157). She described her role in the classroom as not “like a full teacher”
and “not quite the same status as a teacher” (page 159). She believed that mentor teachers should be viewed as “a great resource for us” (page 160).

June had a different experience with her mentor teacher. She was told by the mentor teacher, “I see you as a teacher” (page 160). June responded to that type of relationship with the comment, “she gave me freedom to implement things…and she never questioned what I did. She never made me feel burdened by it” (page 160).

When Barbara’s teacher was out sick one day, Barbara allowed students to bring in hermit crabs, something she felt her mentor teacher would not have done.

I wasn’t doing anything she wouldn’t have approved of….But she was like, ‘I can’t believe you let them bring them in…weren’t you scared of them?’ I had to prove that things could work. It wasn’t like I was doing something secretly but it was like a power unleashed on me when she wasn’t there. (Barbara, interview, 11/18/02)

The variation in the relationships that were established in the classrooms with mentor teachers in the field experience is important to consider. These early field experiences were part of their learning to become teachers, and I wonder at the influence the relationships with mentor teachers had on the idea of what it meant to be a teacher, when the preservice teachers' early field experience limited them to role they perceived given to them, or that they took on.

Summary of Block Two

In my analysis of the focus participants' Block Two's field experiences I have used the focus participants' perspectives. The interviews conducted with each participant revealed insights into their learning to teach and the relationships with their mentor teachers. The preservice teachers used their own experiences as students to make sense of their learning as Vicki demonstrated with the lesson on tape. They were also beginning to make sense of what it was "to
teach" and how "to do it." As they looked for models of teaching they negotiated their role in the classroom. Their reflections often revealed their thinking about the relationships with their mentor teachers and the ways those relationships influenced the possible roles they could take on in the classroom.

During Block Two of their early field experiences, the participants' dual role of student and teacher was particularly visible. Britzman (1991) refers to this as being marginally situated in two worlds. They were students in their capacity of learning to teach, and yet they were teachers in their role of having to instruct students during various times of their early field experience. The concept of being marginally situated in two worlds is discussed later in the conclusions of the study. It contributed to my own theoretical understanding of learning to teach.

Block Three

Block Three was an organized, supervised, and well-planned field experience very similar to Block Two. The students were anxious to know their mentor teachers at the beginning of the semester. Block Three's early field experience had the same four-week placement structure as Block Two, with a mentor teacher who they would meet early in the semester before their full time in the schools. The focus participants were familiar with all the schools where they could be placed, because they were the same schools as were used for placing students in Block Two. They learned about the schools from members of their cohort who had been at those schools for Block Two, and had even heard of some of the mentor teachers. Overall the preservice teachers were not as anxious about Block Three, due to the similarities to Block Two, and the knowledge they shared about the schools.
The Cohort's Perspective…..Block Three

As the preservice teachers moved into Block Three, they had been together for two semesters. The relationships they developed included the relationships they developed with each other in the cohort. They continued to negotiate their role in the classroom. Earlier in this paper I described two scenes from the Block Three early field experience.

The assignments the preservice teachers completed in the field were similar to the Block Two assignments. They wrote letters to the students, mentor teachers, and parents of the classroom where they were placed. They wrote a critical incident report based on a single event that occurred in their classroom experience.

The Cohort's Critical Incident Reports

One expectation for Block Three was that the preservice teachers wrote a critical incident report. The critical incident report was used to as a basis of discussion in another National School Reform Faculty protocol (see Appendix D). I used these reports in my analysis of Block's Three's early field experience for the whole cohort. The following excerpt from the syllabus explained the assignment.

Please type one situation in which you observed an incident during your field experience that helped to confirm or adapt your philosophy of teaching. The incident needs to stand out for you – an episode that you thought about on the way home or that has revisited you during the night. The incident can be about something that happened that was particularly rewarding, or puzzling, or devastating. The incident could have been [an] epiphany, crisis, or moment of revealing insight. More likely, though, it is a small moment that seemed unremarkable at the time, but somehow made its way into your reflections. What
are the implications? …After the critical incidents are discussed in class, a final reflection should be written based on the class discussion. (syllabus EDEC 4030, Spring 2003)

I divided up the incidents to show themes from the reports, and the themes centered on three categories. The first category was an understanding the preservice teachers developed that the children have things in their lives outside of school that are brought to the classroom. Another category was reports that focused on the mentor teacher or paraprofessional in the classroom where the preservice teachers worked and learned. The last category was student behavior or discipline. Six were about the students' lives outside school entering consideration as the preservice teachers interacted with them. Five reports were about the mentor teacher or paraprofessional. Eight stories centered on a student’s behavior.

An important component of the critical incident report assignment was the discussion that occurred in the university classroom around the incidents. The discussion led many preservice teachers to a more reflective, self-critical stance. I return to a further consideration of the class discussion of critical incidents after presenting the categories that I identified.

They carried baggage … the preservice teachers find out what students bring to school.

In some of the critical incident reports, reflection about what students brought with them to the classroom and its effect on teaching and learning was evidenced. Preservice teachers wrote about death in a student’s family and about suicidal students. Kendall writes, “Lisa is pouring her heart out to me. She is telling me about her father dying from a motorcycle accident when she was a small child, and how she takes care of her brother and lives with her grandmother” (Kendall, critical incident report). Vivian wrote, “Since the [dialogue journal] page was open [although creased as if it had been folded] I decided to read it. He wrote that he had thought of killing himself and wrote about his feeling of loneliness at home” (Vivian, critical incident report).
Jan wrote about an incident in her field experience classroom with a single student and how her student’s life impacted her teaching.

Mandy explained that the photograph was of her and her biological father…later she says, 'He is mean to me, I am supposed to see him every summer, but he doesn't come pick me up’… I was not sure how to respond. Combining this incident with the previous one, I became confused as to why Mandy would continue to keep the picture of her father propped up on her desk. Mandy was one of several in my fourth grade classroom who carried baggage with them to school every day. I would now be interested to know how much of student performance is affected by that which takes place outside the classroom. Thinking about my future students, I would like to use the negative happenings outside of school in a positive way inside the classroom. I would like to provide a way to allow students to get their feelings out by means of journaling, role playing, etc. (Jan, critical incident report, 4/1/03)

Kendall had written about a student, “pouring her heart out to me. She is telling me about her father dying from a motorcycle accident…It was beautiful to see a child handle a tough situation so maturely” (Kendall, critical incident report, 4/1/03). Kendall reflected on children’s resilience.

The preservice teachers are dealing with "the baggage" students brought to a classroom and how each student was unique. The focus was now on how to incorporate the new understanding of students' uniqueness into their teaching. In Block Two's analysis I discussed the preservice teachers beginning to focus on aspects of learning to teach and the relationship with the mentor teachers. Now, in the analysis of Block Three, I discuss their interactions with students, mentor teachers, and their peers as they negotiate their own learning to teach.
Working together is essential...the preservice teachers and their mentors. Another type of report was one that described encounters between themselves and the mentor teacher or paraprofessional. The incidents they wrote about ranged from choices made by the mentor teacher that the intern questioned, comments on their evaluations, lack of response to race issues in the classroom, lack of concern for possible reading problems in a student, and lack of respect from a paraprofessional in the same classroom.

Jenna wrote about an event in her classroom during her field experience with the paraprofessional in the classroom.

I was fully aware of the abruptness and unusual rudeness of Mrs. Sanders to the students, however, I wasn't expecting her comment to me….Mrs. Sanders came hurrying up to me and said, "Oh no! We do not tie shoes in here. Kids have had the laces in their mouths as well as in their hands in places after messing with the laces. Gross!" Needless to say, I was speechless. I had no idea how to respond. I just gave a weak laugh and sent Hope on her way. …I felt a sense of embarrassment…as if I was a student in her class who had disobeyed the rules of the classroom….I resented the fact that Mrs. Sanders treated me that way….My feelings for Mrs. Sanders were ruined for the rest of my experience. I have definitely seen through all of this that it’s up to you to create a warm classroom environment. (Jenna, critical incident report, 4/1/03)

In another report, Charlotte wrote about an incident that made her aware of the importance of making decisions collaboratively, something that the cohort was beginning to understand first hand, as they worked through these critical incidents.

[We were still on the playground and] time slipped away and before she realized it, the bus riders were already supposed to be on the buses and they were about to leave. Well,
everyone's bus was still at the school except one in which eight of Ms. Russo's students ride. Ms. Russo’s quickly gathered those students up and loaded then into her car to take them home. She did not let any administrator know that she was doing this and did not ask anyone what he/she thought she should do in this situation. I certainly questioned the way Ms. Russo handled this situation. I thought it was an inappropriate decision for a variety of reasons. All of the group members and I were in agreement that we would have gone to the principal immediately and have him/her assist us in this situation. Working together is essential. (Charlotte, critical incident report, 4/1/03)

In these two incidents the preservice teachers are left questioning the actions of the paraprofessional and the mentor teacher. In the following cases the preservice teachers are left with less closure related to the incident they describe.

