Identity Formation and Development of Self in Early Career Teachers

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(ABSTRACT)

Many aspects of teaching involve the personal dimension of teaching and yet this dimension is often neglected and overlooked as we prepare teachers and sustain teachers in their work. The personal beliefs, attitudes and emotions of teachers often determine the decisions that teachers make in their classrooms. Increasingly, educational researchers have found that effective teachers are aware of this dimension. The aim of this study was to better understand how teachers' self perceptions and understandings of teaching evolve and change across their professional lives and what events contribute to these understandings. A series of in-depth individual interviews were conducted with six early career public education teachers who were also alumni of the graduate teacher education program at Virginia Tech. Interview data were supplemented with a review of artifacts from preservice teacher education program, visual representations of teacher identity development at various stages over the career of teaching and a timeline of significant events encountered during the teaching career. Results of this research suggest that teachers' understandings of the multiple complexities of teaching deepen within the first years of teaching; teaching is emotional work; and the context of teaching heavily influences teachers' practice of teaching regardless of their beliefs about teaching. Suggestions for university teacher education programs and local school districts are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Educational researchers have increasingly concluded that the professional development of a teacher is interrelated and intersects with the personal development of the individual (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1992; Hamachek, 1999; Kelchtermans, 1996; Spodek, 1996; Van den Berg, 2002). Personal beliefs, attitudes and emotions are very much a part of the classroom and who we are influences numerous aspects of our teaching (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999; Nias, 1989). In fact, we frequently recall our own teachers based upon their individuality rather than solely for the subjects they taught (Hamachek, 1999). The personal attributes of a teacher also influence the decisions teachers make from moment to moment in the classroom and, in turn, these decisions affect the quality of teaching (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Van den Berg, 2002).

Rationale

Educational research supports the notion that teaching is a journey of development and that teachers pass through developmental stages over the course of their careers (Berliner, 1988; Fuller, 1969; Katz, 1972; Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000; Vander Ven, 1988). The developmental nature of teaching has also been highlighted in the form of 'life cycle research' aimed at conceptualizing general trends of teacher development over the course of the teaching career (Huberman, 1993; Richardson & Placier, 2001). As a result of increased interest in the details and complexities of being a teacher, teaching has become progressively more recognized as a personal journey. Personal teaching biographies including stories like William Ayers' *To Teach* (2001) and Parker Palmer's *Stories of the Courage to Teach* (2002) have explored the personal triumphs, challenges, and meanings of teaching and have encouraged teacher reflection upon personal biographical stories. Yet, little is known about the personal journey of teaching beyond the initial years of teaching (Bullough et al., 1992; Wildman & Niles, 1987a). There is a need in educational research to focus on the emotional and interpersonal components of teaching (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Bullough et al., 1992; Tickle, 1999, Van den Berg, 2002; Zembylas, 2003), specifically the issue of teacher identity and the perceptions of teachers' personal meanings regarding their educational practice (Beijaard et al., 2004; Tusin, 1999; Van den Berg, 2002; Zembylas, 2003). Little is known about what supports and sustains teachers'

perceptions of self as a teacher over time.

The Construct of Identity

The ambiguous concept of identity may contribute to this missing link in research. Identity has taken on many different and sometimes conflicting meanings in the research literature. In some studies, identity is related to teacher self concept (Knowles, 1994; Nias, 1989) and in other studies on professional identity, identity is correlated with professional roles (Goodson & Cole, 1994; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Although various definitions of identity exist in research, most educational researchers have borrowed definitions of identity from theorists such as George H. Mead, Herbert Blumer, Erik Erikson and, Lev Vygotsky (Beijaard et al., 2004; Bullough et al., 1992; Nias, 1989). It is generally accepted that identity is a multidimensional entity that evolves through a continuous process of negotiating oneself in a variety of settings.

Identity and Teaching

More and more, teacher education programs have recognized the need to focus on identity and the development of self as teacher (Beijaard et al., 2004; Hargreaves, 1998; Tickle, 1999; Tusin, 1999; Van den Berg, 2002; Zembylas, 2003). Teacher educators have sought to move away from a prescriptive view of teaching that narrowly addresses the acquisition of technical knowledge and instructional skills required to teach (Zehm, 1999), and to focus on understanding and addressing the personal foundations and perceptions that preservice teachers bring with them to teacher education. As a result, a research agenda focusing on preservice teachers' negotiation of past and future expectations, the deconstruction of their implicit knowledge and lived experiences, and their expectations about teaching within teacher education programs has emerged (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997; Bullough et al., 1992; Kompf, Bond, Dworet, & Boak, 1996; Liptka & Brinthaupt, 1999; Marsh, 2002 Mok, 2002; Sugrue, 1997; Walling & Lewis, 2000). This research has shown that personal histories and existing images of teachers and teaching greatly influence preservice teachers' views of themselves as teachers (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Lortie, 1975; Mitchell & Weber, 1999; Sugrue, 1997). From this perspective, the point has been made that prospective teachers must be provided with opportunities to scrutinize and reflect upon their own histories in order to address the impact of race, class, gender, religion and sexuality on their lives and their views of the world and the

teaching of children (Marsh, 2002). Zeichner & Liston (1987) argue that reflection on personal experiences, attitudes and beliefs, is the optimal avenue for preservice teachers to gain insight into their personal development.

After students leave the university, the responsibility for teacher development shifts away from the university and onto the schools where teachers are employed. Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1992) described teachers as being thrown into the schools with the expectation they define themselves as teachers in the midst of teaching; yet time and encouragement for such development is lacking. Learning to teach is difficult and often plagued with failures and frustration (Bullough et al., 1992; Wildman, Niles, Magliaro & McLaughlin, 1989). Wildman and Niles (1987b) argued that teachers need to be in control of their professional lives, they need time for themselves and time to reflect on their practice of teaching.

Results of research have shown that storytelling and the exchange of ideas is one way to focus on the creation of self as a teacher (Clandinin & Connelly,1995; Zembylas, 2003) but within the existing social structure of school, there is limited space for dialogue among and between teachers (Wildman & Niles, 1987b). Mok (2002) notes that schools are not viewed as agents promoting reflection about teaching. How can teachers find time and opportunity to talk about and reflect on their teaching, their profession, and who they are in the context of what they do? Teachers spend their workdays in complicated and often harried environments. They are pressed by time constraints, unyielding schedules, lacking resources, and multiple and diversified needs within student populations. There is little time for self within the business of the classroom (Gratch, 2000; Lortie, 1975; Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1999). Without encouragement, time and support for critical reflection upon their experiences, teachers often dismiss experiences and fail to gain the personal meanings along the journey of teaching (Zembylas, 2003). Teachers are at risk of failing to author meaningful lives as teachers or to remain actively engaged in self development, which is one of the goals of teacher education in the university setting. When teachers neglect to nourish themselves, to reflect upon the meanings of their lives and their professions, they loose a vital part of their professional identity (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999; Mok, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000; Tusin, 199).

<center>Interest and Background as a Researcher</center>
A seed of interest in teacher identity was planted during my tenure as a school

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psychologist with the public school system. Although I worked with many well-qualified and capable teachers, I was often struck by the vast differences in their feelings about their profession and about themselves. During my career in public schools, I met beginning teachers fresh from their studies at a university. They were generally full of excitement, couldn't wait to begin teaching students, and were entering their classrooms with great pride in the profession of teaching. I also met practiced teachers with years of teaching experience, and many of them held similar perceptions of their work. Such teachers were the backbone of the school system and provided me with guidance and advice as I grew into my role as a school psychologist.

Within the schools, I also observed unmistakable divisions among experienced teachers. Some teachers had somehow maintained their devotion to teaching and clearly sustained exuberance for teaching over years of working in the classroom. Their teaching spirit was intact, alive, and continually rejuvenating itself. Other experienced teachers appeared "soured" by the practice of teaching. They seemed encumbered by the challenges associated with teaching and the frustration of working as bottom level employees in a hierarchical system. Such teachers seemed to have lost their freshness and their faith in the importance of their work. Parker Palmer would say these teachers had 'lost their heart' (Palmer, 2002).

My observations of the contrast between such teachers nagged at me and provoked several questions. Among them: How do teachers develop and maintain their sense of identity (e.g. "Who am I as a teacher?" and "What do I believe and value?")? What happens to the identity of a teacher along the journey of teaching? Specifically, what happens along that journey that diminishes or even extinguishes the love of teaching in some individuals? And how is it that other teachers sustain their love and devotion for teaching in the face of political, institutional and societal constraints? I believe these questions to be important, because in order to remain in teaching, to thrive and acquire personal fulfillment, teachers must search for and establish themselves in the vocation of teaching (Bullough et al., 1992; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Huber & Whelan, 1999; Zehm & Kottler, 1993;). As a student of human development and as a teacher educator, I am interested in understanding the processes of teachers' search for self and the development of their professional identity as a teacher.

My curiosity about teacher identity and development was heightened in the Fall of 2000 when a colleague, Hank Goshorn, asked me to assist with a teacher continuing education workshop entitled "*Who you are, Who you teach: The good, bad and the ugly*." The goal of the

workshop was to promote teacher self-reflection as well as to encourage teachers to think about the lives and development of the children entering the classroom. This was an opportunity for teachers to focus on what mattered to them, their teaching, themselves and the children they teach.

The workshop consisted of several after school meetings and included several activities from *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* (Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1972). Teacher and principal feedback regarding the workshop astounded us. Teachers reported that the sessions were "therapeutic" and "invigorating." Principals emailed asking us to speak at faculty meetings. In my experience, rarely had a teacher workshop created so much energy or positive discussion. Hank and I were praised for offering new insights into the teaching journey and the personal lives of teachers; yet, Hank and I believed we knew the reason for the "success" of the workshop. We believed that the success of the workshop was related to three factors that are rarely addressed in public schools. We had provided: a) time for reflection and sharing of teacher reflections; b) affirmation and the opportunity to see mirror images in other teachers; and, c) encouragement to reinvent their teaching identity and their passion for the vocation (Wildman & Niles, 1987a).

From the beginning of the teaching career and throughout the experience of teaching, a teacher needs to engage in defining herself as a teacher (Coldron & Smith, 1999). We know that teaching is enhanced by an increased sense of self and individual development (Bullough et al, 1992; Grimmett, Erickson, & Mackinnon, 1990; Zembylas, 2003) and, therefore, efforts to support teacher development and reflection should continue throughout the career of teaching. Yet, public educators have paid so much attention to curriculum reform and educational change, and there has been very little attention given to the personal journey and the emotional dimension of teaching (Hargreaves, 1998). Little research has discussed teachers' professional identity and processes through which teachers develop this identity (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Huberman, 1993). Attention to the evolvement of teacher identity is important if we accept the notion that teaching is a journey -- a developmental process that benefits from individual reflection, growth and renewal as a teacher. Educational researchers need to be actively involved in examination of professional identity formation with experienced teachers (Bullough et al., 1992). The development of insights into how teachers' self perceptions evolve and change across their professional lives will help us understand how to support and sustain

teachers (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Goodson, 1992; Marsh, 2002). Furthermore, such research needs to include a fundamental perspective, the perspective and voice of the experienced teacher (Goodson, 1992). My research addressed this need by seeking the insights, perspectives, and voices (language, terms, phrases, and meanings) of teachers.

Focus of the Study

The aim of this study was to obtain a better sense of the personal dimension of teaching through the interpretations and viewpoints of teachers who are engaged in the day-to-day activity of teaching.   In this study, I focused specifically on the perceptions of identity with a group of teachers who had taught for four to six years in the public schools. These teachers were exposed to the conceptual orientation of reflective inquiry within their university teacher education program at Virginia Tech. I studied how these in-service teachers defined their professional identity and identified the specific changes they have experienced in their values and beliefs since leaving their teacher education program. The research questions were:

- What does it mean to become a teacher across the first five years? How do early career teachers perceive that their understandings have changed since receiving a degree and licensure?
- How do these teachers perceive that their sense of self or identity (e.g. "who am I?", and "what do I believe and value?") has changed since becoming a teacher?
- What significant events or experiences are perceived to have been influential in teachers' identity formation and understandings of what it means to teach?

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CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I explore the theoretical complexity of identity and self. In the first part of this review, I look at several theorists who have attempted to define a framework explaining identity and identity development. It is important to link this theoretical base with the goal of my study examining the formation of professional identity among elementary school teachers in their first years of teaching.   The second part of this chapter reviews teacher development research specifically focused on identity development of preservice and experienced teachers.

Theoretical Perspectives of Identity

A common philosophical stance in modern society is the idea that each person has a unique character and extraordinary potential; something we refer to as identity or 'self' (Giddings, 1991; Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996). As humans, we speak easily of 'self' and 'identity' but our impression of these structures is complex, multidimensional and even a bit mystifying. The idea of self was first recorded as a conscious part of Western civilization during the seventeenth century with Descartes' famous question, "I think, therefore I am" (Wallerstein & Goldberger, 1998). Since then, several famous philosophers (including Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Freud) have debated the concept of identity and the inward perception of individuals (Wallerstein & Goldberger, 1998).

The language and discussion of 'identity' is found in numerous fields including psychoanalysis, psychology, political science, anthropology, sociology, and history (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The interest in self and identity exploded in psychological research in the 1980's and 1990's (Foody & Kashima, 2002). Yet, the literature focusing on identity presents multiple and often conflicting definitions of identity thus reflecting the ambiguous and complex nature of the concept (Beijaard et al., 2004; Foody & Kashima, 2002). In modern day society, several theorists (including Erik Erikson, Lev Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead and Sheldon Stryker) have addressed the concept of self, identity, and community within their theories of human development and social interaction. Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001) has offered a more recent view of identity formation. Consider this review and comparison of their attempts to define identity.

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory and Identity Construction

Erik Erikson is likely the most well known theorist addressing the meaning of identity and the process of identity formation. Erikson's work focused on individual development and attempted to chronicle the individual's successive evolvement of individual identity (Kegan, 1982). Erikson's eight stage model of psychosocial development proposed a lifelong developmental trajectory emphasizing the ongoing personal evolvement of identity. Erikson used William James' description of the term *character* to depict the distinct and individual core of what he defined as identity; an existing entity that all persons experience:

> A man's character [identity] is discernible in the mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says: "*This* is the real me! (Erikson, 1968, p. 19).

Erikson adopted the term identity as a representation of who we are as a person, as a self, as me; and yet the term identity fails to adequately convey the depth and complexity of its meaning. Kegan (1982) argued that Western language and our use of words to describe ourselves fails to convey the evolvement of self and the activity of *becoming*. The nouns that we use to refer to ourselves in Western language lack an active dimension. Our self reference is constituted in the words *human being*. We refer to human being as a thing or an object, persistently neglecting the reference to the activity of being. Our use of the words human being neglects to communicate the progressive motion and action in which we engage as we experience life. We are consistently creating ourselves and giving ourselves a new definition and form. In keeping with psychoanalytic theory, Erikson (1968) felt that the creation of identity occurred mostly in the unconscious mind of the individual (Erikson, 1968), yet one more factor contributing to the mysterious nature of the concept of identity.