*A handful to deal with…the preservice teachers write about behavior incidents.*

More preservice teachers wrote about behavior issues than the other two categories (children's "baggage" and their mentor's decisions). The behavior issues they wrote about in their incident reports were about a variety of issues. One of the reports was about a student who had been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), three reports were about the interns facing a behavior issue with a student on their own, four interns wrote about a change in attitude that they displayed and the impact that had on the students, and one intern wrote about an interaction with a student due to a behavior plan they devised for the class. They all wrote about an incident with a single student.

There was a boy who always presented discipline problems. He was a constant distraction to his fellow classmates. He once received detention three times in one week, for not doing his work or talking back to a teacher. One of those detentions, I gave him, and this
sent him into a fit of rage during which he threw his notebook across the room.

Apparently Brad had now run out of chances. After our discussion of my incident, I began to feel like I had failed Brad in a sense. I regret not trying other disciplinary methods with him. I regret not trying to make some kind of difference. (Karen, critical incident report, 4/1/03)

Another preservice teacher wrote about a different response to behavior problems.

He was described as a child who would probably be diagnosed with ADHD soon and who was a handful to deal with. His academic performance was never mentioned or considered during these discussions. ...As I continued to watch Tommy, responses such as these seemed to surface more and more. During writing workshop and center time he continued to shock me with his observations and talents that he slowly revealed to me. As I watched Tommy more and more, I began to believe that they were completely biased. I feel that due to his hyperactivity the teachers in my classroom disregarded everything else he brought to the classroom….This situation makes me wonder about stereotypes and opinions formed in the classroom. It is almost inevitable that a teacher will form an opinion of each student in her class but how can she ensure that these opinions will be subject to change? As a classroom teacher it is crucial that we be ale to let go of any opinion we may form in order to give each student a fair chance at learning and belonging in the classroom. (Kelli, critical incident report, 4/1/03)

Although both incidents had different end results for the preservice teachers, what is interesting is that they both took on the role of worrying about the student in the classroom.

The most interesting part of the analysis of these critical incidents was the part that peers played in reflecting on the incidents. In the university classroom each preservice teacher spent
time presenting the critical incident and his or her reflections on the incident. After the
discussion, a further reflection piece was added. The peer interaction led to more critical self-
reflection. Some examples are; "After our discussion, I became even more frustrated" (Jenna).
"After our discussion….I regret not trying to make some kind of difference" (Karen). "After our
discussion, I was slammed in the face that the 'right' thing to do regarding his journal [would
have been to leave it alone]" (Vivian).

The relationships the preservice teachers focused on, during their final early field
experience, were more pronounced than the relationships described in the Block One and Block
Two experiences. They had forged relationships with their mentor teacher and with students.
Now the relationships that they had with their peers became important to their thinking about
teaching. Within the relationship with the students, Susan and Erica's stories from Scene One and
Scene Two of the Block Three narrative (pages 128-129), illustrate how the focus turned to the
children's learning. Erica brought attention to Ted reading his name during a lesson after so
much negative attention for his behavior. Susan brought attention to Sharon's inaccuracy while
reading, and her surrounding frustration with her mentor teacher's lack of concern about the
student's learning. Just as in Block One, the preservice teachers were left with questions.

*Asking Questions…How Do You*

At the end of the semester each preservice teacher produced a burning question about
teaching. The questions were shared with colleagues in the cohort and they helped each other
with resources to better understand their questions and look for answers.

“How can one effectively meet all the individual needs in a large
classroom?”

“How do you manage a classroom that fosters a positive environment?”
“How does teacher knowledge affect instructional choices and strategies used for planning?”

“How does school funding affect the quality of student’s educational experiences?”

“Just how much energy is exuded in order to teach to the test?”

“How do you make a classroom management scheme that encourages and co-exists with the learning process?”

“How do you stay current with educational trends?”

“How can you teach and help students learn in meaningful ways about community and environment?” (burning questions, posted on listserv, 4/16/03)

These were some of the questions that the preservice teachers posed after three semesters in the teacher education program. During the Block Three early field experience, one area the preservice teachers focused on was the relationship with children and mentor teachers. Their questions showed a similar focus. As the preservice teachers began to understand more about individual students and negotiated their role in the classrooms, they also began to focus on children's learning. They also began to depend on each other as peers, to reflect on incidents in a self-critical way. After a consideration of the focus participants' perspective of Block Three's field experience, my analysis compares the questions posed in Block One and Block Three.

Focus Participants' Perspective…Block Three

Now I consider the focus participants' perspectives of Block Three. Their reflections were more specific about the relationships and the interactions they had with mentor teachers and students. The choice of schools they were placed in were the same schools as Block Two, although they did not go back to the same school as Block Two. In fact, one mentor teacher had two of the focus participants during their Block Two and Block Three early field experiences.
"It's funny, because Jake had [the] mentor teacher I had last semester….the things he says in class echo what I thought [about her]" (Barbara, interview lines 1028-1033).

**Focus Participants Talk about Teaching…..I Want to Explore**

As I analyzed the Block Three early field experience from the perspective of the focus participants, I used data from interviews, participant observations, and their written assignments to complete the analysis. By Block Three the preservice teachers were clearer about their own goals for learning about teaching. As they began to feel more confident in teaching they had to negotiate evaluations by the university facilitator (UF). They still had to negotiate their roles in the classroom. The excerpts of data I have chosen represent the tensions between the preservice teachers' knowledge about themselves and negotiating their role in the classroom.

Barbara entered a fourth grade classroom for the early field experience and was unsure of teaching math concepts at that level.

I expressed to her at the beginning as far as fourth grade math concepts…these are going to be a challenge for me to teach because of the ways that I was taught and the ways we have been taught at the university to teach. …This is something I want to explore a little more.”  (Barbara, interview lines 271-273, 3/31/03)

When she was evaluated on teaching a math lesson she said, ”The two lessons didn’t go very well….the UF (University Facilitator) suggested things, well….pull out manipulatives, but that is not Ms. Hipp’s way of doing it. Ms. Hipp will get up and do them overhead with manipulatives…” (Barbara, interview lines 420-445, 3/31/03)

Without the support and modeling of the mentor teacher using manipulatives in her fourth grade classroom, Barbara did not feel she could begin to use the manipulatives on her own. The dilemma of differing philosophical beliefs about teaching also connected to the
interactions between preservice teacher and mentor teacher. Vicki struggled with “seeing the teaching” of phonics in one way.

The way that she is teaching [phonics] is the way that I was taught. So that is my experience of phonics instruction….And I taught a lot of phonics and that is not my strong point….I find it so hard to get excited about phonics…in my opinion, kind of out of context, it is not very balanced at all, I mean not that they don’t do other literacy activities….but she wanted me to teach basically like it is in the book. (Vicki, interview lines 468-541, 5/2/03)

Vicki wanted to see phonics instruction carried out in a way that was different from her own boring experiences with it. For lack of a better model for teaching phonics, she struggled with teaching it in the way prescribed by the book. Interestingly this contrasts with the literature that says preservice teacher are more likely to teach in ways that they were taught themselves.

Anna watched her mentor teacher and began to form ideas of how she wanted to do things. She said “I didn’t agree with everything that she [mentor teacher] taught or the way that she taught things.” And once again the relationship she had with the mentor teacher played an important role. “For some reason I felt the need to fit into her mold of what a classroom teacher should be, just so that we would get along better while I was there” (Anna, interview page 6, 3/31/03). Although Anna saw a model for teaching, she acknowledged it was not always the model she wanted to use. Yet she felt bound by the relationship she wanted to maintain with her mentor teacher.

In Block Three the preservice teachers experience tensions in the ways they see teaching happening in the classrooms, and the way they want to be as a teacher. In Block One there is some evidence that they experience this same tensions. The reflections for Block Two focused
on the relationships formed with mentor teachers and not as much on the teaching that was happening in the classroom. Once again temporality is exhibited as the preservice teachers move back and forth in their early field experiences.

*Relationships with Mentor Teachers…In Block Three.*

The relationships forged with mentor teachers became even more important in Block Three. As they negotiated their changing role from student to teacher, they also negotiated with the mentor teacher and her part in that change.

Anna described teaching during Block Three as “playing pretend.” She felt very much that “if the teacher was in the room, then I am the student” (Anna, interview page 6, 3/31/03).

There was a day that there was a sub[stitute] who had been a sub for three days. It was like her third time doing this. …so suddenly I became very protective [of the class]. As soon as [the mentor teacher] left and there was a sub who was supposed to be in charge, I said, "Look you can sit in the back and read a book if you want. I will take over everything because I know what we are supposed to be doing." And they became my kids….I think I learned more on those four days than I did the entire month. …I think I lapsed back into, "Okay, you are in charge," [when the mentor teacher came back]. (Anna, interview pages 6-8, 3/31/03)

As the focus participants became more involved in their early field experiences, they discussed the role they had in the classroom, and how their teaching was affected by that role. They began to see their learning in terms of what they were doing with the students. The relationship with the mentor teacher was still important, but they began to move beyond the relationship in any way that they could, and began to reflect on their own teaching. Even Anna,
who felt she was still a student, used an opportunity when a substitute was in the classroom, to
take on the role of teacher.

Summary of Block Three

In Block Three I have used the perspectives of the whole cohort and the focus
participants to better understand how relationships influenced them as they learned to teach. The
relationships with students helped them learn better how to focus on the student needs. The
relationships with the mentor teacher forced them to examine their teaching and their own
processes of moving from the student into the teacher role. And the relationships with their peers
developed through discussions helped them to become more critically self-reflective.

As the preservice teachers became more involved in the classrooms of their early field
experiences, there were more areas to negotiate, more relationships to negotiate, and more
learning that took place. Britzman (1991) calls this dialogic discourse. The preservice teachers
were shaped by their experiences in the classrooms at the same time as they were shaping
themselves into what they want to be as teachers. All of this takes place in a dynamic way.
Britzman describes it as the social process of negotiation. The preservice teachers are negotiating
their own intentions and values in the midst of another teacher's classroom and a university with
its own ideas. Dialogic discourse and the social process of negotiation are integral components of
my theoretical framework for understanding preservice teacher learning.

Across All the Field Experiences...Block One, Block Two, and Block Three

I have analyzed data gathered over three semesters from a cohort of preservice teachers in
an early childhood teacher education program. The analysis followed the preservice teachers'
chronological progression through the program from Block One to Block Three in their early
field experiences. Next is a summary analysis of the learning across all the Blocks from the perspective of the whole cohort and the focus participants.

The Cohort…Across their Early Field Experiences

As these preservice teachers left their early field placements, the concerns they raised related to students, teaching, and even beyond the classroom. Concerns related to students were the individual needs of students and motivating students. Concerns related to teaching were classroom management, planning, classroom environment, and teacher attitudes. Beyond the classroom they were concerned with the principal role in schools and educational funding. If I rewind and examine the questions that they had at the end of their first semester in the program, some of the same questions were evident. The questions became more directed after the more in-depth field experiences of the program. The language they used to ask their questions changed to mirror the language they had been hearing in the university classrooms. For example the word, “discipline plan” and “management” were words they used to address their questions in the first set of questions. By the end of the third semester and third field experience, the way they asked questions focused on the “classroom environment” and “community.”

I began this section of analysis saying that the cohort of preservice teachers spoke about relationships and how they had learned as students, as a way to make sense of their early field experiences. As they progressed through the early field experiences, it became more important to focus on classrooms in terms of their expectations of what a classroom or teaching should be. The preservice teachers began by looking at relationships in terms of the teacher and students in the classroom, then began to be concerned by their own relationship to the mentor teacher, and by the end of their early field experiences they were focused on their own relationship to the students, and more specifically on the students' learning. This was evidenced in their questions.
The Focus Participants…Across their Early Field Experiences

As the focus participants entered the early field experiences, their reflections moved back and forth between judging, distancing, processing and reconciling. As they progressed through the program they began to use their new experiences within the early field placement as a way to grow and think about what teaching is.

I wonder about the relationships they developed with their mentor teachers in Block Three. As the preservice teachers became more involved in their role as teacher, rather than as student, the relationship with their mentor teacher became increasingly important. Inversely the need to “see teaching” seemed to decline. Is it because they have “seen teaching” in each of their early field experiences and in the university? Or is it because they have developed their own ideas of what they want teaching to look like.

A Note on the Analysis So Far

As the researcher in this study, I took specific aspects of the preservice teachers' development through their early field experiences and highlighted them in my analysis. In Block One the analysis and discussion focused on the judging, distancing, processing, and reconciling categories reflected in their preservice teachers' journal entries. In the analysis of the preservice teachers' Block Two experience, I discussed the roles they took on with the mentor teachers and how that influenced their development and growth. In the analysis of their Block Three field experience, I discussed interactions with mentor teachers, interactions between peers and interactions with students that influenced their development. Each of these in-depth discussions was chosen intentionally to illustrate preservice teacher development in terms of my theoretical framework for understanding preservice teacher learning. My conclusions and implications in the next chapter include describing my framework.
In the analysis of each Block regarding preservice teacher learning, it must be noted that there were data that were not included in the discussion. The development of these preservice teachers was not linear and not identical for each of them. For example, instances of negotiating roles in the classroom showed up as early as Block One, and also occurred into Block Three. I chose to focus on the topic of negotiating roles for Block Two as it was a common theme in my data, just as in my analysis of Block Three I focused on the interactions among the preservice teachers. There were instances of the importance of the interactions among the preservice teachers as early as Block One, and certainly in Block Two, but Block Three data clearly demonstrated the connection the preservice teachers were making between their own learning and interactions with peers.

I chose to take a layered look at the data and continued to use this layered look in my analysis. The three layers of the research, whole cohort, focus participant, and one preservice teacher have been presented as narratives, and two layers have been analyzed in the preceding pages. The remaining layer to analyze is the narrowest lens, with which I viewed the early field experiences of one preservice teacher.

The Narrowest Lens: June's Narrative

In the three-dimensional (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) storied space of experience, interaction, continuity, and situation, a preservice teacher learns how to teach. June Devon’s interactions both personal and social are within the experiences at the schools and in her university courses. Her past history as a learner, her current experiences in the teacher education program and her plans for the future, are along the continuum of learning to teach. Her situations in each field experience are also part of how she learns to teach.
Experience in teacher education can be viewed through Dewey’s principles of continuity and interaction. As you read June’s story, there were underlying tensions. Her interactions created tensions: Tensions pertaining to her choice to teach, her role in the community of learners or cohort, tensions as she learned to address her own views about learners, tensions with what she was seeing in her field experiences, and tensions with student learning. Her learning was on a continuum that moved back and forth. She revisited her own learning experiences and projected into the future what she wanted to use in her own classroom. The context of each field experience contributed to her learning to teach.

**Analysis of June's Early Field Experiences**

June’s interactions with peers, with her mentor teachers, with instructors at the university, and with the children she taught, are important to examine. Her interactions have one goal in mind: student learning.

**Student Learning…What June Focuses On**

In Block One June tried to make sense of her interactions with an African American girl who wanted to play with her hair (page 172). She was concerned about how race would affect her understanding of students. In Block Two she taught a lesson that was evaluated by her mentor teacher and university facilitator with discouraging results, yet she focused on the children's understanding of the material. As she met with her accountability partner, her concern was how she interacted with the students in the classroom for her Block Three field experience. Whether she was interacting with instructors, mentor teachers, supervisors, students, or her peers in the teacher education program, June focused on students.

I think the most frustrating thing about this program to me is that I will never really have a good idea, maybe, I don’t know maybe this happens in Block Four. But my past two
field experiences I don’t know what it's like to feel like a teacher. We have these assignments, we have assignments that we have to build in. It's not like we ever, we never really do get to look at the kids and say, ‘This is what I want to do with them. This is where I think they need to go.” Because we have this list of things we have to do. (June, interview lines 60-63, 3/30/03)

As June negotiated interactions with all the people involved in her learning to be a teacher, she struggled with what was at the heart of teaching, the students.

One of the most significant tensions that June’s story showed was the tension she felt between the students' needs and the university requirements. In June’s narrative earlier, I wrote about reading tutoring she did with one student from her Block Three experience (pages 186-187). Similarly, June struggled with the purpose of the assignment in the context of her concern with student learning. “It was frustrating for the child too. I fabricated things I didn’t do because I didn’t think they were right for the child.”

*Mentor Teachers…June’s Conversations*

June’s interactions with her mentor teachers allowed her to feel like “a partner” in Block Three and like “a teacher” in Block Two. She felt she was able to develop those relationships and roles because she had what she called “the conversation” with her mentor teachers at the beginning of each early field experience. In Block One she was not comfortable in the classroom because she had no opportunity to talk to the teacher. She valued her one hour visit to another teacher’s classroom because, “I had a more sustained conversation with her in the one hour that I was there, than the whole semester in the other class.” In Block Two, her mentor teacher told her, “I don’t see you as a student teacher, I see you as a teacher.” In Block Three Junes said, “We [the mentor teacher and I] went to the library for two and half hours and talked.” In each case
June felt the conversation between herself and the teacher made a significant difference in her learning from the field experience. It may have been the role she was able to play in the class following that conversation that was important to her learning. It may have been the opening up of the relationship with the mentor teacher that allowed further conversations and questioning that was important. The reasons and connections were not made clear in our interviews, but June felt that in the experiences where she developed her roles as teacher and partner in the classroom, “I learned more in a month than I learned in three years at the university” (June, interview line 105, 11/17/02).

What June Wants….How Does it Change

The letter that June wrote herself at the beginning of Block Two (page 189 -190) expressed clearly what June wanted to do as a teacher. She had not changed by the end of Block Three. What had changed was the language she used to express her desires for the students in her classroom. Earlier she wrote, “create a learning environment,” ”get to know how your students interact with themselves and in their environment, “ “and [be] willing to be creative in developing a variety of activities.” As the semesters continued and as June entered her two field experiences following that letter, the language she used to do the things she wanted to do changed also.

June “got to know her students” with an interactive bulletin board called “You’ve Got Mail.” Letters entered and exited the mailbox between June and her students in a fifth grade classroom of her Block Two early field experience. She said, “this helped to facilitate growing relationships between my students and myself that assisted in fostering trust as well as enabled me to learn more about my students' backgrounds, interests, and concerns” (June, portfolio, 5/2003). She even included her love of reading as a way to further connect with the students. “I
always tried to include things about books or things that I was reading that they might want to respond back to. I wanted them to see just how important it was” (June, interview lines 549-550, 11/17/02). She ended her thoughts by writing in her portfolio, “Knowledge of students is indeed a practice that will be forever changing with the distinctiveness of each unique child.”