Although he felt that the process of developing a self was an unconscious and personal endeavor, Erikson did not feel that it was a solo endeavor (Erikson, 1968). Erikson viewed identity as a balance between self understanding and an understanding of self within the context of society and culture. He addressed the interplay between self with social experiences and the formation of communal identity. Erikson felt that an individual's sense of self is further complicated by cultural values, social contexts and settings. He highlighted the influence of cultural identity upon the formation of personal identity using Sigmund Freud's personal descriptions of the Jewish community and the shared sense of persecution among individuals of

the Jewish faith (Erikson, 1968). Erikson argued that Freud's recognition of the unity between self and society signified an inescapable relationship between the inner core of a person and the community within the process of recognizing self and defining identity. Erikson's theory of identity expanded to include the introspective process of self recognition and the balance of this self with perceptions of how one is judged by self and by others. He described identity formation as,

> a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceive to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him (Erikson, 1968, p. 22-23).

Lev Vygotsky's View of Identity Construction

Erikson's contemporary, Lev Vygotsky, agreed that a human is a constantly changing organism but unlike Erikson, Vygotsky placed a stronger emphasis on the social construction of personal identity rather than on the unconscious and personal focus of identity (Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). While many developmental theories focus on the individual as the primary driving source of development, Vygotsky challenged the view of individual autonomy. He emphasized the interplay between individual development and social origins (Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) and posited that identity is socially constructed. Vygotsky perceived humans as embedded in a social context and that human development and behavior could not be understood or scrutinized independently of the social context or settings (Miller, 2002). He highlighted the social and cultural settings of the individual as unique factors contributing to the development of the individual.

Vygotsky defined the social setting or cultural context as consisting of numerous levels including shared beliefs, relationships, customs, symbol systems (language), knowledge, physical settings, and objects (Moll, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). For Vygotsky, the individual, other humans, the activity or *being* of humans, the culture and language of humans and the experiences of humans are amalgamated (Miller, 2002). Vygotsky viewed the relationship between identity and context as an interaction. He questioned the idea of a coherent, self-contained person and proposed instead, a more dynamic and distributed identity made up of all different kinds of

interactions and experiences (Stevens, 1996).

Symbolic Interaction Theory and Identity Construction

In keeping with the view of society's influence on the development of identity, we must consider the sociological theory of symbolic interaction. The 1934 text, *Mind, Self and Society,* was the culminating work of philosopher and sociologist, George Herbert Mead (Mead, 1934; Prus, 1996). This text is regarded as the origin of the study of the human lived experience through an emphasis on the interrelatedness between mind, self and cultural meanings (Mead, 1934; Prus, 1996). Mead recognized and emphasized the individual uniqueness of identity. Mead recognized the importance of the interaction between individual and society. Mead's important contribution was his attempt to form a framework to explain how society shapes identity and how identity shapes social behavior (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The three guiding assumptions of Mead's symbolic interaction theory are (a) individuals act toward each other (and objects) in terms of the meanings they have for those individuals (objects); (b) meanings are derived from social interactions; (c) people manage and transform meanings of their social worlds through an interpretive process (Smith-Lovin, 2002).

Mead described *mind* as the symbolic core of self (Mead, 1934; Prus, 1996). This concept of the mind is similar to the construct which Erikson later termed identity. Mead defined mind as an internalized perspective or interpretation of the ongoing progression of understanding oneself and the world. Mead's focus on this interpretation creates the difference between his theory and that of Vygotsky. While humans are born with the capability of individual thought and society influences thought, thinking is a reflective process requires interpretation. It is through this reflection and interpretation of oneself and seeing oneself from the perspectives of others that identity develops (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Prus, 1996).

Grounded within Mead's theory of social interaction is Sheldon Stryker's view of identity theory (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Much like Erikson, Stryker viewed identity as a more stable entity than many other theorists (Hogg et al., 1995) and Stryker placed less emphasis on the significance of gaining an individual identity through the reflection of self by others. Stryker's view of identity focused on the multiplicity or multiple phases of identity. He viewed the entity of self as a multidimensional social construct that emerges from an individual's roles in society. In this theory, identity is comprised of distinct components referred to as role identities. An individual's identity consists of multiple components of self or

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role identities. Role identities are self conceptions or definitions that an individual applies to self as a result of the positions or roles they occupy within society. A person's role identities may include the roles of daughter, wife, mother, teacher and a runner. The variation in an individual's sense of identity is directly related to the various roles that people occupy in society. An individual's identity evolves through a process of labeling or defining ourselves as members of specific social categories. These identities are important as they provide meanings for ourselves and allow us to distinguish us from others.

So how do we define the multiplicities of identity? In an era of poststructural thought, many researchers accept that individuals possess multiple identities and recognize that individuals can transform and adjust their identity to suit various social expectations and social contexts (Britzman, 1992; Foddy & Kashima, 2002; Kashima, 2002; Mesmer, 1998; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). The multiplicity of layers within identity coupled with the multiple and differentiated social and cultural contexts contribute to the intricacy and ambiguity of identity. A consistent and agreed upon definition of identity is not probable or possible in a poststructural world that views meaning as never fixed (Britzman, 1992). However, a review of literature shows that most researchers looking at identity agree with three common prongs of Erikson's, Vygotsky's, Mead's, and Stryker's theories of identity: (a) identity is a constantly changing entity; (b) identity is a process of renegotiating self over time; and (c) the process of identity formation is greatly influenced by society and the interpretation of oneself within a social context (Beijaard et al., 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Huber & Whelan, 1999; Kashima, 2002; Kegan, 1982; Kelchtermans, 1993; Mesmer, 1998; Sachs, 2001; Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Van den Berg, 2002; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998; Wenger, 1998; Zembylas, 2003).

Magolda's Findings on Identity Development and Self-Authorship

For the purpose of this study, I would also like to consider the process of identity development based upon the work of Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001). In her work with college students and young adults, Magolda has identified four stages of evolvement of identity *and* beliefs in adults which include a shift from an externally defined identity to an internal and personal definition of self, identity and beliefs. Magolda's initial research interest was in the intellectual development of college students. In 1986, she initiated a study with 101 college freshmen focused on examining and understanding intellectual development over the course of four years in college. Through ongoing interviews with these freshman participants throughout

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their college experience and specific monitoring of their ways of thinking and reasoning, Magolda found specific patterns in the evolution of personal identity. Recognizing that she had focused too narrowly on intellectual development, Magolda shifted her focus to include an investigation of participants' sense of identity, beliefs and relationships with others. Magolda conducted a longitudinal study following 39 of the original college freshman participants through their twenties in order to study the transformation of identity, beliefs and relationships.

Magolda's (2001) research has demonstrated that most college students enter and leave higher education with externally defined knowledge and an externally defined sense of self. She labeled this stage of development as 'absolute knowing' and described students as looking to authorities for truths and as following external formulas of knowledge. Upon entering the professional world of work and long term relationships, several of Magolda's participants experienced dissatisfaction with the absolute and externally defined knowledge they had clung to in college. This nagging dissatisfaction, according to Magolda, developed from neglect of their own internal needs and perspectives. Magolda labeled this subsequent stage of recognizing the inkling towards an internal sense of self as an important transition or 'crossroads' in the establishment of identity and self. The third stage of identity development, which Magolda labeled 'becoming the author of one's own life', is defined as the arrival at a definition of self and identity. This definition of self stems from internally defined beliefs and values. Individuals establish relationships and social interactions based upon these internally based values. The final phase of identity development in Magolda's model is the phase of 'internal foundation'. In this stage, Magolda described her participants as recognizing the power of choice in directing their lives their beliefs, and their actions. With this recognition of personal empowerment and intention, participants also recognized their individual ability to control external influences. Magolda reported that this final phase of identity development rarely occurred in her participants before the age of thirty (Magolda, 2001).

Identity and the Influence on Teaching

Similar to Magolda's findings in her work with college student and young adults, Beijaard et al. (2004) concluded that both the internal and external dimensions of identity influence how teachers teach, how they develop as teachers and their attitudes towards educational change. The professional identity of a teacher is an ever-evolving entity which seeks

a balance between the personal self and personal identity of the teacher (the internal dimension of identity) with the numerous roles teachers feel they have to play in multiple settings (the social or external dimension of identity). An unseen task in becoming a teacher is the constant negotiation of one's identity as a teacher within the context of teaching, or as Magolda would state, an ongoing process of defining one's beliefs, values, identity and relationships while also balancing external forces in knowing and relating to others. The goal is to develop a teacher identity which comfortably suits the individual sense of self while also maintaining a satisfying balance with the requirements of society.

According to Zembylas (2003), teaching is inextricably linked to teacher's personal lives. "Consciously we teach what we know; unconsciously we teach who we are" (Tickle, 1999, p. 209). The process of becoming a teacher is a process of making personal choices about who you want to be as a teacher. The images of self as a person and self as a teacher are critical to the process of becoming a teacher because they constitute the personal context in which new information will be interpreted. This requires a balance of beliefs, values, and desires (personal dimension) with the multiple interpretations of social experience and expectations of the leader in the classroom (social dimension) (Britzman, 1992).

Thus, a teacher must continually construct a sustainable professional identity by honoring her personal beliefs and actions in the classrooms (the personal dimension of identity) while also fulfilling the common societal expectations and images of teaching (the social dimension of identity). More than ever, teachers perceive themselves as vulnerable to externally imposed educational objectives which are frequently at odds with their personal beliefs and experiences as teachers (Van den Berg, 2002). Teachers are impacted by the expectations imposed on teachers by social standards, public policy, changing work conditions within schools and the stresses endured by families. Societal expectations must be balanced with a teacher's personal values and what she finds important in her professional work.

Specific to the profession of teaching, meanings and expectations are imposed by society and by its own members of the teaching community (Sachs, 2001). Society is intimately involved with the profession of teaching because of years of experiences in school as a student and day-to-day knowledge of teachers and their behaviors. Our society has common images of what teachers should know and do in school because each of us has played a role opposite teacher for a substantial part of our lives (Britzman, 1992). These expectations and images have

a significant impact on teachers' perceptions of their own work and actions. The teacher's role in the classroom is multifaceted and requires the teacher to balance her personal values and beliefs with the numerous expectations and roles that accompany the responsibilities of leading and teaching students (Beijaard et al., 2004). These beliefs greatly influence teachers' lives and impact a teacher's actions both inside and outside of the classroom (Goodson & Cole, 1994).

Research on Teacher Development

What do we know about teacher development and specifically, teacher identity? At one time, teacher development was viewed as a simple two-step process: preservice education received at a university followed by continuing education through opportunities offered by a teacher's employer. We have come to recognize that a two-step process is much too simple an explanation of teacher development. Several developmental stage theories have been introduced to describe the progression of teachers through their careers (e.g., Berliner, 1988, 1994; Bullough & Baughman, 1995; Caruso, 2000; Fuller, 1969; Huberman, 1993; Katz, 1972; Knowles, 1992).

Much of the research regarding the stages of teacher development has its beginnings in the work of Frances Fuller (1969). Fuller's (1969) classic concerns-based model offers an understanding of the initial developmental dynamics of preservice and beginning teachers. In a review of research and through her own studies, Fuller found that student teachers were less concerned with student progress or instructional techniques and more concerned with themselves and their survival in the classroom. Fuller described student teachers and beginning teachers as inwardly focused and uncovered their specific concerns about themselves as teachers. Over time and with experience, Fuller found that student teachers' focus gradually shifted away from self and onto instructional techniques and finally to the impact that teachers were having on student learning. Fuller emphasized the need to abbreviate the 'concerns with self stage' experienced by student and beginning teachers.

The prominence of Fuller's model in textbooks on learning to teach and practitioners' acceptance of it validity suggests it is an accepted theory in teacher development. However, Fuller's promotion of the abbreviation of the self and survival stage has been criticized (Conway & Clark, 2003). Increasingly, researchers have called for educators to pay more attention to the changes in the nature of the self-as-teacher concerns and the aspirations of student teachers rather than promoting a solely outward focus on students and instructional techniques (Conway & Clark, 2003). Self inspection is viewed as a necessary part of teacher development. Such a

focus is clearly necessary and valuable as teaching is both an inward and outward journey and a new start in the beginning teacher's professional development. Research focusing on the personal dimension has grown and teacher educators have increasingly recognized the need for heightened awareness of self, backgrounds, beliefs, and values in preservice teachers (Gaudelli, 1999).

Since Fuller's work with student teachers, numerous researchers have looked at teacher development. Unruh and Turner (1970) were among the first to propose the idea of stages of development over the career of a teacher. Unruh and Turner (1970) defined three stages in the career of a teacher; the initial teaching period, the period of building security and the maturing period. The initial teaching period was described as the first six years of teaching and was characterized as a time of solving organization, management and curriculum problems. During this period of time, teachers also gain a sense of membership in the faculty. The period of building security was thought to occur between the sixth and fifteenth year of teaching and was characterized by a sense of comfort and confidence. Unruh and Turner found that teachers sought to improve their teaching and enhance their salary during this phase. The final stage described by Unruh and Turner (1970) was titled the maturing period and was characterized by security and commitment to the profession as well as involvement in outside interests and new concepts.

Unruh and Turner's work was followed by Lillian Katz's (1972) descriptions of the stages of preschool teacher development and teachers' differing need for technical assistance. Katz described the first two years of teaching as a time of survival and highlighted the need for on-sight teacher assistance. Into the third year, Katz described teachers as gaining confidence and as benefiting from the advice of colleagues and consultants. The third stage, the stage of renewal, teachers needed less one-on-one assistance but professional training offered through professional organizations and attendance at conferences were helpful. At the fourth stage, which Katz defined as extending through the fifth year and beyond, teachers were identified as benefiting from professional seminars and degree programs.

The similarity of the models offered by Fuller, Unruh and Turner, and Katz is that each viewed teaching as a developmental process. All agreed that initially teachers struggle but with time, teachers overcome their struggles and shortcomings to become seasoned and mature teachers. Fuller, Unruh and Turner, and Katz failed to address the continued development or

needs of teachers who are in the classroom for more than five years.