Certainly her “creativity in developing a variety of activities” was evidenced in her mathematics lesson for the fifth grade class in Block Two (pages 176-178). She changed her language to describe more specifically what she was doing in her interview with me following the field experience in Block Two. She discussed the “children's literature and problem solving intertwined” in her lessons on traveling. She made sure the lessons were “progressive” and she “modeled” working together in groups. The students ended by “designing their own trips.”

She brought her own interest in dance to the classroom in her Block Three experience with a kindergarten classroom. Her thematic unit on dance went beyond the requirements for the courses she was enrolled in as part of her program. The “learning environment” she created includes centers with dance costumes, reading literature with dance themes, and creating sculpture like Degas’ Dancer with clay. She placed these activities into her portfolio under Standard Six of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, “Meaningful Applications of Knowledge.”

In each of these examples, June’s letter written at the beginning of Block Two, indicated her ideas of what she wanted to be as a teacher, and as the semesters progressed and she entered more university classrooms, and more early field experiences, I saw that she had held onto those ideas, but was able to use new language to articulate why she wanted those to be part of her classroom.
Summarizing What June’s Narrative Adds to Analysis

June’s narrative was not typical of the preservice teachers in this cohort of teacher education majors. Not everyone felt their Block Two and Block Three early field experiences were a success. Not everyone felt a partner in teaching with his or her mentor teacher. Not everyone admitted to fabricated assignments for coursework because they felt it was not benefiting their students. Not everyone explicitly placed student learning at the heart of what they were teaching. But even as it is not a typical story, it speaks to me. I feel the need to tell the story of one preservice teacher who did experience success, and felt that she had learned important lessons about becoming a teacher. By examining her experiences, perhaps we can begin to understand what makes a successful early field experience. Perhaps we can discover ways to support preservice teachers so that their early field experiences are also successful.

What I would like to highlight about June’s story is she shows how important the relationship between mentor teacher and preservice teacher is in how they develop their roles in their field experiences. Encouraging preservice teachers to bring their own interests to their learning appears to be important. June’s highly successful experience with kindergarten in Block Three seemed in large part due to her success in teaching a unit on dance, something she knew so much about before she began the teacher education program. Paying attention to what preservice teachers say about their concerns and interests as they enter the program, and allowing them to build on those concerns and interests, may prove to help preservice teachers to connect their interests to learning about teaching. By examining June's letter from the beginning of the program, I find that she has not changed, but only strengthened her goals. Although preservice teachers may not be so clear about who they are and what their ideas about teaching are, I
believe her narrative and its analysis are important to consider for its implications in teacher education.

The layered data of whole cohort, focus participants, and one preservice teacher, provided a unique view of preservice teacher learning from early field experiences. The differing lenses offered a broad look at a cohort of twenty-five preservice teachers beginning an early childhood teacher education program, together with a narrative that shared scenes from each Block. A narrower lens of the perspective of five volunteer participants shared their unique views on their early field experiences was also offered. The tightest lens was the analysis of one preservice teacher whose story shared details that teacher educators and researchers can learn from.

Final Words on Analysis

The analysis of the data for this research study proved difficult. The amount of data and differing layers and perspectives made it hard to systematically work through analysis. Instead I have provided a view into the whole cohort's early field experiences and my interpretations of them. Then, a view into the focus participants' early field experiences and some analysis of what they learned. And finally I expanded on the early field experience narrative of one participant in the early childhood teacher education program. In the conclusions and implications chapter I return to the research questions and theoretical investments that guided the data collection and analysis for the dissertation.
"Good qualitative research ought to confound issues, revealing them in their complexity rather than reducing them to simple explanations" (Wolcott, 2001, p. 36). Revealing complexity is where I find myself. As I return to my research question, how do preservice teachers learn from early field experiences? I am left with no simple explanation. As a study of a process, I see learning to teach as dynamic (Wertsch, 1991). Studying a whole cohort of preservice teachers as they progressed through three semesters of an early childhood teacher education program, I am left with multiple constructions of their experiences. I am left with further questions to guide my next research project. I am left only beginning to understand the complexity of learning to teach and early field experiences.

How Do Preservice Teachers Learn From Early Field Experiences?

The preservice teachers are learning during every Block and every semester. In order to begin my understanding of their learning, I used Dewey's (1938) theory of experience, Britzman's (1991) ideas on practice, and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry. I have taken from these theorists and researchers in order to design my own framework for understanding how preservice teachers learn from their early field experiences. The ongoing analysis of data informed the framework. As I sought to answer my research question and understand how preservice teachers learn, my framework was a way to connect my theoretical understanding of Dewey and Britzman to how the preservice teachers were learning from their early field experiences. The narrative of the preservice teachers' experiences viewed through these lenses provided access into how they were developing as teachers. My framework, pictured
in Figure 4, includes aspects of all the theories I relied on to make sense of the preservice teachers' early field experiences.

My Framework for Understanding How Preservice Teachers Learn From Early Field Experiences

Understanding preservice teacher knowledge is one aspect of how they learn from early field experiences. In my review of literature, I discussed Shulman's (1986) *Seven Categories of Teacher Knowledge* (page 39) and Grossman's (1995) *Six Domains for a Typology for Teacher Knowledge* (page 39). These frameworks both address teacher knowledge, which is very
different from the development of preservice teacher knowledge. Lacking in Shulman's framework for teacher knowledge was knowledge of self, and although Grossman's framework includes this, my study has led me have it placed more centrally in understanding preservice teacher development. Shulman's and Grossman's frameworks are lists of types of knowledge that teachers should have and therefore do not address they dynamic process of learning that knowledge. My framework had to be a graphic representation of a dynamic process of learning knowledge rather than a list of types of knowledge.

In my framework I acknowledge the importance of the context of the experiences of the preservice teachers. I include in my framework the larger context of their whole program. Within the whole program, the multiple layers of context may be the local community of the schools, the university buildings, any classroom where the preservice teachers were placed, the university courses they took, the community that developed in their cohort, the peers they used for support. All these multiple and layered contexts were part of understanding the preservice teachers' narratives of learning to teach.

My framework for preservice teacher knowledge and learning addresses knowledge of self. Figure 4 has an arrow that represents how preservice teachers go back and forth from the past, present and future, as in Dewey's (1938) principle of continuity, in understanding themselves and understanding learning to teach. The arrow also crosses right through the intersecting interactions of all the people involved in their development. Developing an understanding of themselves is an important part of the preservice teachers learning to teach. Their voices and perspectives are particularly important to include in their learning so their narratives are told from their perspectives and with their voices. The narratives and analysis of their early field experiences demonstrated how the preservice teacher revisited and reflected on
past experiences in order to make sense of their present field experience, and even projected into the future of having their own classrooms based on what was happening in their field experiences.

Dewey's (1938) principles of interaction and continuity were not sufficient for completely understanding the early field experiences of the preservice teachers I studied. The continuity of the experience was more clearly viewed through the past, present, and future concepts articulated in Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry. Especially important was the idea of the preservice teachers moving back and forth on a temporal continuum throughout their early field experiences. Dewey's principle of interaction does not make a clear enough case for understanding all the interactions that occurred in preservice teachers' early field experiences. That is why my framework has the arrow (continuity) intersecting all the interactions.

I include specific aspects of Britzman's (1991) theories of learning in my framework. Learning to teach involves intricacies of multiple interactions in early field experiences. The terms I have taken from her theories are: being marginally situated in two worlds, dialogic discourse, and the social process of negotiation. These ideas address the intricate web of interactions within early field experiences.

Britzman's (1991) notion of being marginally situated in two worlds was especially important to my understanding of preservice teacher learning. In my framework I have included a dotted line separating the schools and the university. The line is dotted because it is a line that was often crossed in their early field experiences, yet it is a line that was clearly there. The preservice teacher and the mentor teachers were on opposite sides of this line, but both crossed it. Often the preservice teachers crossed the line and took on the role of teacher. One mentor teacher mentioned that her reason for taking preservice teachers was so she could learn new ideas from
them, so that they could bring ideas from the university into her classroom. The narratives and analysis of the data demonstrated the tensions that surrounded that line, a line that depicts begin marginally situated in two worlds.

Dialogic discourse (Britzman, 1991) is placed at the center of all the interactions between the people who are involved in preservice teacher development. It is the area where the preservice teachers were shaped by the experiences, and the experiences were shaped by the preservice teachers, as they were learning about teaching. This is set in the middle of the arrow along the continuity of their early experiences, thus shaping future experiences, and moving back and forth along past, present, and future. In the context of the schools and the university the preservice teachers negotiated their learning to teach. The process of negotiation was social, so I placed it in a larger circle in my framework. This coincides with Wertsch’s (1991) notion that meaning making is situated in the social. The arrow is still a part of the process as it signifies the preservice teachers going back and forth from past, present, and future. The narratives and subsequent analysis demonstrated many examples of dialogic discourse and the social process of negotiation. One example of this dialogic discourse and social process of negotiation, is Vicki. She began her Block Two experience knowing some of the students in her early field experience classroom having been their Girl Scout leader. She dealt with the name issue, "I'm Miss Vicki in stead of Miss Shelly," in a dialogic way, and then negotiated the transition into a different role for these students.

My framework allowed me to view the multiple contexts, the multiple interactions, and the continuity of the process of how these preservice teachers learned to teach in their early field experiences. How do preservice teachers learn to teach from their early field experiences? If I answered this question simply, then there would be no story to tell, no interpretations to make,
and no conclusions to draw. To answer the question how do preservice teachers learn in their early field experiences, I must consider the particular situation of the particular experiences of the cohort I studied, the interactions within the early field experiences, and the continuity of what has gone before this experience. I return to each of these now as I draw conclusions from the research I conducted.

Using Narrative Inquiry to Frame My Conclusions

I used narrative inquiry to guide my data collection and analysis and now I use narrative inquiry to frame my conclusions. The narrative of the preservice teachers' experiences as they learned to teach viewed through this lens provided access into how the participants developed as teachers and provided insights into the continuity of their experiences and learning. I began to see how the preservice teachers moved forward, backward, inward and outward as they experienced teaching. As they interacted with peers, mentor teachers, and students, and as they developed into teachers, their interactions became important to their learning in the early field experiences. The situation of a particular cohort, in a program, in a university, and each of the schools, was also considered. I use the terms situation, interaction, and continuity, as I revisit narrative inquiry with my conclusions.

Situation

The multiple contexts of the preservice teachers I studied learning to teach are important to consider. The cohort, the university, and the schools all played a part in the learning process for these preservice teachers. I consider all of these contexts as part of the situation in my conclusions.
The Cohort

The unique nature of the cohort program allowed this group of preservice teachers to remain a cohesive group over three semesters. The fact that the early childhood instructor remained with them over Block Two and Three helped to build a sense of community. With the support of their peers, the preservice teachers understood incidents in the classrooms where they were placed. They also made sense of their own teaching practices with their accountability partners. Some members of the cohort made the connection between the community they were building in the university classroom and using that model in their own classrooms.

The University

For these preservice teachers the university assignments and requirements began to take on a different role in their learning as they began to spend more and more time in the classrooms. Sometimes they felt their reflections were intended either for themselves or for the coursework, but there was not one easy way to reflect for both. They felt reflection was an important part of their learning to teach, but did not always see what they considered to be the university prescribed approaches to reflection as useful.

Other times the preservice teachers made connections between the university learning and their field experiences. By using the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, the preservice teachers learned to focus on student learning in their field experiences and even to place that as the most important part of learning to teach, as June did. The language the preservice teachers used in their reflections changed to reflect some of the learning in their university courses. In initial reactions to their first early field placement the preservice teachers remarked on the teacher's behavior as "rude" or her attitude as "burned out." Later they more
often used words in their reflections that showed their concern with community, with "warm classroom environment," "consistency," and "expectations."

The Schools

The schools used for the placement of the preservice teachers in the cohort I studied are specifically chosen to ensure they have experiences in a variety of schools settings. As I consider the learning of this cohort, I must consider what they learned about teaching from the variety of schools. Teaching in schools serving socio-economically and ethnically diverse students allowed the preservice teachers to be in situations that were vastly different from their own schooling experiences. In analyzing the way they confronted and made sense of those differences, I was able to view important aspects of their learning about teaching.

As presented in the analysis, the preservice teachers dealt with issues of diversity in language, race, and socio-economic status with the students who were in the classrooms of their early field experiences. The Block One university and school contexts did not allow the preservice teachers to really explore those differences in a meaningful way. In Block Two and Block Three the focus participants begin to make sense of those differences and what they meant to their teaching. During Block One the journal reflections contained references to many students who did not speak English, "The few boys I am talking about speak Spanish to each other most of the time. That surely isn't helping them with their vocabulary and recognition of words" (Jenna, field experience journal Block One, 1/29/02). By the end of Block Three Barbara's critical incident report reflected what she was learning about students who were limited in their understanding of English. "He doesn't speak English well….he didn't understand what we were asking for….that really changed my relationship with him….he would seek me out because I showed a little compassion" (Barbara, interview, 3/31/03, Block Three).
How My Framework Addresses Situation

The largest part of my framework is the context. Although I made a rectangle shape that appears to encompass the dual contexts of university and schools, in reality the context is much less clean-cut. In reality the contexts are interrelated and the boundaries are messy. The cohort crosses both contexts in their learning to teach. The limitation of the framework is the inability to articulate the complexity of the contexts. For those intricacies I turned to narrative.

Interaction

Dewey (1938) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) both describe interaction as crucial to understanding experiences. I described many interactions in my narratives of the cohort and their early field experiences. There are interactions on multiple levels that need to be addressed. I begin with peer interactions because that is the basis of that was established in the narrative of Cluster A. Peer interactions are only one way to view the experiences of the preservice teachers. Other interactions include interactions with the mentor teachers they work with and the students. I discuss each of these types of interactions separately and then relate that to my own framework.

Peer Interactions

When the cohort entered Block One of the early childhood education program in the Spring of 2002, some faces of fellow students were familiar from classes required to enter the program. The preservice teachers began that semester taking all coursework together, and each subsequent semester in the program they were also together in all of their courses. One aspect of the peer interaction was formalized in accountability partners. The preservice teachers learned about listening to each other, learned about depending on one another to make decisions together, and used each other as a tool for observations of teaching practice and making changes
in practice. As evidenced by their critical incident reports in Block Three, their reflections were heightened by the discussion of the incidents with their peers.

*Interactions with the Instructor*

The early childhood course instructor, Michael, was a graduate student who taught the course as part of his graduate assistantship in the Department of Elementary Education. He chose to work with the cohort in this study for two semesters in a row. Michael made an impact with the preservice teachers in his interactions and with the way he developed a community within the cohort. The weekly reflections I used as a data for this research were one way the preservice teachers interacted with Michael.

Kagan (1992) found that preservice teachers wanted procedural knowledge in their teacher education programs. In my study, as the preservice teachers moved into Blocks Two and Block Three, the role of leading the university class in their rituals (for example the read-a-loud) was handed off from Michael to an assigned group of the cohort. I found that during this transition the data reflected fewer preservice teachers asking to "see" teaching." It seemed that as the preservice teachers became more involved in leading the university rituals they did not mention needing to see teaching as often. The transition from student to leader was also an example of the preservice teachers being marginally situated in two worlds. Michael served as a model for the preservice teachers as they transitioned into leaders themselves. As they began to make steps into teaching, by managing the university classroom rituals, they returned to being students for the rest of the period.

*Interactions with Mentor Teachers*

The preservice teachers viewed their relationships with the mentor teachers as an important part of how they viewed the field experiences. I wanted to view this important aspect
of interaction through the eyes of the preservice teachers. The roles that the preservice teachers felt they had in the classrooms for their early field placement were important in their development as teachers. The interactive roles the preservice teachers saw for themselves in relation to mentor teachers ranged from visitor and even intruder to partner and team member. Some members of the cohort felt they had to take the role of policeman or even as another student in the classroom. In some cases the preservice teachers' conversations with their mentor teachers enabled them to feel more of a teacher. Other preservice teachers were not able to discuss their role in a way that helped them negotiate a new view of what their role in the classroom might be and how it might relate to their becoming a teacher.

The way the preservice teachers viewed their interactions with the mentor teachers also affected the sense of what they could and could not do in the classroom while in their early field experience. Some preservice teachers and mentor teachers seemed to have better skills for negotiating the relationship. The instructor's focus on the importance of "the conversation" between preservice teachers and mentor teachers seemed to recognize the need of many students and mentor teachers for support in negotiating this relationship.

*Interactions with Students*

The critical incidents reported by the preservice teachers in Block Three, overwhelmingly relate to students. The preservice teachers reported many ways in which their interactions with students influenced their thinking about teaching. In most cases the student interactions led the preservice teachers to reconsider their experiences as learners, or to reconsider their views of teaching. In some cases the student interactions were what brought to the forefront a clearly articulated goal of student learning.
Interactions with the Researcher

The focus participants had significant interactions with me. The extent to which my interactions through interviews and observations changed their learning is hard to tell. On more than one occasion the preservice teachers noted that they had not thought things out clearly until they talked in our interviews. One of the focus participants included her participation in my research as evidence of meeting one of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards: Contributions to the Profession. She included transcripts of our interviews to show her "commitment to the continued growth and development of my colleagues, my school and my profession" (Anna, portfolio, 5/7/2003). From my own experience in teacher education, I felt understanding what I was experiencing in my field experiences was missing. Therefore I felt that the participants' opportunities for interactive reflection with me were significant in understanding how they were learning from their own field experiences.

How My Framework Addresses Interaction

Whether it was interactions with peers, interactions with the instructor, interactions with their mentor teacher, interactions with the researcher, or interactions with students, the preservice teachers seemed to gain knowledge about themselves as learners and teachers. Therefore, the arrow of past, present and future runs right through the relationships and interactions between the players in the development of the preservice teachers.