David Berliner's (1988, 1994) numerous studies also support the notion that teaching is a developmental journey and his focus was primarily on the development of expertise in teaching. His model (1988, 1994) outlines five stages of teacher development related to teacher proficiency. Upon comparison of beginning and expert teachers, Berliner found that expert teachers' behavior, situational interpretations and problem solving consistently differed from novice teachers across various settings and situations. Berliner (1994) concluded that becoming an expert teacher is a developmental process requiring time, maturity, motivation and ongoing self-evaluation. "What looks to be so easy for the expert and so clumsy for the novice is the result of thousands of hours of experience and reflection" (Berliner, 1988, p. 15). However, Berliner cautioned against the suggestion that expertise in teaching was based upon the number of years and experience in teaching. He found that some teachers remained at novice or beginning levels due to their failure to take responsibility for improving their competencies.

Research on Preservice Teachers and Identity

During the past two decades, several researchers have focused specifically on the personal development of students in university teacher programs and the formation of their identity as professionals (Bullough & Stokes, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Knowles, 1994; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1994; Zeichner, 1992; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Teacher educators have increasingly become aware of the images and expectations of self-as-teacher formed by students prior to their arrival in a university teacher program (Lortie, 1975; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Holt-Reynolds (1992) termed conceptions as 'lay theories' and described this as subconscious and unstated knowledge.

Cole and Knowles (1993) found that student teachers often hold deeply etched images of themselves and preconceptions about what teaching is all about. These preconceived thoughts and images are based upon prior experiences with teaching and usually do not match the demands of teaching within a classroom. Childhood experiences also add to constructed images and expectations of teaching (Sugrue, 1997) and these images about teaching are difficult to change (Richardson, 1996). University students romanticized views of teaching often stem from the altruistic nature of teaching as a service profession, an exposure to media about teaching (i.e. movies and books), and from personal experiences with teaching and teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 1995).

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Drawing from a series of research projects, Cole and Knowles (1993) hypothesized that student experiences in the practicum assignment were less influential than their preconceived notions, images and personal beliefs about teaching. Using a variety of methodologies, including interactive journal accounts, interviews, reflective papers, and autobiographical statements; several researchers (Aitken & Mildon, 1991; Cole and Knowles, 1993; Knowles, 1994; Mertz & McNeely; 1990) have documented the mismatch between the expectations of preservice teachers and the realities of their student teaching experience. Cole and Knowles (1993) found that student perceptions of what to expect within the classroom was very different from the reality of the classroom. Aitken and Mildon (1991) found that student teachers were more satisfied and more successful in their field placement when their placement and/or coordinating teacher matched their images of teaching. This mismatch in expectations was a source of frustration, and contributed to instances of failure in the practicum experience (Schmidt & Knowles, 1995).

Studies investigating student teacher perceptions have heightened the awareness of the university role in focusing on preservice teachers preconceived images of teaching (Sugrue, 1997). Increasingly teacher educators have recognized the need to focus on the centrality of identity and self to teacher development (Bullough & Stokes, 1994). Attempts to change student teachers' personal theories to suit the classroom or to mirror the values and practices of the cooperating teacher have not been successful. There is no easy route to developing an identity as a teacher (Bullough et al., 1992; Wildman et al., 1989). Teacher educators began attending to the constant task of negotiating between past experiences, expectations, and implicit beliefs about teaching (Sugrue, 1997). Research findings suggested that beginning teachers need guidance in role negotiation through increased awareness of prior self conceptions, the influence of previous experiences and their beliefs about teaching. Individuals do indeed construct meaning from their experiences (Schön, 1983).

As a result of the interest in self knowledge and self disclosure of student teachers, preparing reflective teachers has become a primary goal of American universities (Tusin, 1999). The minutiae of teaching and accompanying complexities of being a teacher began to be addressed in educational research and within university preservice teacher education programs (Cole & Knowles, 1993). The reflective paradigm took hold as an educational reform movement with the publishing of Donald Schön's work, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and the revival of John Dewey's work, *How we think: A restatement of the relations of reflective thinking to the*

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educative process (1933). With this paradigm of thought, teacher educators realized students'
past experiences at in the broader social context, at home and at school, and their implicit
theories of teaching and of learning, were indeed factors contributing to the development of a
teaching identity (Bullough et al., 1992; Goodson & Cole, 1994).

In theory, the reflective paradigm promotes the deconstruction of preservice teachers'
implicit knowledge and beliefs about educational practice as a means understanding personal and
social influences on their professional teaching identities (Sugrue, 1997). University teacher
preparation programs emphasize critical thinking about the practice of teaching and assist
students in framing their own professional development through reflective thought. Reflective
thought targets the understanding of the phenomena of classroom experiences. It is a process in
which teachers recast, reframe and reconstruct their experiences in a way that generates new
insights and assimilates knowledge of what they know and what they experience (Grimmett et
al., 1990). Continual reflection can propel teachers through different phases of their career
(Steffy et al., 2000). Through reflection, the personal understanding of practice can be a
powerful mechanism for transforming practice.

The number of university teacher education programs guided by reflective thought and
critical analysis of self and practice has grown since the 1980's (Richardson, 1990). Teacher
educators realize that teachers need to be more reflective and in control of their professional
development (Wildman & Niles, 1987b). Activities within a university teacher preparation
programs have increasingly focused on increasing self awareness among preservice teachers and
enhancing their understanding of themselves as teachers (Bullough et al., 1992). Reflective
activities are tools aimed at revealing the layers of the teaching self, often the unarticulated
characteristics and meanings that teachers hold within their core self perceptions (Bullough et al.,
1992). Personal reflection is achieved through autobiographical writings, analysis of teacher
metaphors, journaling, classroom observations and the establishment of cohorts.

Identity and the Personal Dimension of Teaching

As a result of the increased interest in the details and complexities of becoming a teacher,
the personal aspect of teaching has gained attention. Raymond, Butt and Townsend (1992)
recognized a need for understanding teacher development throughout the span of the teaching
career. Yet, the research on identity formation has seemingly focused more on preservice
teachers and less on identity formation across the career span of teachers within the public

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schools (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Possible explanations for this missing link in the literature include the ambiguity of the construct of identity. The variations in theoretical foundations and definitions create problems when attempting to study identity or self perceptions of individuals (Tusin, 1999). An accompanying dilemma is an inability to define and measure identity. This ambiguity may contribute to a view of a lack of rigor in studies of self perception and identity. Researchers may consider investigations into the development of teacher-as-self as 'too soft' or as failing to constitute 'true' research. A possible third factor explaining the lack of research on teacher identity development is the question of responsibility and interest in teacher's personal development. While university teacher education programs have been very motivated to improve their programs and the quality of their teacher education programs, reform movements in public school have seemingly overlooked the personal journey of teaching in pursuit of higher standardized test scores, increased community among teachers and parents, and renewed organization of the school structure.

Research on Teacher Identity Formation

So what does happen to a teacher's sense of professional identity once they leave the university environment and begin working in schools? Research focusing specifically on the development of professional identity of experienced teachers is limited. Beijaard et al. (2004) found only 21 articles dated 1988 and 2003 in ERIC and Web of Science searches when 'professional identity' was used as a title or main identifier. In categorizing these articles, I found that 15 were empirical studies conducted with teachers, employed or retired, and three studies were conducted with student teachers. Only five of the 15 studies included experienced public school teachers (Beijaard, 1995; DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997; Mawhinney & Xu, 1997) and only one study of the four was conducted within the United States. {A reference for the remaining article was not provided by Beijaard et al. (2004)}. I reviewed eight of the 15 articles and found that the construct of 'professional identity' is no less messy or ambiguous than the notion of identity and self. The majority of researchers failed to define professional identity and when definitions were provided, they differed in focus.

I was able to supplement the articles reviewed by Beijaard et al. (2004) with longitudinal studies of teacher development such as Elbaz (1983) and Nias (1989) and tease out results specifically related to teacher self, identity and the development of a professional identity as a

teacher. I was also successful in finding additional texts addressing teachers, teacher image and the development of teacher-as-self {i.e. *The Role of* Self *in Teacher Development* (Lipka & Brinthaupt, 1999)*; That's funny, You Don't Look Like a Teacher* (Weber & Mitchell, 1995)*; On Becoming a Teacher* (Zehm & Kottler, 1993)}.

A common conclusion of researchers studying teaching identity is the ongoing developmental process of becoming and being a teacher (Beijaard et al., 2000; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Kelchtermans, 1993; Nias, 1989; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). Researchers description of professional identity consistently highlight that identity is not a stable or fixed entity. Professional identity formation is a career long process (Kelchtermans, 1993) and teachers' self perceptions and teacher identities change over time (Goodson & Cole, 1994). Bullough and Baughman (1995) noted that the professional identity of a teacher occurs at an uneven and unpredictable rate over time.

However, the ambiguity surrounding the construct of identity and a lack of agreement upon a standard definition continues to plague the research. The ambiguity of identity has resulted in a variety of operationalized definitions across the research. Beijaard et al, (2004) suggest addressing this dilemma by eliminating the concept of identity from the research and replacing it with a seemingly less abstract concept such as 'professional characteristics'.

A second common conclusion of researchers is the interaction between the personal and social dimension of teachers' lives. Teacher experiences inside and outside of school contribute to a personal framework of knowing about themselves and about teaching. Studies of inservice teachers have found that the development of a professional identity as a teacher is an interactive journey between the personal self and the experiences of teaching (Bullough & Baughman, 1993, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Elbaz, 1983; Kelchtermans, 1993; Nias, 1989). Personal and life experiences have been viewed as significant factors in teachers' way of being or teaching within the classroom. The personal experiences and values of teachers influenced their way of teaching, the images they held of themselves and how they carried out their work in the classroom. Several researchers referred to this 'personal way of being' in the classroom as an unconscious personal theory of teaching or as implicit knowledge. Elbaz (1983) labeled this concept practical knowledge and Kelchtermans (1993) labeled it subjective educational theory. Clandinin and Connelly's (1995, 1996) research focused on teacher self images, values, beliefs, and teacher interpretations of teaching experiences as part of the learning process. Connelly and

Clandinin (1999) described teacher's way of knowing as 'stories they live by'. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) have approached teacher development research with a belief that humans live, tell and retell their life stories over time as they negotiate themselves within and across many social settings. The use of narrative is viewed as an effective method of gaining insight into teacher identity formation.

A third common theme in literature focused on teacher professional development is the direct influence of the social context upon teacher identity (Beijaard, 1995; Bullough & Baughman, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Kelchtermans, 1993; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Beijaard et al., (2004) argue that the significant influence of context is too often overlooked when examining the professional development of teachers. Kelchtermans (1993) highlighted numerous contextual variables beyond the teacher's control that directly influenced how teachers viewed and defined themselves. Teachers described themselves as vulnerable to the micro-politics within their school, politics within their school district and the greater society, in addition to vulnerability regarding judgement by parents, students and media (Kelchtermans, 1993; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002).

The school placement and environment were noted as significant and influential contextual factors in the development of teacher identity. Teachers often describe their development in terms of a chronological chain of teaching positions (Kelchtermans, 1993) suggesting the influence of school placement and environment. Supportive school placements were credited with pushing a teacher to develop new expertise while an oppressive environment negatively influenced teaching performance (Bullough & Baughman, 1995). Other contextual factors influencing teacher identity included colleagues and students. Teachers also described themselves as confident in supportive environments which offered supportive colleagues and positive pupil relationships (Beijaard, 1995). Positive relationships with colleagues were credited with stimulating professional growth and expertise (Woods & Jeffrey, 2002). Bullough and Baughman (1993) noted that the student population was an addition contextual influenced the professional identity of teachers. Working with difficult students can challenge a teacher's sense of self and identity as a teacher. Several teachers recalled such experiences as critical phases (Kelchtermans, 1993) in their development as a teacher.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

In the past, there has been little recognition of the need for teachers to construct their own understanding of what it means to teach. Yet, we know that teachers at every stage of their career are seen as constructing personal theories about teaching, themselves and their work (Hamachek, 1999; Nias, 1989; Tusin, 1999). This on-going process of self scrutiny contributes to the understanding of self, values, personal experiences and it contributes to development as a teacher (Elbaz, 1985; Nias, 1989). The focus on the personal process of becoming a teacher is emerging in educational research literature (Bullough et al., 1992; McLean, 1999) and researchers are now calling for the teacher's voice and teacher's meanings to be included in educational research (Beijaard et al., 2004; Goodson, 1992; Mok, 2002; Van den Berg, 2002).

As highlighted in previous chapters, only a few studies have focused on the development of professional identity outside of the student teaching or internship experience. The majority of these studies have been conducted in England and Canada (Beijaard, 1995; Beijaard et al., 2000; Mawhinney & Xu, 1997; Nias, 1989) and most have focused on the formation of identity in experienced teachers in higher education and high schools (Beijaard et al., 2000; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Mawhinney & Xu, 1997; Moore & Hofman, 1988; Nixon, 1996). In this study, I focused on the development of professional identity in elementary and middle school teachers with four to six years experience teaching in a public school setting. I utilized teachers' voices and personal meanings to investigate the formation of professional identity from the student teaching experience through their current year of teaching. In this chapter, I describe my choice of a qualitative, phenomenological study of teachers' professional identity formation and the core philosophical assumptions of qualitative research, including the role of the researcher and the methods employed for data collection and analysis.

Research Design

The main goal of this study was to discover what it means to be a teacher across the early years of teaching. How do early career teachers perceive that their understandings have changed since receiving a degree and licensure? How do these teachers perceive that their sense of self or identity has changed since becoming a teacher? What events or experiences do they perceive as influential in the formation of their identity as a teacher and their understandings of what it

means to teach? Due to my interest in the identity development of teachers and the meaning they assign to their experiences, I chose qualitative inquiry as my research design.

The founding assumption for qualitative research is that individuals assemble their own realities through their interaction with the world (Merriam, 1998). Inquiry within qualitative research focuses on the personal meanings assigned to experience as a method of gaining a rich understanding of perspectives of participants. Qualitative researchers are the primary instrument for data collection and analysis of data. The qualitative researcher is charged with developing understanding gained from the field.

Data Sources

My study has a phenomenological focus, meaning it is a study that focused on descriptions of what teachers experience and how it is that they perceive and interpret what they experience in their everyday lives. A phenomenologist assumes a commonality in the human experience and seeks to expose those experiences and commonalities. Husserl, a German philosopher, first used a phenomenological approach claiming that humans can only know what they experience by attending to their perceptions and the meanings they assign to their perceptions (Patton, 2002). It is the attention to perceptions and their meanings that heighten conscious awareness and self interpretation (Patton, 2002). Thus, reflection and interpretation are essential to the understanding of experience. Phenomenologists focus on how humans make sense of their experiences and how humans develop a broader view of themselves, their lives and the world. The primary source of data was a series of in-depth phenomenological interviews with each participant. Secondary data sources included participants' artistic representations of teacher identity of various stages of the teaching career, a review of preservice teacher portfolio, a timeline of significant events of participants' teaching career and a personal research journal containing my own thoughts, perceptions and feelings after each interview.