Continuity

"Growth, or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally, is one exemplification of the principle of continuity" (Dewey, 1938, p. 36). If this is what the principle of continuity of experience states, then we can expect that the preservice teachers are developing as a result of their early field experiences. The experiences that precede their early
field experiences, such as their own schooling experiences, all affect the current experiences, which in turn modify the next experience.

*Preservice Teachers Early Experiences in a Classroom and as a Learner*

All of the preservice teachers have experienced classrooms long before they enter the teacher education program. This *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 1975) provides a strong beginning for how they view their own learning to teach, and developing into teachers themselves. In Block One, some preservice teachers began by noting the differences in the racial, linguistic, and socio-economic makeup of the classrooms. In Block Two they began to deal with how their early learning had been different than how they were expected to teach. As their university coursework and early field experiences challenged them to try to understand children as learners they also reflected on and questioned their own experiences as learners.

Something important to consider when viewing experience was how the preservice teachers in this cohort brought aspects of themselves into their process of learning to teach. Their own interests and strengths and needs manifested themselves as they began to develop as teachers. Examples of this were: June, who loves to dance. For Jake this meant bringing himself as a male role model to the students in the classrooms he worked in and his unique interest in being a kindergarten teacher. For Vicki it was bringing her outside interests in social justice issues to the classrooms she worked in and using what she learned from her trip to Mexico. Anna was emotionally involved in the students' lives as she stated she wanted to be. For Barbara, it was bringing what she learned from her mother’s classroom to her learning to teach and her own struggles with working with ESOL students. It seems important for teacher educators to help preservice teachers articulate who they are in terms of their early field experiences and their
teaching. Who they are represents an intersection of where they are in their lives as well as making sense of who they are as they learn to teach.

In my own experiences in teacher education I felt that knowledge of myself was a critical part of my learning to teach. My literature review included this important aspect of learning to teach also. For the preservice teachers I studied, learning about themselves was also important. As they moved forward into their own classrooms and teaching, important knowledge about themselves drew them back into the learning process.

*Learning Across the Early Field Experiences*

The relationship between university coursework and field experiences showed increasing strain as the students became heavily invested in the school and students where they were placed. They began to see reflection in each setting as different processes. Some preservice teachers even felt that certain university assignments, in fact, did not help the children and therefore were not important.

Preservice teacher did not always see connections between what was happening in their university classes and the classrooms where they were placed. Their struggle with wanting to "see" teaching in earlier courses did subside, as they became immersed in the field experiences. Some tensions arose when the preservice teachers were not able to try things that they were introduced to in courses, or when they felt mentor teachers did not support their efforts.

Towards the end of their early field experiences, the preservice teachers began to see the connections between their teacher education courses and how they were taught and the classrooms they would have in the future. Jake in particular made the connections with Michael's community building in their cohort, and how he wanted to build community in his classroom. "I am understanding the importance of consistency on an even deeper level as I pick up on all the
things Michael consistently does class to class" (Michael, weekly reflection from university class, 11/6/02, Block Two).

The preservice teachers used the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards as a way to showcase their learning over two semesters of early field experiences. These portfolios contained instances of impact on student learning. June's narrative provided examples of how she saw the connections between her learning in the teacher education course and her own focus on children's learning. Another student reflected, "The standards make sense now that we've been out in the field" (unnamed reflection sheet, undated, Block Two).

*How My Framework Addresses Continuity*

The principle of continuity connects to the process aspect of learning to teach. Instead of a linear notion of development with one stage progressing to the next, my framework for understanding how preservice teacher develop includes an arrow. The arrow intersects the interactions and the context. The intersection and the interactions are an important part of preservice teachers understanding themselves as they learn to teach.

*Situation, Interaction, and Continuity*

Through my framework of how preservice teachers learn to teach in their early field experiences, situation, interaction, and continuity are all considered. Narrative inquiry framed my study and aided in framing my conclusions about the research. Through a graphic representation of the dynamic process of learning to teach, I reveal some of the complexities. Preservice teachers' voices were the source for beginning and ending my understanding of how preservice teachers learn to teach in their early field experiences.
Implications

The two contexts of the preservice teachers' early field experiences in the schools and the university, interacted to create a place for the development of teachers. There are important assertions I would like to bring out from my longitudinal study of this cohort as they progressed through three semesters of a teacher education program. Assertion One: Preservice teachers want to see teachers and teaching. Assertion Two: The role the preservice teachers take with their mentor teacher has an influence on their learning to teach. Assertion Three: Viewing reflection through the preservice teachers’ eyes is important.

Assertion One

Ziechner's (1981) article explained possible reasons for the effects of university teaching being "washed out" by school experience. Perhaps one way we can prevent a washing out effect of university teaching is by listening as the preservice teachers ask to see models of teaching. As the preservice teachers began the early childhood teacher education program, they repeatedly stated the need to see teaching. They wanted to see teachers in action, watch someone else teach, hear how theory was put into practice, and watch how "real" teachers taught.

Korthagen et al. (2001) use a model of realistic teacher education to move the teachers back and forth between theory and practice, from the classroom to the university and back again. For Korthagen, the preservice teachers used their experiences to delve into theory and make sense of what they experienced. In Korthagen's model the preservice teachers bring specific events from their field experiences back to the university classroom to discuss. Another model could be Cochran et al.’s (1993) concept of pedagogical content knowing, which was mentioned in the literature review. Pedagogical content knowing includes understanding context when discussing pedagogy and subject matter learning. Understanding the many contexts of any
teaching assignment is something that these preservice teachers struggled with throughout their early field experiences. Both Korthagen and Cochran et al. seem to be a ways to bridge the preservice teachers' need to see teaching, and using that desire for teaching models to connect their learning to a more theoretical understanding of teaching.

For the preservice teachers I have followed, their need to see teaching diminished as they gathered more and more early field experiences on which to base their own teaching. In developing programs and planning early field experiences for preservice teachers, the transition from wanting "to see" teaching to making sense of what they are seeing is important to note. Once the need for seeing teaching is less important, it becomes increasingly important to make connections between research and theory and teaching. A model of reflective university instruction and a framework such as a portfolio using standards to focus on impact on student learning are possible supports for helping preservice teachers make these connections.

Assertion Two

Understanding that interaction is a part of experience makes it impossible to ignore the relationship between the mentor teachers and the preservice teachers I studied. The role the mentor teacher and preservice teacher took in the classroom for the early field experiences played an important part in the learning to teach. If we as teacher educators are empowering preservice teachers to take responsibility for their own learning through community and student centered learning, then as they enter their early field experiences we must continue to work to facilitate the relationship between the mentor teachers and interns. Whether it is modeling how to "have the conversation" about roles and relationships with mentor teachers or some other method of facilitating the relationship, teacher educators must take a more active role in facilitating
relationships throughout any early field experiences. We must also reconsider the early field experiences that do not provide the structure for relationships to develop.

Assertion Three

Korthagen et al. (2001) writes that there are many different conceptualizations of reflection and reflective teaching that are considered as curriculum is developed for teacher education. I would add that the preservice teachers' own conceptions of reflection and reflective teaching are an important piece to be considered. Understanding how preservice teachers individually constructed meaningful and instrumental approaches to reflection was important. It is important for teacher educators to consider preservice teacher's knowledge about themselves, and how to facilitate keeping that at the center of their learning and reflecting.

Knowledge of self underlies all these assertions. It is imperative that any teacher education program incorporates ways for preservice teachers to learn about themselves. By encouraging the preservice teachers to view their own previous learning experiences as students, by encouraging them to take ownership of their learning in university coursework by making it meaningful to them, and by showing them how to work with peers, they begin to form their own ideas of who they are as a teacher. None of that should be ignored as they make sense of their university coursework and their field experiences in any teacher education program.

It is well and good to have hundreds of pages of data and many pages of analysis to explain the early field experiences of these preservice teachers as they learn to teach and develop into teachers. The most important part of research is to return to so what. So what does this research mean for teacher education and the preparation of preservice teachers for their own classrooms?
My assertions are clear. I believe that preservice teachers want to see teaching. The relationship that mentor teachers have with their interns is important in understanding their learning and development. Understanding the complexities of reflection is important also. All of this stands strong on the theoretical framework of social constructivism. Each preservice teacher has a very different experience drawing on unique autobiographies as learners and as people, with very different interactions with their mentor teachers, and then have their own personal reflections to those experiences. SO WHAT? Now we, as teacher educators, must build meaningful learning contexts that reflect how preservice teachers learn from early field experiences.

Letters

As a way to share my research with the participants who shared with me over the three semesters, and to share my conclusions with teacher educators, I wrote letters to communicate both my appreciation and my conclusions.

Dear "Perfecting Community Known as Cluster A"

I use Jake's words from an email in my salutation to you all. What an absolute honor to be a part of your learning to be teachers. I feel lucky to have been a part of you learning journey; first as your instructor as you began the Early Childhood Education program, and later as a researcher. I feel fortunate to have watched you grow through the two semesters in Michael's class. You have become an amazing community of learners.

You have your own language, and your own jokes.