Following suggestions outlined by Irving Seidman (1998), I conducted a series of in-depth phenomenological interviews with each participant. Interviewing allowed participants to relate their experiences, their perspectives and interpretations of their development as a teacher. A semi-structured interview guide was used for my guidance (see Appendix B) yet each question was not necessarily asked of each participant. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), asking participants the same questions stifles the discovery of the rich and individualistic terms of experience. This guide kept me focused on the research questions throughout the interviews but

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allowed me flexibility to change directions within a particular subject area as the conversation progressed. Interview questions were open-ended, but each interview meeting had a clear and announced goal.

Three interviews of approximately 90 minutes were scheduled with each participant within a six to eight-week time period with a goal of a fourteen to twenty-day time span between interviews so as to enhance continuity and reflection of the participants and myself. The amount of time spent in each interview varied but most conversations averaged between 90 to 120 minutes. The series of three interviews allowed rapport building between the participant and myself and supported reflection time for both myself and the participant between interview sessions (Seidman, 1998). This approach also encouraged participants to expand upon previous conversations and to further reflect upon experiences and their meanings. Each interview session was audio-taped.

In addition, I took notes during the interview as a means of helping me create new questions as the interview flowed. I also included in my notes key points made by the participant or specific language used by the participant. During note taking, I used initials for all proper names. These notes were used as a support for my analysis of the transcript data and provided insights regarding relevant topics to pursue in subsequent interviews. These notes were not reviewed by individual participants because they were my personal field notes.

Following the analysis of each interview, I generated a summary of the interview themes and emailed the summary to the participant. Each participant was encouraged to review the summary of themes and to determine if the summary reflected the overall spirit of the interview. Participants were encouraged to add comments or to identify themes with which they did not agree. Additional comments and clarifications were discussed and audio-taped at the subsequent meeting. Although these steps were time consuming, this process of member checks enhanced the trustworthiness of the study and minimized my biases as a researcher.

A second data source in this study was the participants' artistic representations of their identity across various stages of their teaching career and their interpretations of the drawing. Drawings have mostly been used by researchers to scrutinize development, school readiness, reading readiness, emotional development and social relationships in children (Fury, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1997; DiLeo, 1970; Goodenough & Harris, 1963; Koppitz, 1984; Rudenberg, Jansen, & Fridjhon, 2001). Drawings can express moods and feelings (Ives, 1984; Koppitz, 1984) not

readily shared in words.

Drawings are often a means of enriching conversation and can result in the inclusion of memories and perceptions that perhaps would have remained unmentioned by participants in the traditional interview conversation. Nyquist, Manning, Wulff, Austin, Sprague, and Fraser (1999) found that graduate students' drawings depicting the journey into the professorate revealed compelling views into the day-to-day lives of graduate students. The addition of drawings to the methodology allowed Nyquist et al. (1999) to inquire about the visual representation of the student journey.

In this study, I used drawings as a tool to prompt teacher reflections about their personal experiences as a teacher and as a way to learn about their experiences. I was hopeful that this avenue of data collection would enhance participants' reflection upon their past and present experiences as a teacher. In this study, drawings were specifically addressed during the interview and were used as a tool for furthering discussion about personal identity development. As teachers discussed their individual drawings, I took notes regarding their references to specific details within the drawing.

A typed description of each drawing assignment and thinking prompts (see Appendix C) were given to each participant at a specified time during the cycle of interviews. Four of the six participants agreed to produce drawings for this project. Each drawing was completed by the participants on their own time and in my absence. The first drawing assignment was given to each participant at the initial contact meeting. This initial assignment consisted of an artistic representation of themselves as a teacher during their student teaching experience. The drawing was completed prior to the initial interview session. Topics addressed in the initial interview included the selection of teaching as an area of study, memories of experiences within the student teaching experience, relevant memories related to their initial formation of an identity as a teacher, and precise goals at that time for their future. At the conclusion of the first interview, the second typed drawing assignment was given to the participant.

The second drawing task consisted of creating a visual representation of themselves as a teacher during the first year of teaching. Once again, this drawing assignment was completed prior to the second interview and in my absence. The time invested in reflecting upon this experience and creating the drawing encouraged the participants to recall their perceptions as a first-year teacher.

The second interview session focused on the details of the teacher's initial teaching experiences and their developing identity as a teacher. Specific details of personal accounts, experiences and interpretations were elicited during this interview. Again, the drawings were used to stimulate conversation about the participant's experiences. At the conclusion of the second interview, the participant was asked to prepare a third drawing and a timeline of significant events prior to the last interview. The third drawing assignment requested a visual representation of the participant's current identity as a teacher. The timeline was to include any significant or influential event in their career as a teacher. The timeline was yet another artifact used to document teacher experiences and the meanings assigned to these experiences. The drawings and timeline were included in the final interview conversation.

In addition to interview data and teacher drawings, a fourth source of data was a review of each participant's teacher portfolio. These documents were created during the student teaching experience in the graduate education program. Portfolios were available from four of the six participants and contained their early philosophy of teaching and viewpoint on classroom management, teaching style and values. Information available in teacher portfolios was used as a resource documenting the participants' early development as teachers.

A fifth source of data was my own personal research journal which contained notes from each interview as well as my thoughts and questions throughout the process of interviewing participants. The time immediately following an interview was a critical time for reflection and elaboration (Patton, 2002). Therefore, following each interview, I conducted my own analysis of the success of the interview. I recorded my own thoughts and perceptions about the interview and drawings. During this time of conscious reflection, I considered what the teacher had revealed and what I had learned from our conversation.

Role of the Researcher

I recognized each interview as a highly personal experience. I shared a part of myself with each of my participants and they shared themselves with me. I learned from these experiences. Rubin and Rubin (1995) caution that interviews, especially interviews conducted at the start of any project are far from perfect. I used the personal research journal as a space to scrutinize my skills as an interviewer. Was I successful in establishing rapport with the participant? How well did I ask questions and attend to the themes of the participant? How did

the participant react to the questions? Did I successfully 'listen' to the participant and see their perspective rather than my own? This procedure of disciplined reflection and writing enhanced the authenticity of the study and served to enhance my skills as an interviewer.

Researcher Bias

It is my responsibility as a researcher to acknowledge my own biases. I conducted these 16 interviews with my participants. I conducted the analysis of these interviews and I found the themes of the interviews. I followed a rigorous method of phenomenological interview analysis outlined by Hycner (1985) and I included a triangulation of data sources and member checks to increase the accuracy and credibility of the findings.   Throughout this research, I was cognizant of my own perspective and logged my thoughts in a personal research journal.

As an active participant in this researcher, I made every effort to maintain a careful balance of the voices of my participants with my voice and my experiences. I tried to listen in a new way and hold back my own theories, thoughts and perceptions during the interviews. Dana Jack (in Gluck & Patai, 1991) warns against "listening with a third ear"; that is, avoiding the habit of listening to my own responses to what my participants were sharing rather than what my participants were telling me. I specifically concentrated on listening when I thought I already knew what a participant was sharing with me. My initial training was as a psychologist and I had to carefully listen to what was said to me rather than making a judgement in my own mind of what was said based upon my own perceptions and analytical training. I had to maintain an awareness of what the participants offered. I attempted to understand each participant's story from his/her perspective rather than from my own.

Criteria for Selection of Participants

Participants for this study had four to six years of full-time teaching experience within a public school setting. The criterion of four to six years was essential to locating participants who have made it through the initial trials of teaching and were committed to the vocation of teaching. Research suggests that 29 percent of teachers leave the teaching profession within the first three years of full time teaching experience and up to 37 percent leave the teaching field by the fifth year of teaching (Ingersoll, 2001). In addition, life cycle research suggests that teachers are more likely to reach a level of comfort or contentment by the fourth or fifth year of teaching (Hubmerman, 1993; Steffy et al., 2000).

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Huberman (1993) found that teachers usually conquer the initial stages of survival and discovery within the first three years of teaching and as a result, gain confidence in themselves as leaders within the classrooms. Huberman labeled this time period of confidence as a phase of stabilization. Teachers generally approach this phase during the fourth to fifth year of teaching experience with fluidity and confidence (Huberman, 1993; Steffy et al., 2000). Numerous teachers in Huberman's longitudinal study described this phase as positive and used terms such as stabilization, consolidation, affirmation, relaxation, effectiveness, and pedagogical mastery as descriptors of their teaching abilities during this time. It is during this phase that teachers typically commitment to the profession, find successful strategies for class management, establish positive relationship with students and colleagues, and a find a balance between home and personal life interests (Huberman, 1993).

Participants were also required to be alumni of the teacher education program at Virginia Tech. While this was not an evaluative study, the inclusion of solely Virginia Tech graduates may provide insight regarding the evolving nature of the personal journey of teaching beyond the preservice teaching stage. This research was one way to inform the continued development of the teacher preparation program and the development of support for graduates in the field. Whatever is learned from the graduates regarding their personal journey as teachers may shed light on what teacher educators can do to further develop and enhance identity formation during participation in the teacher preparation program?

I received approval for this project from the Assistant Superintendent from a local school division in August 2004 and subsequently was granted permission from the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) in September 2004 (Appendix A). Potential candidates for participation in this study were identified through the use of the alumni data base maintained by the Director of Teacher Education at Virginia Tech and by records maintained by the Staff Development Coordinator of the school district. I located thirteen teachers within the local school district who fit the criteria for this study and contacted each teacher by written letter (U.S. standard postal delivery). This letter contained a brief introduction of me; an explanation of how I gained access to their name and an explicit explanation regarding the specific expectations of participants were paramount in this introduction (see Appendix D). This initial written letter was followed seven days later by a less formal communication sent via electronic messaging. Most participants replied through electronic messaging. I received commitments from six potential

participants.

Participants

The participants for this study were graduates of the Master's degree program in Curriculum and Instruction at Virginia Tech. Table 1 outlines participants' names, degrees, years of experience and current teaching assignment. Researchers investigating teacher professional identity have focused mainly on teachers within the university and high school settings (Mitchell, 1997; Beijaard et al., 2000; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Beijaard, 1995). The inclusion of elementary and middle school teachers contributes to the uniqueness of this study.

Table 1

Description of Participants

Name	**Degrees Earned**	**Years Experience**	**Current Assignment**
Barbara	BS - Family and Childhood Development; MS - Curriculum & Instruction	5	Sixth-grade
James	BS - Economics; MS - Curriculum & Instruction	6	Fifth-grade
Linda	BS - Geography; MS - Curriculum & Instruction	5	Eighth-grade
Patty	BS - Psychology; MS Curriculum & Instruction	4	Kindergarten
Sally	BS - Early Childhood Education; MS - Curriculum & Instruction	6	Preschool
Sharon	BS - Elementary Education; MS - Curriculum & Instruction	5	Fourth-grade

I was successful in meeting with four participants prior to the first interview. The initial visit between potential participants and me served several purposes. An introductory personal face-to-face meeting enhanced the comfort level of both the teacher and me once the interview sessions began. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the details of the project, the purpose of the three interview sequence and the explanation of drawing assignments. I was also able to explain the IRB details and asked participants to sign informed consent forms. Teachers

who agreed to participate in the proposed study were asked about their preference for contact and most agreed on electronic communication through email. A final task of the introductory meeting was scheduling dates, times and locations of three interviews sessions with each participant.

For the two candidates who did not have time for an additional meeting, the first contact took place at the beginning of the first interview. Realistically, combining the contact meeting with the first interview was ideal for my participants but was less than ideal for me. I found that meeting the candidate for the first time on the date of the first interview negatively impacted the first interview session. The explanation of the study and questions seemed stifled due to the time factor for conducting the interview. I fear that two of the participants did not have a clear understanding of the purpose of the study and were less invested in the assignments of the study. These participants also declined to produce visual representations of their teaching journey and were unable to locate their teaching portfolios. Establishing rapport with these two participants was somewhat more challenging due to the lack of time to discuss the project ahead of time and the sense of 'rush' during the initial interview.

Data Analysis

Table 2 displays the sources of data collected from each participant. Interviews were completed with all six participants. Due to time constraints, two participants participated in two interviews as opposed to three. Following each interview, each participant completed a review of the interview summaries and confirmed the overall themes generated by the interview. The request to produce a visual representation of self and identity was anxiety provoking for several participants. Four of the six teachers followed through with creating a visual depiction of themselves and/or their experiences as a teacher at various stages of their career. Several teachers used clip art for this assignment. These depictions are included in chapter four of this document. Four of the six teachers had access to their teaching portfolio and graciously shared this document with me for review. The remaining two participants promised availability of their teaching portfolio but failed to carry through with making it available for review. Only two of the six participants created a timeline of significant events encountered during their career.

Table 2

Sources of Data Collected from Participants

Participant	Interview 1 w/ member check	Interview 2 w/ member check	Interview 3 w/ member check	Drawing	Timeline	Portfolio	Research journal
Barbara	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James	X	X					X
Linda	X	X	X	X		X	X
Patty	X	X	X	X		X	X
Sally	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sharon	X	X					X

The lack of carry through on this final assignment was likely due to time constraints of the participants and somewhat unrealistic expectations on my part. For the final interview, participants were asked to create a drawing (their third drawing for this project) and a timeline for the final interview. In addition, each participant was asked to review the interview summary and themes from the previous conversation. Participants had approximately fourteen to twenty days to complete these tasks for this project. In the cases of the four participants who did not create a timeline, the third interview also took place towards the holiday season, end of November to mid-December. Thus, timing was a critical issue in the lives of these participants and I neglected to take into account the excessive time required for the assignments in preparation for the final interview.

The identities of the teachers who participated in this study are confidential. A pseudonym was substituted for names in the transcriptions of the interviews and in this final written document. I personally transcribed interviews into typed documents, substituting pseudonyms for all names of persons, schools, school districts and locations. I disguised the teachers' identities and teaching locations as much as possible in this final written document.

In the analysis of the data, I have tried hard to be systematic, rigorous and disciplined in my interpretation of what participants shared with me about their teaching experiences and perceptions (Patton, 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1998) described data analysis as an ongoing interaction between the researcher and the data. I achieved this interaction by following

Hycner's (1985) guidelines for analysis of phenomenological interviews.

First Phase of Analysis

Although it was time consuming to transcribe the data myself, it allowed me to gain a beginning familiarity with the data. I included the literal statements of my participants and included the nonverbal and para-linguistic communications such as changes in voice quality, volume, intonation, laughter, and pauses. I formatted the transcription to suit my data analysis needs. For example, I left a large margin to the right of the transcription to allow for notes and enumerated each line of the interviews. I transcribed each interview as soon as possible following each meeting with a participant.