“Apples and passion fruit”

“Insanely engaged”
I saw such a small part of your daily, weekly, monthly, semesterly, and yearly interactions. But the breadth of your impact on me, and each other, is evident in so many ways. You wrote emails, from places far away, letting everyone know what was happening in Ireland, New Zealand, and Australia. You kept in touch with Michael and responded to his many queries through the electronic mailing list. Some of you volunteered even more time to talk with me in-depth about your field experiences, and let me watch you in action. You allowed me to read your instant thoughts with the weekly reflections about class time in Basset Hall. Some of you shared the culminating portfolio of learning what the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards mean to you.

Some things you learned were small and part of the community you built in the university classroom.

Always check your reflections sheet with a little mark…so you don’t have to turn in the white paper, or write it all over again.

Some of the things you learned you learned about yourself.

A learning community is developing because we are sharing ideas, NOT judging them.

Some of the things you learned you learned about students.

There are so many different issues that children have, and some of them make me so sad.

There seems to be an unfortunate situation in every class. I hope I don't reach the level of just giving up.

And some of the things you learned you learned about classrooms.

At first I never really gave much thought to the dynamics of a classroom. It was for the most part, out of my idea of the role of the teacher. Then I began to realize all that
teaching encompasses. As these ideas progressed, I now see how crucial community is and understand how it can be constructed effectively. What a difference it makes.

All of these things you learned will be important to you as you take on your own classrooms, make your own choices, try new things, and continue to learn and develop as teachers.

Thank you for sharing your learning journey with me.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Olson

Dear Anna, Jake, Vicki, June, and Barbara

Thank you so much for allowing me into your learning journey. Your enthusiasm and honesty made my work fun, interesting and very personal. I know that you are on the brink of an exciting, challenging and rewarding time in your life - thanks for letting me watch you prepare for it.

You have spent three semesters in the Early Childhood Education Program learning about teachers, teaching, students, and learning. You have had a foundation laid in understanding how students learn, how to teach them, and you even had a chance to teach yourselves. The hours you have spent in the university classroom have helped to make sense of all the theories, methods and practice in the complicated world of teaching and learning. The hours you have spent in the field have helped you to learn by watching, doing and reflecting.

What I have learned from you has deepened my own understanding of how teachers learn, how they develop into thoughtful practitioners, and how they begin the practice of teaching. What I hope to share with the field of teacher education is what I have learned from you.
I want to share these three assertions with you. One, it was important for you to be able to “see teaching.” You wanted teaching modeled in both your methods classes as well as early childhood classes. Community began to take on new meanings as it was modeled for you and you began to experience it. Teacher educators should provide that for you. Two, the relationship you had with your mentor teacher was important to consider when understanding your learning. A program should help negotiate that relationship. Three, all of you had different ideas about reflection and what it was. Your different approaches to reflection need to be honored and recognized as important to your process of learning to teach in a community of learners.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Olson

Learning From the Research Process

In my letters I have conveyed the implications I have drawn as a result of my research. I have also learned from the research process. Not only have I learned from the participants and the data in my research, but I have also learned a lot about doing research. I learned what immersion in my data meant. I learned how important it is to have someone to read your work. I have learned that the research process is not over until the last word is typed.

As I organized, typed, and transcribed data, I felt that I knew more about this cohort of preservice teachers than anyone else did. When I met two participants for an interview following their student teaching they were startled by the "fat file" I had on their progression. We joked together about sending any principal that was interviewing them to me. They thought I would be able to tell the principal more about them as teachers than they knew themselves. The amount of data for this project was quite overwhelming. Although the decision to exclude student teaching in the research did not seem to make sense in terms of seeing the preservice teachers through the
whole program, I was glad I followed my instincts and advice from others to keep it manageable. Being immersed in the data was one thing, but being flooded with it was a different matter.

Writing qualitative research cannot be done alone. There is no simple plan, no simple structure to follow, and there is definitely no ONE book to help you make sense of your data. It is a personal journey but one that you must allow others to help you with. For me, that was finding a partner in writing. I needed someone to read my raw work, to see if I was making any kind of sense. Once you enter your own research world it is hard to step back and see it from someone else's perspective. It was very important for me to have feedback from someone who was not immersed in my data, who was not viewing things from my theoretical framework, and who told me when I was not clear about something.

Until the last week of writing my work into the form of a research text, I struggled with trying to answer my research question. I finally figured out why I was having so much difficulty. I did not have the right question. One word made a big difference in my research process. I changed my research question from "What do preservice teachers learn in their early field experiences?" to "HOW do preservice teachers learn in their early field experiences?" The funny thing is that I was always trying to answer the second question anyway. My reading about teacher knowledge, my framework built on Dewey's (1938) and Britzman's (1991) theories of experience and practice, and my analysis of each layer was always focused on HOW and not WHAT. It was not until I came to writing the conclusions that it felt wrong. I felt like I should make a list of the things that the preservice teacher had learned because my question asked WHAT. I could not do it. I knew something had to change, and what a difference that one word meant. I was surprised by how little I had to change in my earlier writing.
What a process! I love it! Research for me was a process of learning from my data until the very end. It was a process that allowed me to be a learner to the very end. It was a process that allowed me to learn from others who have done research before me, yet a process that let me try my own ideas too. What I have learned from the research process is to allow myself to make choices in the research design, data collection, and analysis that may not be written in any book. I have also learned to depend on others to make sure my writing is clear. And finally I have learned that the research can frame the question just as well as the question can frame the research.

Further Research

The narratives of my research fit into a greater area of discussion for teacher education. Specific narratives about teaching in my research detailed preservice teacher using content knowledge in their learning. The narratives also shared how the preservice teachers struggled with pedagogical content knowledge and wanting practical knowledge about teaching. The narratives also revealed intimate details about the challenges preservice teachers faced in dealing with diverse students as they learned to teach. These narratives tell many stories for teacher educators to learn from, but the research also leaves many questions yet to be explored.

Much as I did not wish the narratives to end, I find it hard to end this particular research project. I feel that the cohort of preservice teachers and the data I have collected over two years has much left to tell us about how preservice teacher learn. I conclude the research study with questions for further research. There is much to be understood from this cohort and its uniqueness. More can be learned from other programs with different structures or contexts.

The preservice teachers requested "seeing" teaching in their time on campus and even in the schools. It would be interesting to explore further what they view as "teaching" during
various stages of their development as teachers. My preliminary analysis pointed to a change in the need for "seeing" teaching as they progressed in their program. It would be interesting to understand those changes more. Do programs with other structures have similar requests to see teaching? Does my framework that includes the preservice teachers moving backward and forward along the continuity help other researchers address learning to teach?

The relationship established between the preservice teachers and their mentor teachers is an interesting area for further research. I found the relationship played an important part in their view of the experiences, but it would be interesting to study the relationship. Who established it? Are there any ways to help preservice teachers talk to their mentor teachers about the role they would like to have in the classroom? Are there ways to work with mentor teachers to help them establish relationships that foster learning? Are there certain points in the development of the preservice teachers particularly in early field experiences that need to be taken into consideration before the role can be understood further?

The framework I have developed for understanding how preservice teachers learn from early field experiences addresses marginality, and dialogic discourse. Would an understanding of these notions help preservice teachers and mentor teachers understand each other's position in the process of learning to teach? Would these concepts be helpful for preservice teachers in order to "have the conversation" about learning while they are in their mentor teacher's classrooms?

My findings in this research study were that the preservice teachers changed their views about reflection at different points during their program. In their later field experiences they began to resent the university reflections as too lengthy and specific, and viewed their on-the-spot decisions as reflection also. They also felt that reflection could be done in different ways depending on the reason for reflections. The contexts of university-required reflections and
reflections that they did while in their early field experiences changed the way that they reflected. Areas to study further related to reflection could be related to these differing ideas of reflection. When do the preservice teachers begin to form their own ways of reflecting? When does formal reflection become less for them, and more for the university? How could the university assist preservice teachers in designing their own models for reflection? How does establishing a community of learners in the university context foster reflection?

I wonder about what differences there may be between this cohort of preservice teachers using this particular structure for early field experiences and preservice teachers learning to teach in other programs. Will the framework I have developed help other teacher educators to understand how their preservice teachers learn to teach? As preservice teachers move into student teaching, does this framework continue to address their development? What about when they begin their first teaching job?

I am left with many questions, as any qualitative researcher should be. I feel that with my framework for understanding how preservice teachers learn from their early field experiences I have a good place to begin exploring further. What began as a journey to understand my own teaching and how I learned to teach has resulted in understanding how to help preservice teachers learn to teach. Although my journey with this group of preservice teachers in these early field experiences is over, my journey to understand more about the development of preservice teachers into teachers, is far from over.
CHAPTER EIGHT:

A POSTSCRIPT

As I began writing this research study, my husband and I started a new building project on our older home. Together we planned, prepared, and began the deck project, so that he could work on the new deck while I was away for a week of writing. The steps we had taken to begin the building project were fresh in my mind. The preservice teachers' learning in their early field experiences were also in my thoughts. As I drove away, in my head I connected the two very different projects I was involved with. The project of building a deck for our home, and the project of making sense of the data I had collected from the cohort of preservice teachers. I used an analogy to make a connection between these two projects. These two projects shared a process, the process of making a deck, and the process of learning to teach.