Second Phase of Analysis

Once interview tapes were transcribed, Hycner (1985) urges researchers to approach the recordings and the typed transcription with openness. In order to identify my own thoughts, I jotted down interpretations and personal theories about participant's meanings in the margins of the transcription and set apart these personal thoughts with brackets. Bracketing my individual thoughts alerted me of any unconscious assumptions and personal biases about the data (Hycner, 1985; Patton, 2002). I wanted my analysis and writing of participants' experiences to reflect their experiences and perceptions and not my own theories. Thus, bracketed personal notes seemed helpful in divorcing my thoughts from the ideas and perceptions of my participants.

Once my own biases were bracketed, I re-listened to each interview and re-read each transcription in order to gain an overall sense of the interview. I recorded my general impressions of each interview and noted specific issues in a research journal. I was conscious of the nonverbal and para-linguistic levels of communication and double checked my initial identification of nonverbal communication in the transcription. I wanted to be sure to listen to and read for the participant's meanings rather than my own perceptions and understandings.

Third Phase of Analysis

The next step of analysis introduced the rigorous process of condensing words and phrases of the participants into "units of general meaning" (Hycner, 1985). Hycner (1985) defines a unit of general meaning as "those words, phrases, non-verbal or para-linguistic communications which express a unique and coherent meaning clearly differentiated from that which precedes and follows" (Hycner, 1995, p. 283). Again, Hycner (1985) urges that the researcher be open to the analysis and as focused on the meanings of what is communicated in

the interview. The general idea in this stage was to condense what was said by the participant in the interview but to also use the exact words of the participant whenever possible. Identifying these 'elements of meaning' required listening to each interview numerous times and reading the transcription of each interview several times.   While staying close to the exact phrases of the participant, I looked for specific words and phrases which created a coherent idea and was able to generate a list of general phrases or units of general meaning. Each phrase or element was enumerated. Hycner (1985) suggests embracing ambiguous and redundant data rather than excluding data. I included ambiguous and redundant phrases in my margin notes and in the list of phrases of general meaning. These phrases were identified with a question mark.

Fourth Phase of Analysis

Once these general phrases or elements of meanings were identified, listed in a table and numerated, I addressed the specific research questions of this study. Hycner (1985) describes this stage as the beginning of critical analysis. At this point, I compared the general phrases listed in the table to the specific research questions of this study. I determined if the general phrases or ideas expressed by the participant explicitly addressed the research questions. General phrases which addressed specific research questions were considered to have relevance to the study. Therefore, at the time of making this connection between the phrases of general meaning to a research question, the phrase was recognized as an element of relevant meaning. All elements of relevant meaning identified were listed in second table. Phrases or ideas not directly related to the research question were not included in the table. Yet, I included phrases which seemed somewhat related to the research questions. Ambiguous elements of relative meaning were included in the second table and labeled with a question mark. Through this comparison of participant phrases and units of meaning to the research questions, I was able to further reduce the data. This condensation allowed me to focus solely on the units of meaning or themes directly related to the research questions.

As a novice phenomenological researcher, I asked my graduate advisor to look over my initial analysis of an interview. With discussion and her assurance, we refined my method of analysis. The use of numeration and relevant units of meaning were to correspond with the placement of origin of these meanings in the original transcript and aided with tracing my decision making throughout the phases of analysis.

Once I reached agreement with my advisor regarding this initial stage of data reduction, I

eliminated redundancies and generated a third list of non-redundant units of relative meaning. Hycner (1985) urges researchers at this point of analysis to once again address personal theories. I bracketed my own presuppositions in my research journal.

Fifth Phase of Analysis

Once a non-redundant list of relevant phrases or elements was generated, I began the creative process of clustering together the units. This phase of analysis was a constant back and forth effort between the transcription, the listing of units of general meaning and listing of relevant phrases. I looked for the meanings of each phrase and identified common topics among phrases. Initially, it was necessary to list the same phrase in more than one cluster. In such cases, I returned to the original transcription and attempted to determine the exact essence of the phrase and made a definitive decision regarding the meaning and subsequently the appropriate cluster of the phrase. I kept in mind that Hycner (1985) noted that it is typical to experience ambiguity and overlap among data at this stage of the analysis.

Sixth Phase of Analysis

The next step included the creation of a fourth list that recorded both the clusters and the relevant meanings. I included the original numeration of units of general meanings in order to determine the placement of each phrase or idea in the original transcription. From these clusters of relevant meanings, I was able to determine the central themes of the interview.

These specific steps allow for a rigorous and organized analysis of each interview. By reviewing the entire interview and the list of generated themes, I created a summary of the interview and described the recurring themes resounding through the interview. This summary was compared to my personal journal entries of my feelings and impressions of the interview. This comparison increased my awareness of my personal theories and thoughts about the interview prior to the analysis of the data.

The summary of each interview was shared with the participant through electronic communication prior to the subsequent interview meeting. I specifically asked each participant to review the summary and contemplate the accuracy and their impression of each interview. Participants replied to my electronic message affirming the summary of the interviews.

I examined each drawing and the words teachers used when describing the drawing. These drawings served as a physical documentation of their feelings and experiences about teaching and their personal development. I also reviewed each teacher portfolio and copied

essential writings which documented beliefs, values and goals from the student teaching experience. This documentation was crucial in corroborating how teachers described their beliefs and values from their early career. The themes generated from both pictures and teacher portfolios were listed in my personal research journal.

At the final interview, two participants offered a timeline of significant events and people encountered over the course of their career. These timelines were used as a tool for discussion and questioning about teaching experiences and the meaning assigned to those experiences. Information from each timeline was considered as I analyzed interviews and drawings. These events were noted in my personal research journal.

Seventh Phase of Analysis

Once all interviews and artifact analysis were completed, I generated a detailed description of each participant's experiences using rich quotations from the interviews. Patton (2002) encourages the qualitative researcher to open up the world of the participants to the reader through rich, detailed and concrete descriptions of people and their experiences. My goal was to share this information in such a way that readers would understand the experiences of the participants. Within this composite summary of each participant, I included information obtained through interviews, teachers' drawings, timelines and documentation from teacher portfolios. I used numerous quotes from participants as a means of sharing their voice. Composite summaries for each participant are included in chapter four of this document.

When a composite summary for each participant was complete, I conducted a cross case comparison of the interviews of each participant, specifically addressing my research questions. I looked for commonalities in perceived changes in the understanding of teaching, changes in beliefs and values and significant events that influenced their professional identity as a teacher. This analysis of common findings is included in the latter portion of chapter four of this document. This comparison allowed me to identify common themes running throughout the majority of interviews.

Limitations of this Study

The nature of this study was highly personal. Addressing the development of self and the evolvement of personal identity is indeed a delicate topic. I was keenly aware of the challenge presented by in-depth conversations about the personal dimension of teaching with a stranger. I

made every attempt to establish an ongoing relationship with each participant. I took care to create a sense of trust and comfort within the interview settings. I was careful to ask probing questions in a cautious manner so as not to give the impression of interrogation or judgement. It is my belief that each participant was comfortable with our conversations and each was honest and authentic in their presentation of their experiences and their development as a teacher. However, I realize that the participants may have been selective in what they shared with me regarding their development based upon the highly personal nature of this research.

Also, qualitative studies are highly contextual and case dependent. It is important to state that this project provided a snapshot of the descriptions and experiences of six teachers, all of whom are alumni of the Virginia Tech graduate teacher education program. My goal was to give voice to these participants and to examine their perceptions regarding shifts in identity development across their career. The small number of participants allowed for in-depth interactions and rich conversations. The findings from this project are not meant to be generalized to other teachers or other university teacher education programs.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Interpretations

   The intent of this dissertation was to qualitatively examine shifts in teacher identities and understandings of what it means to teach across the first five years of their career. To explore shifts in the understanding of teaching and shifts in teacher identity, participants were asked to reflect on their teaching experiences. Participants were encouraged to discuss how their understandings of teaching have changed since finishing their teacher education programs and to consider how their personal beliefs and values have shifted over the course of their early careers. Participants were also asked to recall specific events that were influential in shaping their understandings of teaching and/or their identities as teachers.

   The organization of chapter four emerged from my interpretations of the data analysis process, specifically relating individual teacher experiences to the experiences of the group. The initial portion of the chapter includes a composite summary of each participant. This summary contains a description of the participants' experiences, and their understandings and interpretations of these experiences. Each summary is supported by archival information found in teacher portfolios, descriptions of the visual representations created by each participant as a depiction of how he or she viewed himself/ herself at various stages of the teaching career and by a timeline drawn by the participants depicting significant events over the course of their career.

   While reflection is a critical dimension of effective teaching, I have come to recognize that reflection is not easily accomplished. As one participant stated, "I don't think people really understand what the purpose of it [reflection] is and I don't know how you really explain that to somebody. I think there is an assumption that people know how to do that [reflect] and they don't" (Linda, 2004, 1:945-949). In my conversations with teachers, I recognized differing inclinations and abilities to reflect upon experiences and teaching. Recalling experiences was an easy task for participants and I believe that my participants enjoyed the opportunity to talk about their teaching. However, participants differed in their success in connecting the meaning of these experiences to their beliefs, values and practice in the classroom. At times, getting to the personal beliefs and meanings of experiences of my participants seemed an excruciating task. Many times I asked questions that drew a deep sigh or a puzzled look from my participants. Although I could debate whether reflection comes naturally to some people and seems unnatural to others, I believe anyone can learn to reflect upon their experiences. From my conversations

with these participants, it seemed that they lacked the support, time and encouragement to reflect upon their experiences.

<div align="center">Composite Summaries</div>

Barbara

Unlike many students who enroll in a teacher education program, Barbara did not aspire to be a teacher. Although Barbara's family consisted of educators, including a mother who taught in the public schools and a father who served as chairman of the school board for several years, as a young person, Barbara actually vowed that she was not interested in a career as a teacher. She ignored her mother's suggestion that she would make a wonderful teacher. "She would tell me 'Oh, you would be a good teacher' and I would say, 'Are you crazy? That is the last thing I would want to do" (Barbara, 2004, 1:171-173). Evidently there is something to be said for a mother's wisdom! Barbara enrolled in the graduate education program at Virginia Tech when she reached her early forties. She graduated in 1999 and was subsequently hired as a middle school math and science teacher for a local district.

I initially met Barbara in her classroom after school. In our first conversation, Barbara admitted that she was not a 'navel gazer' and did not spend time reflecting on who she was as a teacher or what she personally valued or believed about teaching. In fact, Barbara confessed that she struggled with assignments in graduate school which required reflection about her experiences, interpretations and personal feelings as a student teacher. "That [reflection] was hard for me because that is not something that I tend to do. Some people go on and on [pause] and that is their natural [pause] and it is not my natural thing to do. That was hard" (Barbara, 2004, 1:542-546). Ironically, it was the reflection component of this project that attracted Barbara to volunteer as a participant. As a teacher in her sixth year of teaching, Barbara acknowledged a need for personal reflection. She recognized the potential value in examining her career as a teacher, her experiences throughout the past six years, and the thinking about the meaning of those experiences. Barbara confessed that serious personal reflection was not something that she was likely to do on her own; thus, this project presented a unique opportunity for her to talk with someone about her experiences as a teacher.

Barbara and I had a lot to talk about! Our meetings typically lasted two hours. Barbara also offered her teaching portfolio, a document created during her student teaching experience, as an artifact for review. She was consistently prepared for our meetings but was shy about

drawing pictures to depict how she viewed herself at different stages of her career. She typically elected to write notes about her experiences rather than construct pictures. At our last meeting, Barbara shared clip art pictures depicting her self perceptions and a timeline identifying the significant events of her career.

Over the course of four meetings with Barbara, I got to know her as a dedicated and hard working teacher. Barbara is an elegant woman, quite confident with herself and extremely articulate. She is serious about her work and my guess is that students perceive her as challenging, stern - an 'I mean business' teacher. Although Barbara described herself as "old", as a perfectionist, and as somewhat "old fashioned", I was strongly impressed with Barbara's devotion to her vocation and work as a teacher. I also witnessed Barbara's extraordinary sense of humor, a nice balance to Barbara's serious nature. More importantly, I saw several glimpses of immense love for her students and her colleagues.

Barbara testified that her decision to become a teacher was gradual. She toyed with the idea long before she actually made the decision to pursue a graduate degree in education. "I think I had toyed with the idea of getting certification because I kept thinking that I wanted to do something, but I wasn't quite sure what" (Barbara, 2004, 1:66-68). Barbara had plenty of experiences with schools prior to making the decision to become a teacher. As I noted earlier, education was a priority in Barbara's family. Her parents were involved in public education and conversations about teaching and the politics of schools were part of her life as a child.

Following a short career as a social worker and subsequent motherhood, Barbara found a flexible part time job in a school district when her children were young. She was hired as a theme reader and her job consisted of reading and carefully reviewing student work based upon criteria set by the classroom teacher. Barbara reported that she picked up a stack of papers from teachers, proof read student work, made comments and suggestions based upon what teachers were looking for, and then returned the papers for teachers to review and grade.

When Barbara's children enrolled in school, she became increasingly involved in the day-to-day business of school. She joined the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and was soon an active member who was involved in planning, designing and fundraising for a new playground. She worked as a parent volunteer in the school office and gained first-hand knowledge of the many unexpected situations rising in a school on any given day in a building that houses several hundred children. These experiences certainly helped her to understand the culture of school.

However, Barbara credits parenthood as the most influential factor in her decision to become a teacher.

> I think my experience as a teacher would have been different if I had children who had been what I think of as 'brain trust' kids, who just sailed through and never needed any advocate on their part or a cheerleader (Barbara, 2004, 3:51).

Two of Barbara's three children struggled with school. She recalled working with her daughter to overcome a weakness in math and the challenge of creating alternative ways of explaining math concepts. This was a challenge; however Barbara realized she was good at it and she enjoyed undertaking this work.

> I would be explaining something to her and she just couldn't get it so I would turn it around and go at it in a different direction and then go in a different direction. And I was realizing that I was kind of enjoying that [pause] 'how do we work this out so that she

gets   this'? And I thought, 'There is an occupation that does this!' (Barbara 2004, 1:143).

Barbara also shared memories of her son's experiences in school. "My oldest son had a lot of difficulty with school [pause] attention issues and school was always difficult for him" (Barbara, 2004, 1:78-80). Along her son's journey through school, he encountered many teachers and Barbara was overwhelmed with their efforts of sincerity, care and nurturance of her son. "My son had one or two teachers who were wonderful to him and I was so appreciative of that" (Barbara 2004, 1:80). "It was just overwhelming to me that they would go out of their way to do what they did" (Barbara 2004, 1:85).

> Barbara's son also encountered teachers who were burned out or ready to give up teaching. These teachers were less willing to meet her son's needs and Barbara recalled feeling anger and frustration in the face of these teachers' shortcomings.

> You know, there are some kids, I think, who attract bad luck. If there is a teacher who they are trying to get out of the system, anywhere in the county, my son would get them. So he had a couple [pause] who just were [pause] and even looking back [pause] I knew their peers would acknowledge that they were destructive and they should not have been in the classroom (Barbara, 2004, 1, 89-96).

As a parent, these encounters were difficult. Barbara was vigilant and outspoken about her son's needs. She expected teachers to work with her child, to make every attempt to teach her child and to find strategies that worked for him. Barbara was not hesitant to remind teachers of their

responsibility to teach all children and to adjust their teaching to meet differing student needs.

> You know, sometimes I felt that I was a bully. Not a bully to the school system
> necessarily but [pause] well, perhaps on a couple of occasions but a bully towards them
> like 'get your act together and get this done' (Barbara, 2004, 2:47-49).

At one point, Barbara met with the principal to express her concerns about her son's experiences. In response to Barbara's concerns, the principal challenged Barbara to consider becoming a teacher. "I went to the principal complaining one time about this is just [pause] things are not being done right. It is just not right. I could do better than that.' And he said, 'Why don't you?'" (Barbara, 2004, 1:98-102). Barbara wrote about her experiences with her son's teachers and her interaction with the principal.

> Some of my views on teaching were based on that fact that I had children in school at the
> time. In fact, my decision to go into teaching was based on a bad teacher's influence!
> My son had a teacher in middle school that I felt (as did MANY others - including her
> fellow teachers) was doing a very poor job. I was very frustrated and expressed that
> frustration to the principal. I think I said something like, 'Even I could do a better job
> than she is.' He said, 'Well, why don't you then?' That got me thinking about teaching in
> a way that I had not before (Barbara's written notes, October 2004).

Following this interaction, Barbara seriously began to consider a teaching career. She decided to work as a substitute teacher and spent a year working in different schools in that role. Barbara credits this experience as a good preparation for the real work of teaching in the classroom. "I think subbing was a real good [pause] the day-to-day of what goes on in the classroom was a good preparation. So I wasn't at all surprised about teaching" (Barbara, 2004, 1:234-236).

As Barbara took classes towards teacher certification, she was asked to construct her beliefs and philosophy of teaching. These written statements are currently on display in her classroom and although Barbara admitted that she does not look at this document very often, she remains pleased with her written statements and beliefs.

> As part of a class assignment, we had to come up with our philosophy of teaching and I
> spent quite a bit of time thinking about what do I really believe? I have it framed. It has
> always been up in my classroom but I don't look at it real often. I wouldn't change a
> thing. There is nothing that I wrote then that I don't totally buy into now (Barbara, 2004,

1:485-494).

Barbara's teaching philosophy emphasized a basic respect for individuals and acknowledgement of their background and experiences. Barbara's philosophy also stressed the magnificent responsibility of teaching individual students and meeting individual student needs. Barbara's teaching philosophy includes these statements:

> All students are intelligent, creative, and learn in different ways. Because students learn in different ways, I must teach in a variety of ways. Students are to be held to high expectations - not the same expectations. Students deserve individual attention to the best of my ability. Students have the right to be judged as individuals apart from their parents, siblings, ethnic, economic, political and racial groups (Barbara's portfolio, 1999).

Barbara acknowledged that these beliefs continue to guide her as a teacher. "After reading it, I really can't say [pause] the order might be different [pause] it is not necessarily in order of importance" (Barbara, 2004, 1:530). As far as philosophy [pause] it almost sounds like, "Well, I am happy with how I am" and I guess I am" (Barbara, 2004, 1:511).

> Barbara also documented her beliefs about teaching and her values as a person with quotations, many of which were included in her teacher portfolio and scattered around her classroom. "I like quotations and I put up a quotation every week [gestures around the classroom]. By the end of the year, we will have lots of quotations around. Sometimes those reflect what I think about myself "(Barbara, 2004, 1:715-720). Barbara identified her favorite quote as being from Mark Twain; "Don't say the old lady screamed. Bring her on and let her scream." She described her interpretation of Twain's quote. "I guess this is what I am thinking [pause] it is actively engaging students [pause] bring her on and let her scream" (Barbara, 2004, 2:785-786).

> Clearly Barbara has high expectations of her students and of herself. "I think kids can handle a whole lot more than sometimes what they are given" (Barbara, 2004, 2:363-364). She described that she valued quality teaching and quality learning when she began teaching and she continues to strive for perfection.

> I spent a great deal of time (and still do) on preparation. There may have been some feeling of wanting to show what I was capable of initially but I have always had a bit of a perfectionist mentality - not always to my benefit. I spent a huge amount of time finding or creating lessons and perhaps looked down on those teachers who I thought were

slackers (Barbara's written notes, October 2004).

Barbara credits her belief in high standards to her experiences as a parent.

> With my oldest child, I made mistakes as far as wanting to bail him out of situations. Bringing work to school that he left at home. Staying up late with him, sitting with him and trying to help him get something finished that he should have done on his own. Not necessarily doing the work for him but holding his hand big time (Barbara, 2004, 2:63-69.)

In hindsight, Barbara is aware that she perhaps did too much for her son and deprived him of learning from the consequences of his behavior. She failed at times to let him figure out what he needed to do, but at the time, she felt she was doing what was best for him.

> When my son was in fifth or sixth grade, I might not have taken it real well if someone had said, 'You need to stop babying that kid. Give him some consequences at home.' I may not have wanted to have heard that myself. My husband and I had conflicts about that (Barbara, 2004, 2:82-87).

Lessons from parenthood continue to guide Barbara's expectations in the classroom.

> Now in some ways, I wouldn't say that I am harder on kids [pause] impatience is probably not the right word either [pause] I have expectations for kids but I also know from personal experience that if you provide a crutch to someone, they never learn to walk on their own. I see some of the parents that I have had over the years and I am thinking, 'You are making' [pause] but maybe everybody has to make their own mistakes (Barbara, 2004, 2:69-80).

> In the classroom, Barbara runs a tight ship. "You can present your point. You can try to persuade me but there is going to be a point where I am going to say, 'Enough. It is not up for discussion and this is the way it is going to be" (Barbara, 2004, 2:182-185). She is not concerned about her popularity with her students. She strives to make learning happen within her classroom and demands respect and discipline from her students.

> I want my students to feel comfortable enough to let me know if they have got something that they need to tell me but I also want them to feel like if I walk in the room and look at them because they are up and running around, they should find a seat immediately (Barbara, 2004, 3:35-39).

Barbara offered this picture as a depiction of how she is seen in the classroom by her students.
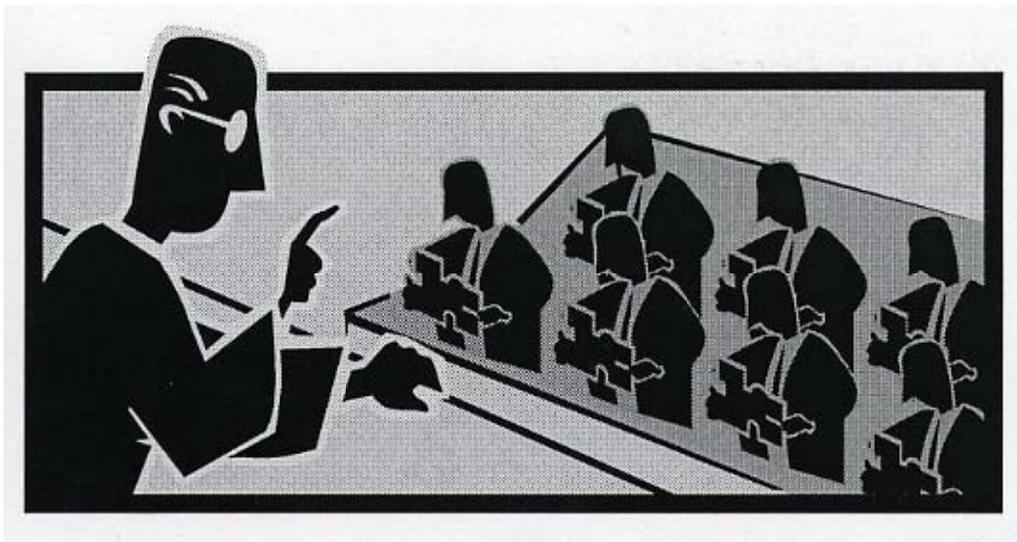
"This is how my students see me (laughter). I think in some cases they are a little bit nervous which does not bother me one bit" (Barbara, 2004, 3:33-35).

"I am standing in front of them preaching at them and I probably do that" (Barbara, 2004, 3:43-46).

One of my goals for this project was to identify ways in which Barbara had changed as a person and as a teacher since leaving graduate school and working in the public school classroom. Consistently throughout our conversations, Barbara remarked that she has noticed little change in herself and her values since becoming a teacher. "I don't know that I have

changed that much. I don't know that I have" (Barbara, 2004, 3:63). She sees herself as maintaining her personal status quo. Her core values and beliefs have not changed. Barbara views her practice of teaching as very similar to five years ago.

As our conversations continued, Barbara became sensitive about her perceived lack of change since becoming a teacher. She asked me questions about the meaning of an absence of change within her beliefs and her values. Does the lack of change represent a failure? Does a lack of change represent a lack of growth? Is she too old and set in her ways to change? Barbara expressed fears that she felt perhaps a lack of change meant stagnation. "In some ways, it bothers me that I haven't changed much because that makes me think that [pause] you are static" (Barbara, 2004, 3:30).

It seems to me that the absence of change in Barbara's beliefs and values may be a testament to her maturity and comfort with herself, as well as her knowledge of teaching and the context of public education. Barbara had advanced knowledge of schools and teaching from several viewpoints including: a) the child of an educator, b) the parent of three children who had experienced school, c) a volunteer in school, d) an active PTA member, and, e) a substitute teacher who worked in several schools. "I think I was pretty aware of what I was getting into. I had children. I think that is the whole thing" (Barbara, 2004, 1:348-352).

It is also my belief that Barbara had clarified many of her personal beliefs and values prior to walking in the classroom as a teacher. We all know that 40-year-olds are different than 22-year-olds with regard to development, knowledge, experience and wisdom. Barbara's maturity was an advantage as she entered the career of teaching. She was less willing to accept the belief that her age was a benefit in the classroom than I. In fact, in response to the assignment of drawing a picture representing her at different stages of teaching, Barbara offered a picture of a broken clay mask as a visual representation of herself.

Barbara gave this explanation of how the picture depicted her vision of herself:

> This is like either an old art piece or an unfinished work of art [pause] not quite finished
> or maybe broken [pause] I don't know. Not really broken but I know that this is an old
> piece and to me it is like [pause] not quite done, a work in progress (Barbara, 2004, 3:29-
> 31).

Despite Barbara's belief that she hasn't changed much since she began teaching, she has encountered subtle changes in her personal beliefs and in her understanding of teaching. Let me share with you what I learned about Barbara's personal development as a teacher. First I will uncover the subtle changes in Barbara's beliefs as a teacher and then I will address how her understanding of teaching has changed since entering the classroom six years ago.

Early in her career, Barbara recalled a personal hope and expectation of creating change in the lives of students. She was optimistic and hopeful that she could make a difference for children. In preparation for one of our conversations, Barbara wrote the following statement,

> While I was a student teacher, I had a vision of myself as the 'savior' for students who
> might have been at risk. In the back of my mind, I saw myself as turning around kids
> who were unmotivated and were unsuccessful in school (Barbara's written notes,
> October 2004).

As she approached teaching, Barbara believed that her teaching and nurturing of students would be the answer to students' problems.

> I think I did have this 'pie in the sky' [pause] I am going to make a difference in the life of

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a child. I am going to turn somebody around. I am going to motivate somebody who

hasn't been motivated before (Barbara, 2004, 1:273).

It did not take Barbara long to realize the improbability of success in changing students

lives. In her first year of teaching, Barbara's class included a student with significant behavioral

and emotional problems. She exerted great effort to teach this student and wanted desperately to

turn him around. She was unsuccessful and the experience clarified for Barbara how difficult it

is to actually reach troubled children, change their behaviors, and resolve their problems.

> I probably wanted to fix him. I wanted to be the one to turn him around. Actually, I was
>
> starting to realize that might happen every now and then but the reality is that I am going
>
> to do the best I can for him. I can't take him home with me (Barbara, 2004, 2:485)

Barbara also began to recognize the magnitude of factors influencing children's success

in school and the limitations of school staff in rectifying these influences. She realized that not

every child wanted to be in school, not every child was prepared for school and not every child

would benefit from school. But no matter what, she was responsible for teaching all students.

"We take whoever walks in and we drag them in, kicking and screaming. And we try to teach

them. We don't have a choice" (Barbara, 2004, 2:1054).

Since her first year of teaching, Barbara has learned to balance her hopes for helping her

students with the reality of her limitations as a teacher and the influences on students that are

beyond her control. Still, she tries to hold onto a belief that her teaching can make a difference

in the lives of some children.

> I think I still have a bit of that (pie in the sky). I hope I do. Some (Barbara, 2004, 2:496).
>
> And if my teaching makes one bit of difference to them twenty years from now [pause] it
>
> probably won't but I can hope (Barbara, 2004, 3:159).

Barbara also realizes the importance of reminding herself of these limitations and maintaining a

boundary between her care for students and her work of teaching students.

> I don't think it is healthy to go home and lose sleep about students' lives that you can't fix,
>
> I can't fix. I can't adopt them. I can't take them home with me. But I can do the best for
>
> them while I am here (Barbara, 2004, 1:497-500).

Barbara also talked about the emotions of worry and caring for her students.

> I do go home and worry about some kids and of course, if I felt there was something that
>
> was dangerous [pause] obviously I would talk to and have [pause] to say that I am really

concerned about this kid [pause] but I think it is just the balance. I have to do the best thing I can do here which is to do the best job I can teaching math and science (Barbara, 2004, 3:150).

Barbara's dedication to her students is evident. Although at one point in our conversation, Barbara described herself as "not a nurturing person" (Barbara, 2004, 1:685), she puts forth a great deal of effort to nurture and support students. "A little bit of fear in the classroom is not a bad thing, but I also joke around" (Barbara, 2004, 3:41). Her care for her students also shows in her work. She described her concern about her students' performance on the Virginia Standards of Learning tests and her desire that her students be comfortable with what is expected.