Now, as I sit on my new deck at home, I think about the process involved in making it. Every careful step taken to ensure the deck's strength, our safety as we enjoyed it, and our ability to use it for backyard explorations. I have used the strength of the foundation as we eat dinner on its decking. I have appreciated the support of the railings as my children run up and down the stairs. I have enjoyed watching the birds and plants of our natural backyard from the height of the deck.

Now, at the conclusion of the study, I reviewed the process of the preservice teachers learning to teach in their early field experiences. I considered the foundations of understanding experience. I explored the social processes of negotiating multiple roles and interactions in their
field experiences. I framed how they were learning as they explored teaching in their early field experiences.

I find myself extending the analogy one step further to include the process of writing the dissertation. I brought myself into the research as I provided background for my interest in the topic. The research began with me. My own unique school experience, my concerns with my learning as a preservice teacher, and my frustrations as a new teacher were all part of the beginning of the research. The structure began to form as I got involved with the cohort as their instructor for the initial course in the program and as I learned the ways to study their experiences with my own graduate research methodology classes. I made connections between understanding experiences and how to understand the experiences of preservice teachers. The safety of exploring their experiences as a graduate student, with the guidance of faculty and fellow graduate students, became the focus of my own learning journey. Just as a deck is a jumping off point for the backyard explorations, so the research project was the jumping off point for my own explorations. With the foundation of my interest, the support of the research process, and the guidance of fellow researchers, I began my own explorations into the data.

I can sit back and reread the whole dissertation, with the benefits of hindsight. I began this dissertation with an analogy. I described building a deck, building a strong framework, connecting it to our home, making it safe with railings, and then enjoying the outdoors and backyard, from the stable structure. At the center of the dissertation was understanding the process of how preservice teachers learn to teach in their early field experiences: their teacher education course as a base, their own learning experiences as learners connecting to their new experiences in the schools, how they ventured into their roles as teachers, and returned to being students, and how some began to feel comfortable to step into teaching. I concluded my
dissertation with a framework. I designed a framework for understanding how preservice teachers learn in their early field experiences.

The beginning and end were not planned. I wrote the analogy in my first attempt to write up my qualitative data. The framework was the last part of my dissertation that fell into place. But somehow the dissertation makes sense with this beginning and this end.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX A

### SAMPLE SPREADSHEET OF WEEKLY REFLECTION ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>Connections was really quiet this morning and seemed longer than usual. It was kind of strange.</td>
<td>11/18/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after field</td>
<td>It was nice to see everyone again! Yeah, I don't have to write in Denealian style. Look I can still write like me.</td>
<td>10/28/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before field, connections</td>
<td>IT is sad that today is our last day for a month. I have really enjoyed class and I look forward to coming back and sharing what we have learned. I know I will miss connections time.</td>
<td>9/25/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>A learning community is developing because we are sharing ideas, NOT judging them.</td>
<td>9/16/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning history</td>
<td>I am realizing more and more that my experiences in elementary school, although good, was quite different than the way we're being taught to teach. Hmm…</td>
<td>8/28/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBPTS</td>
<td>I wish you would share what you think are key terms regarding the standards. I am interested in hearing what a professional thinks.</td>
<td>11/25/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see teaching</td>
<td>I really love watching real classroom scenarios. It helps me to visually see what we discuss and learn about in class.</td>
<td>9/18/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>anon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after field</td>
<td>Its good to be back but I miss my kids. I do think the field wore us out. I'm just glad I no longer have to wake up at 5:00 am.</td>
<td>10/28/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Deirdre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>The unknown can be fearful. Praying for you. Phil. 4: 6-7 May the peace of God guard your heart and mind.</td>
<td>10/30/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>Connections time s is good because it helps me to learn about others' outside life.</td>
<td>9/9/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Susan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before field</td>
<td>I am so excited about going to the elementary school but nervous about where I'll be.</td>
<td>8/26/02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tricia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>This class is going to force me to take a hard look at myself and the way I learn. I enjoy the group activities and hearing other people's perspectives. As a teacher you have to work with many other people, kids, adults, so cooperative attitudes are crucial. I enjoy the social learning this class is providing.</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vivian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B

## SAMPLE SPREADSHEET OF FOCUS PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Block</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>J: Yeah, and where do you think the practice comes from? Does it come from the field experiences that you are getting? Is that the practice that you are talking about? A: Yeah J: So the reflective piece that comes after or during or ongoing is a part of that learning for the practice? Or is it an additional piece you think? A: I think it is, I think it is part of it because you don’t learn anything</td>
<td>interview 1, lines 440-448</td>
<td>reflection</td>
<td>11/17/02</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>I missed Connections! I'm so sad that we'll only have it once a week now. I think it should be longer to compensate.</td>
<td>weekly reflection from 4030</td>
<td>connections</td>
<td>1/14/03</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>I like the idea of APs --peer observation is kind of exciting!</td>
<td>weekly reflection from 4030</td>
<td>Accountability partners</td>
<td>1/14/03</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Tricia did such a fantastic job with the read-a-loud today! It's so neat to see more of a glimpse of our classmates as teachers instead of almost teachers.</td>
<td>weekly reflection from 4030</td>
<td>role</td>
<td>1/21/03</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

CONNECTIONS PROTOCOL FROM THE NATIONAL SCHOOL REFORM FACULTY

What is Connections?
Connections is a way for people to build a bridge from where they are or have been (mentally, physically, etc.) to where they will be going and what they will be doing. It is a time for individuals to reflect – within the context of a group – upon a thought, a story, an insight, a question, or a feeling that they are carrying with them into the session, and then connect it to the work they are about to do. Most people engage in Connections at the beginning of a meeting, class, or gathering.

There are a few things to emphasize about Connections for it to go well...

- It is about connecting people’s thoughts to the work they are doing or are about to do.
- Silence is OK, as is using the time to write, to just sit and think. Assure people that they will spend a specific amount of time in Connections, whether or not anyone speaks out loud. Some groups – and people within groups – value the quiet, reflective time above all else.
- If an issue the group clearly wants to respond to comes up in Connections, the group can decide to make time for a discussion about the issue after Connections is over.

The “rules” for Connections are quite simple:

- Speak if you want to.
- Don’t speak if you don’t want to.
- Speak only once until everyone who wants to has had a chance to speak.
- Listen and note what people say, but do not respond. Connections is not the time to engage in a discussion.

Facilitating the process is also straightforward. Begin by saying “Connections is open,” and let people know how long it will last. A few minutes before the time is up, let people know that there are a few minutes remaining, so that anyone who hasn’t yet spoken might speak. With a minute or so to go, let the group know that you will be drawing Connections to a close, and again ask if anyone who hasn’t spoken would like to speak. Before ending, ask if anyone who has spoken would like to speak again. Then end.

Ten minutes is usually enough time for groups of 10 people or fewer, fifteen minutes for groups of 11-20 people and twenty minutes for any groups larger than 20 people. Connections generally shouldn’t last more than twenty minutes. People can’t sustain it. The one exception is when there is a group that has been together for a period of time doing intensive work, and it is the last or next to the last day of their gathering.

Some people will say that Connections is misnamed, since people don’t connect to (or build on) what other people have said. However, the process is a connecting one; and powerful connections can still occur, even though they are not necessarily the result of back and forth conversation.

Gene Thompson-Grove 2001
APPENDIX D

CRITICAL INCIDENT PROTOCOL FROM THE NATIONAL SCHOOL REFORM FACULTY

The purpose of this protocol is to provide a formal process for critical friendship using a variation of Costa and Killick’s model (See “Through the Lens of a Critical Friend” by Costa and Killick, Educational Leadership, October 1993) and based on the theory and language used by David Tripp in Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgment (Routledge, 1993). Revised February 2002 by Gene Thompson-Grove for the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF).

Roles:
- A facilitator/participant should be assigned for each round. The facilitator’s role is to keep the conversation moving through each phase and to facilitate the final conversation and to keep time. The facilitator should also participate.
- The presenter shares a critical incident from within the context of his or her work. This is to be used as a text for professional learning within the group.
- Groups of three seem ideal for this process, as even a small group often reveals startling insights for the presenter. If, however, a presenter prefers to hear multiple perspectives, a group of four or five could be used.

Process:

- Each member of the group writes about an incident, with as much detail as s/he can muster. This writing should tell only what happened, like a snapshot. The writing should be crisp and succinct, but it should be clear that the group’s discussion will be about what happened, and not about the quality of the writing. (10 minutes)
- The group decides on the order of presenters/facilitators.

Time: 35-40 minutes for each round (after the writing).
Step 1: Presenter reads the written account of what happened and sets it within the context of professional goals or outcomes that he or she is working on. (5 minutes)
Step 2: Colleagues ask clarifying questions about what happened or about why the incident occurred. (5 minutes)
Step 3: The group raises questions about what the incident might mean in the context of the presenter’s work. They discuss as professional, caring colleagues. The presenter listens and takes notes. (10 minutes)
Step 4: The presenter reflects back to the group what s/he heard that was significant, and then the group engages in a general conversation about what the implications might be for the presenter’s practice and/or for their own practice. A useful question at this stage might be, “What new insights occurred for all of us?” (10 minutes)
Step 5: Debrief the process. The group talks about what just happened. How did the process work? (5 minutes)