There will be a math SOL and I looked through it and I realized that our curriculum does not cover some things that will be on the SOLs next year. The kids in 6th grade this year won't have it. So if you look at the board right now [gestures to the blackboard], box and whisker plots are not in our curriculum. There are on the SOL test and so I am telling the kids, 'I don't know if next year in 7th grade, they [7th grade teachers] will have thought that you will have had this and you may see this on an SOL test. I don't want you to be freaked out, so this is what we are doing' (Barbara, 2004, 2:322-332).

She strives to teach the concepts in several ways so that all children can learn. Barbara described the following situation she encountered with a student who was a weak reader. Her actions demonstrate her care for students.

I was trying to make accommodations for a student who did not have an IEP, he was not a special ed student. I was having him go out and have a test read to him or a quiz read to him, knowing that he is a really, really, really poor low reader. That might be helpful to him and make him more successful. But in my conversation with my teaching partner, who is a former special education teacher, she said, 'You know he won't get those accommodations on a SOL test.' And I thought, 'Okay, what am I doing [pause] by trying to do what I think is helpful to him to succeed now am I going to be doing something in the end that will hurt him?' (Barbara, 2004, 2:121-131).

Clearly the emotions of love, care, nurturance and worry are a part of Barbara's teaching identity and yet she does not readily admit to the care she has for her students. Perhaps her experiences in the classroom have taught her to stifle her emotions about teaching.

Although Barbara's core values and beliefs seemingly have not drastically changed during the past five years, she has gained an acute understanding of teaching and what it means to teach. Barbara recognizes teaching as grueling work; it is never done and it is never perfect. Barbara also views teaching as a labor that takes place in isolation within a bureaucratic system that offers little recognition and few rewards.

Probably the most encompassing understanding of what it means to teach for Barbara has been the recognition that teaching is laborious. In fact, Barbara volunteered that she often had difficult sleeping prior to becoming a teacher. But since that first year of teaching, sleep comes easily during the school year. "What I remember from that very first day [pause] would fall [pause] was dead. I fell asleep and I slept soundly until school was out and then I started not sleeping again" (Barbara, 2004, 2:625-628). For Barbara, teaching is a quest, a journey towards perfection but it is a journey that never reaches the goal of perfection. Because of her own children's experiences in school, she holds herself accountable for teaching each student in her classroom. Barbara has first-hand knowledge of the variety of student needs, learning styles, comfort zones and confidence. She has high expectations of herself. Barbara pushes herself to improve her skills, her approach, her presentation and her assignments. She offered this picture as a representation of how she views herself.
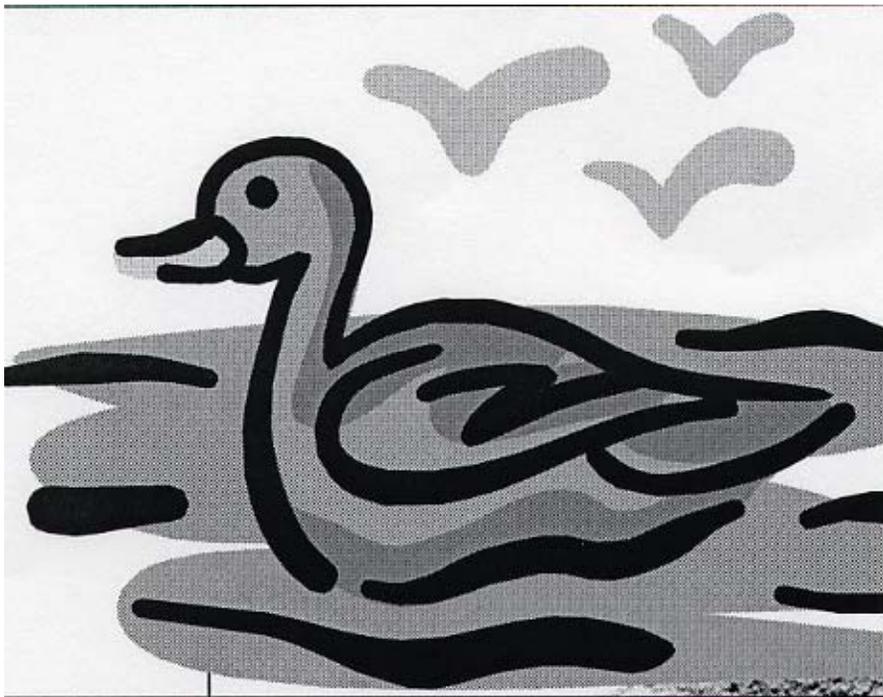
I put together some images that I sort of see as who I am; a duck that is serenely floating

on top but paddling madly underneath. Just to me [pause] it is me because that is, [pause] others may see me as being fairly calm, but that is not probably very accurate (Barbara, 2004, 3:12-16).

Barbara also described herself as overwhelmed with the work of teaching. "Overwhelmed with papers. I guess that is everybody, but I just [pause] I am always trying to find the perfect system for managing" (Barbara, 2004, 3:20-22).

Barbara's dedication to improving her teaching was evident even before she entered the classroom. The summer prior to beginning her new job as a teacher, Barbara was motivated to enroll in staff development opportunities because of a nagging doubt about her preparation to teach math. While she felt confident with the science curriculum, she felt she needed more preparation in mathematics. "Math was an area that I felt nervous about, fairly nervous. I was fairly nervous about it, but I went to summer [pause] the staff development during the summer" (Barbara, 2004, 1:230). Since that time, Barbara has continued participating in staff development courses as a means of improve her teaching. She has also pursued growth opportunities on her own. At one point in her career, she has enrolled in and paid for on-line courses as a means of improving her teaching. She has applied for and won grant funding for her school, collaborated with university faculty on grant projects and enrolled in a college course addressing teaching methodology and assessment.

Barbara's quest for knowledge and improvement is not solely evident the academic arena; she has also pursued better means of behavioral management in the classroom. She described an incident in her classroom with a male student who threatened to hit her. In the midst of this situation, Barbara remembers telling herself that she needed to learn how to manage such

outbursts. "He said something about hitting me and I thought, 'I really need to learn. This is not something that I feel particularly equipped to handle" (Barbara, 2004, 2:739). "When I said that to him, I realized that I could have done that better. I should have done that better. I should have done something differently"(Barbara, 2004, 2:759).

Barbara has also come to understand that working within a bureaucratic system requires an understanding of the school politics and the unwritten rules of the system. Barbara learned about unwritten rules early in her first year of teaching.

I remember that first year, that student that I mention that had a lot of [pause] he had a violent temper, a real trigger hair temper and you could not even predict it. I knew the principal of the school where he had gone [previously]. I knew him on a personal level. I thought, 'I will call and talk to him about him.' I did and I talked to him. I don't mean this as criticism of my administration, but I really got informed pretty quickly that I had gone outside of the channels (Barbara, 2004, 2:707-716).

Since that time, Barbara is more aware of the unrecorded rules that govern the way schools work. She admits that she now recognizes the 'hoops' but is not always savvy in playing the political game. "That was in the first year [pause] kind of okay [pause] I am getting better. I know now there are some hoops I have to jump through" (Barbara, 2004, 2:724-725).

The demands of school politics and working within the bureaucracy were clear when Barbara was teaching a child with significant emotional disturbance and behavioral problems. She describes her lack of input and her lack of power over a situation that she was living with in the classroom.

I had one kid who was standing up, screaming or ran out of my class and that would take [pause] it was taking so much of my time [pause] with one kid who did not want to be there. I really think that this is where [pause] our [pause] trying to make sure that he is in a class was impacting the education of the rest of the students (Barbara, 2004, 3:1005-1010).

I was annoyed by that and I was probably angry about that, and then the powers that be would schedule these meetings. They would get me a sub. I did not request that they get me a sub so that I could go sit in these behavior modification meetings where they would talk endlessly about this child having a fear of the building (Barbara, 2004, 3:1012-1017).

Despite Barbara's day-to-day interactions with this student, she was frustrated. The lack of

control over her classroom and teaching was frustrating.

> There was an aide in the classroom, in the math class but not in the science class. There
> was no one. So if I had a lab and he [pause] with kids doing a lab and he decided to bolt
> [pause] I would have to decide, 'Am I going to walk out and leave the kids and go chase
> him?' (Barbara, 2004, 3:1054-1057).

Barbara did not feel that this student was receiving an appropriate education and neither were the
other students in her classroom.

> There are many students for whom it is wonderful to be in an included setting. There are
> some students who should have some other setting that would be more beneficial to them
> and certainly to the rest of the students (Barbara, 2004, 3:1060-1065)

Barbara's experience in the classroom has also resulted in an intimate understanding of
the isolation of teaching and of the lack of support and encouragement offered to teachers.
Although the isolation of teachers is commonly discussed in teacher preparation programs, the
actual experience of living in isolation as a profession can be difficult and lonely. "It is such a
solitary job in so many ways, although we are surrounded by people" (Barbara, 2004, 3:530).
"I am fine with solitude. I was fine with that but there is a down side to not having another
teacher or adult" (Barbara, 2004, 3:536). During the first few years of teaching, Barbara's
classroom was in a mobile unit, physically removed from the school building with no physical
connection to any other classroom. "We were physically far away [pause] didn't even have the
hallway camaraderie" (Barbara, 2004, 3:533).

Once Barbara was accustomed to the isolation in the classroom, the idea of having
another adult in the classroom was unnerving. During her second year of teaching, Barbara was
the teacher of a student with a hearing impairment. The child was accompanied by a sign
language interpreter for several hours a day. Barbara recalls the discomfort and anxiety she felt
prior to the opening of the school year due to the threat of an adult set of eyes in her classroom.
"Having another adult in there all of the time, I thought, 'Oh, they are going to see me as not very
nice and that I am very grumpy. What will they think of me?" (Barbara, 2004, 3: 550-552).
"I was nervous about that. That whole experience of having someone else in there" (Barbara,
2004, 3:556-557). Yet, it was a fruitful experience for the student, Barbara and the interpreter.
"I would say, [laughing] 'Okay, Mr. Smith is going to have carpal tunnel syndrome here in a
minute. I am going to have to slow down. It was good though. It was a good year" (Barbara,

2004, 3:625-626). "Just having that [pause] the fact of having an adult [pause] was a little [pause] but it was a good experience" (Barbara, 2004, 3:615-616). Barbara has since moved to a new school building and feels more connected to faculty, particularly her teaching partners. She relies on her teaching partners for advice and feedback about teaching, assignments, and situations with students and parents. She commented many times throughout our conversations that colleagues are wonderful.

Barbara has also come to understand the lack of recognition and the few rewards in teaching. Early in her career, she was waiting for a principal to come into her classroom, observe and evaluate her teaching. "I wanted to know, 'Am I doing a good job?'" (Barbara 2004, 3:498). "I did want some feedback and I think that is one thing that I would like to have seen more of, feedback; positive and negative" (Barbara 2004, 3:507-508). When the principal finally came to Barbara's class during her second year of teaching, Barbara recalls the principal's comments as very having an important effect on her teaching.

> She [principal] came in [pause] at a day that I thought [pause] I was not [pause] you know how sometimes it is clicking and you are doing really great and you wish someone was watching or [pause] and this was just not one. It just didn't seem like [pause] but as I sat down and talked with her, she almost made me cry because her evaluation was so positive. Things that I would not have even thought [pause] she said, 'That was really good. This is what I saw that was really good.' And I thought, 'Well, I didn't even think about that. I didn't even know I was doing that.' That was really good. More of that would be nice (Barbara, 2004, 3:514-524).

Yet, her principal is not in her classroom often. Barbara perceives the administrators in her school as working hard to keep students in line and to handle tough situations with parents. Their jobs seem to leave little time for feedback and support to teachers. Over the last five years, Barbara has increasingly become aware of the lack of expressed appreciation for her work as a teacher. "We all need pats on the back and you don't get them from kids. Every now and then you do. They are few and far between and I don't know if that is just here of if that is everywhere" (Barbara, 2004, 3:462). "We hear so much of the negative" (Barbara, 2004, 3:1463). "I don't get a whole lot of feedback from parents" (Barbara, 2004, 3:668). Barbara savors the compliments she has received from a student or from a parent. "You don't get many compliments and you have to save the ones that you have" (Barbara, 2:2004, 996). "I have a

letter from the end of that year and it was really nice" (Barbara, 2004, 2:982).

Given Barbara's descriptions of the excruciating work of teaching, the lack of rewards and the complexities of working within a political system, I asked Barbara if she had every doubted her decision to become a teacher and why she has chosen to stay in teaching for the last five years.

> I value some of those [pause] the moments [pause] not that they happen every day or every week where you have got their attention, totally have their attention and class is over and they look at you and say, 'Oh, is it time to go already?' (Barbara, 2004, 2:886-889).

She admitted that she has a fear of losing her heart for teaching.

> There are teachers who are never happy with anything the administrators do. They are the first ones to get here and the first ones to leave. They hand out workbook pages and say 'Do this. Answer these problems. Read this section. Do these problems. And they never do anything innovative or different or hands-on. I sometimes have this fear that is what I am doing to become. I hope that I would quit on my own before [pause] that I will be able to recognize [pause] that I will have enough self awareness to recognize if I lose heart in it (Barbara, 2004, 3:1280-1294).

In summary, it is clear to me that Barbara's core beliefs and values have not changed significantly since she entered the classroom six years ago. She is confident in who she is as a teacher and as a person. Magolda (2001) might say that Barbara defined her beliefs, values, identity and her relationships with others prior to enrolling in graduate school to receive licensure as a teacher.

Barbara credits her personal experiences as influential in her decision to become a teacher. "It was my personal experiences that steered me toward teaching" (Barbara, 2004, 1:154). She was in her mid forties when she entered the teacher education program. She was a mother of three children and had a multitude of experiences within the context of public school. These experiences helped shape Barbara's understandings and expectations of teaching.

I noticed only subtle changes in Barbara's personal beliefs and values as a teacher. This change relates to the emotions of teaching. Since Barbara's first year of teaching, she has learned to balance her desire to help and love children with the reality of the limitations upon her as a teacher, as an individual and as a human. She recognizes the dangers in investing too much of

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herself in a child or a situation and allowing her care and nurturing to have a negative effect upon her own life. Barbara has come to understand that it is easy to become invested in students and then endure hurt and disappointment when monumental changes within the student or within the student's circumstances fail to materialize.

Barbara's has gained a broader understanding of what it means to teach. She views teaching as difficult, time consuming, challenging, laborious, isolating, sometimes unrewarding, and as a profession that is not often recognized for its value. Barbara admits that she does not always agree with the policies and the politics of the school system. At times, she has questioned her desire to continue teaching. "I was tired and so frustrated at the end of the year and I really started thinking seriously, 'Do I want to do this? Do I really want to come back?" (Barbara, 2004, 3:1150-1152).

There is some fear that she will lose her heart for teaching and there is self awareness of the frustrations associated with teaching. Yet Barbara continues to come back to teach every year. She maintains that she loves what she does. She loves it for the joy of learning, the joy of seeing the 'light bulb come on' in students and knowing that she is making a difference for some kids.

James

I met James for the first time in his home during the winter holiday break. Due to his busy schedule, we met twice in his home to avoid any interruption of his after school commitments and his responsibilities as a father and husband. James is involved in many projects at the school level and tutors students several days a week after school. James completed the graduate degree program in Curriculum and Instruction at Virginia Tech in 1999. He is certified to teach fourth through eighth grades and was in his sixth year of teaching when I interviewed him for this project.

James elected not to produce drawings representing teacher identity at different stages of his career. Although we communicated about the possibility of reviewing his teacher portfolio several times, James did not follow through on his promise to share this artifact. This composite summary is based upon several hours of conversations with James focused on his teaching career and his experiences.

James impressed me as a tough critic of education and public school. He is very

inquisitive, analytical and unafraid of speaking his mind. He is ambitious and has goals of furthering his education. He works extremely hard as a teacher as is evident by his involvement in a grant project, after school tutoring and numerous professional development activities. James acknowledged that his colleagues view him as competitive and perhaps somewhat arrogant. Indeed, his own wife confessed that she did not like him when she first met him because of his cocky attitude. Yet, I came to recognize James' devotion to empowering his students to seek and discover knowledge on their own. His overarching goal is for his students to learn, succeed and to gain confidence in their own abilities.

I have to admit that at times interviewing James was difficult. He is passionate about his profession and the responsibilities placed upon him as a teacher and yet, getting him to reflect upon his own development was a challenge. He was very caught up in the day-to-day activities of his class and was hesitant to reflect upon the meaning of his experiences. He admitted that reflection upon teaching and the changes one experiences in teaching was crucial, but a lack of time often keeps him from reflection. "I would love to do a journal but considering that I don't grade enough papers and I don't send home enough letters to parents, I can't justify that" (James, 2004, 2:842-844).

James' story of choosing teaching as a career is unusual and he described himself as an unlikely candidate for a career in teaching. As a young child and throughout his undergraduate experience, James recalled having a negative attitude towards school. "I hated it. I wouldn't have gone for anything" (James, 2004, 1:381). "I absolutely despised it. It was not a very good time" (James, 2004, 1:383). He described himself as arrogant and as sometimes overly confident about his intellectual abilities. While in school, James frequently held the opinion that his teachers lacked intelligence and were undedicated to their profession. James could not identify a teacher who was influential in his life or one who stirred his desire to become a teacher.

> When everybody says, 'Name a teacher who had a positive influence on you', I can't. I
> don't have one. My kindergarten teacher I liked and then my eleventh grade English
> teacher but in between those twelve years of school, I don't have anybody (James, 2004,
> 1:374-379).

James finished a Bachelor's degree at Virginia Tech in 1994 in an area other than education, but described his academic performance in his area of study as weak and he failed to find a career in his field. James jokingly described the three years following the completion of a

four year degree and beginning graduate school as time he spent avoiding the responsibilities of adulthood, working odd jobs, and having fun. "I hiked the Appalachian Trail, was a house painter and went to a lot of concerts [laughter]"(James, 2004, 1:30).

James' first encounter with teaching occurred when he found part-time employment as a substitute instructional aide for a local school system. He had previous work experience with adults with disabilities, so working with children with disabilities seemed familiar to him. There was an ongoing need for substitute instructional aides in the schools. Initially James worked as a substitute and he was frequently assigned work with numerous children and teachers in several schools throughout the district. Eventually, he was offered a full-time position as an instructional aide.

As an instructional aide, James began to consider a career as a teacher. James described his work with children in the classroom as the first job that he looked forward to. "You know, I liked going to work; which was the first job I had where I would go to work" (James, 2004, 1:50).
As a participant in the classroom, James observed many teachers with varying levels of competence. He was convinced that he could do the job and that he could do the job well. James admits that when someone asks him why he wanted to be a teacher, he replies,

> I have seen so many things that I thought were done [pause] so many ways that I thought kids were not treated correctly and so many ways that [pause] well [pause] not just kids with disabilities, but bright kids that are just bored out of their gourds but smart kids that aren't being challenged (James, 2004, 1:392-397).

Perhaps James' happy-go-lucky lifestyle since finishing college created doubt among faculty regarding his sincerity about becoming a teacher. Whatever the reason, James felt that he had to work at impressing the faculty at Virginia Tech and convincing them to accept him as a graduate student.

> I had to go to two interviews. Getting my recommendations from people that I had subbed with and things like that. It was interesting. I mean, it was hard to do. I had to kind of go in [pause] and convince them that they needed to take me (James, 2004, 1:64-68).

Unlike his previous experiences with school, James recalled his graduate school experience as positive. James was a tough critic in the classroom and had high expectations of

his professors. He wasn't disappointed. James spoke out about his needs and was assertive and persistent in asking for what he wanted. James recalled insisting that he be able to select the teachers with whom he would be working as a student teacher. "I was really afraid that I was going to get stuck with a bad teacher as my cooperating teacher, so I kind of went out of my way to make sure that did not happen my first time out" (James, 2004, 1:180-183).

James perceived himself as a capable and confident student teacher. He was aggressive in asking for more responsibility in the classroom. His cooperating teachers allowed him to take on many tasks including teaching several subjects, working on report cards and holding conferences. James reported that he was recognized as the Phi Delta Kappa Student Teacher of the Year.

James described his early philosophy of teaching as guided by child-centered learning and freedom of choice. He viewed the relationship between child and teacher as one of equality, and he believed in the empowerment of students. Acting upon his experience with poor teachers and a dislike of school, James held a strong conviction that teachers must be responsible for teaching and equipping students to learn.

James also described a sense of great confidence that he had what it took to teach kids and to fix the wrongs of education. "I had an extreme sense of hubris and I was going to fix what was wrong" (James, 2004, 1:452-453). He credits this confidence and attitude as the key attributes that landed him his first teaching job in a large urban school district. During a job interview, James was asked about the type of school environment he was looking for. "I basically said 'Put me in the toughest school.' So I ended up in the lowest reform school in the state and just got my butt handed to me [laughter]. It was horrible. I was completely unprepared" (James, 2004, 1:459-463). "It was absolutely insane to be in a district of about 100,000 kids in a bad school. It was awful. I mean, it was just awful" (James, 2004, 1:803-805).

James' first year of teaching was filled with struggles. He described a classroom of students living in a neighborhood plagued by poverty, violence and crime. The violence was part of his students' everyday life. James recalled that on more than one occasion his students came to school asking if others had seen the dead body in the neighborhood, a result of a shooting. The violence carried over into the classroom. "Towards the end of the school year, kids brought in pool cues and they were going to beat me up with pool cues [laughter] when I was in school one day" (James, 2004, 1:650-652). At one point during the school year, a bullet

penetrated the window of the mobile unit of James' classroom.

> Over Christmas break, somebody shot through the window of my trailer. I had a bullet hole in the white board and it stayed there for like two weeks so we would erase around the bullet hole, right around it (James, 2004, 1:592-595).

Unsurprisingly, students displayed extreme behavior problems and were generally noncompliant with requests. James describes himself as unprepared to manage his students.

> I had taught children previously where you walked in and said, 'Let's do this' and everybody did it except for a couple of kids and then you would develop a targeted plan for those kids. I had an entire room of children that was [pause] it was just amazing. You went into defensive mode immediately (James, 2004, 1:465-470).

James recalled several incidences of noncompliance.

> I was teaching a social studies lesson on the second day of school which indicates a lack of awareness there [laughter]. I stopped and I said, "I am not accustomed to having nine-year-old children not do what I ask them to do when I ask them to do it." And this kid said, "Welcome to the real world, Mr. Smith. I ain't doing it" (James, 2004, 1:601-607). I was in a trailer that had been an office before so I didn't have cubbies. The kids finally got hooks at some point. This kid just went and got his coat and got his backpack and was sitting in the back of the room. He was telling a bunch of kids, "We don't have to stay here. Come on, we can just leave. We are out of here. We are going home. He is not going to stop us." This went on for awhile and it was getting distracting. I was ignoring it for as long as I could and finally I stopped and I said, "If you are going, would you just get out so I can teach the people who want to be here?" And I opened the door and they left. I closed the door and the whole time I am thinking, "Well, here it is. I have been teaching for three days and everything is happening right here. Everything is on the line." I closed the door and said, "Is there anybody here" [pause] like I turned into a yeller within four minutes [pause] "Is there anybody here who doesn't think that he is still going to be sitting there when I open the door in five minutes? Is there anybody else who wants to go?" Everybody was just stunned and looking at me. So I taught for about five minutes and the whole time I am thinking, "Oh, please God, let that child be sitting outside the door." And he was! I opened up the door in about five minutes and I said, "You let me know when you want to come back in here." I won. He came back in and I

thought, "Whew! Thank God!" (James, 2004, 1:622-648).

In addition to the extreme behavioral problems in the classroom, the learning difficulties and the academic weaknesses of students were overwhelming and James had little support and resources for teaching. "It was an amazing pile of children who needed help in that room. Trying reading groups was hilarious" (James, 2004, 1:762). He recalls having no resources for the social studies curriculum. He received no support from school administrators or colleagues. James was assigned a mentor and an instructional aide. The mentor was a retired teacher from the school district but she offered little support to James. He recalled seeing her in his classroom on one occasion for less than ten minutes. The classroom aide was a nice person, according to James, but she offered little assistance with instruction or behavioral management. Although a team of experts were in the school as part of a state assistance team, James received little support in the classroom.

James also became cognizant of political tension in the school. The principal of the school was not supportive of the involvement of the state assistance team and refused to cooperate with state experts. The principal's attitude created a difficult situation for teachers who needed help and may have benefited from the support of the assistance team.

> The principal would not cooperate with the state assistance team at all and so if you went to the state assistance team [pause] then you were on the principal's bad side. There was just a lot of talk going on in the building (James, 2004, 1:493-496).

James requested that the assistance team visit his classroom because he was desperate for help. His request was put off for several weeks, but when James' was finally observed by members of the state assistance team, his behavior management skills were identified as weak and he was placed on an improvement plan. James resigned from this position in February, but continued teaching through the end of his contract. He began looking for another teaching position.

The first-year experience greatly influenced James' perspective on teaching. In looking back on his first-year experience, James chuckled with amusement but admitted that at the time, it was an extremely difficult situation. He admitted that he still thinks about his first year of teaching.

> I think it is like a car accident or a prison term. It comes back to you in flashes at unexpected moments. There was an awful lot of blocking and transference [pause] of

"that didn't happen to me," but [pause] it changed me. It changed me more from the standpoint of [pause] like as we talk about it now, I can see that year, I have already had a year where people told me that I stunk and this is ridiculous (James, 2004, 2:264-271).

As he resigned from his position and relocated to his current school the following year, James felt he could handle even the worst situations.

All I could think was, "There is nothing [pause] no child could walk into my classroom at all [pause] ever [pause] and I won't know what to do. I will need help with a lot of different aspects but there is no child who is going to come in and scare me" (James, 2004, 1:714-717).

James left the student teaching setting with a belief that he was a capable teacher. After one year in a setting very different than his own experience as a student and very different from his previous work experience and student teaching, James described himself as humbled. "I was pretty cocky. It was a very humbling experience in a lot of ways because I knew that I wasn't organized enough to be doing what I needed to do" (James, 2004, 1:808-810).

James also recognized the encompassing knowledge and skills he needed in order to be successful in the classroom. As he considered his own skills for teaching students with significant academic and behavioral problems, James realized he had little knowledge of the systematic approach of teaching phonics.

I also realized that I had very big holes. All I could think was, 'Crap! Nobody taught us how to teach kids to read.' It was a glaring weakness. I mean nobody taught us how to teach kids to read. We did not know anything (James, 2004, 1:818-821).

As he entered his second year of teaching, James was more cognizant about the skills he needed to master as a teacher. He immediately approached Curriculum Supervisors in his school district about resources for his classroom and assistance in teaching subjects for which he felt ill prepared. He was extremely driven to be successful in the classroom and for his students to be successful as well. Initially, this was a challenge because he was assigned to teach subjects that he did not view as his strengths. He struggled somewhat during his second year of teaching with learning a new curriculum. "I was able to try a lot of what I thought were pretty innovative things at that time [laughter] and did okay with it" (James, 2004, 2:95-97). "I can't believe we [he and his students] would survive that first year because I mean [pause] I should not have been

the person that was doing all of that stuff. It was intense" (James, 2004, 2:215-216).
He attended numerous professional development activities and participated in special projects.

During his third year of teaching, James began teaching subjects that he felt more prepared for. He reached a point of feeling confident in what he was doing in the classroom and in his teaching skills. He credited his team teacher as a key to their success as a team. "She got social studies and we have done really well with social studies and I am not touching that.

I am glad that I don't have to do that one anymore" (James, 2004, 2:143-145).

In reflecting upon his six years in teaching, James admits that he is a very different teacher in comparison to what he was like as a student teacher. "That [child-centered learning] is what I was like as a student teacher [pause] but it is all out the window" (James, 2004, 1:1128). James credits the change in his practice of teaching to the pressures of his current teaching position in a school that has failed to receive full accreditation based upon test scores for the Virginia Standards of Learning. There is immense pressure on the school, teachers, and students to improve scores on criterion referenced tests. James is convinced that the poor performance of students at his school is a due to poor instruction at his school.

> Most of it is out of the window [early beliefs and values] because I am at a failing school
> and I have got teachers that [pause] I have got some people who have never seen the test
> [Virginia Standards of Learning tests] in the lower grades and they don't know what is
> going on. There is a third and fifth grade test and in our building [pause] we really need
> retirement in a few cases. It is awful (James, 2004, 1:1130-1135).

James perceives his students as very capable, but he believes that they have not been instructed in the academic areas that are tested by the Virginia Standards of Learning tests.

> I have got a bunch of kids that are [pause] I have got smart kids in a school that has a bad
> reputation and I am just done. I don't have any problem calling a spade a spade if
> somebody is not doing something, and I am comfortable with that (James, 2004, 1:1219-
> 1223).
> We have lots of kids that come from trailer parks and their parents are supportive and
> they go to bed on time and they are here everyday. Those kids are learning just fine. If
> they are behind, they are behind because of lost time before they got here. I am sure that
> sounds cocky, that sounds obnoxious, but it is just not true that kids cannot do better than
> what they are doing. The hardest school needs the best teachers and we don't have

everybody (James, 2004, 2:348-358).

James sees his job as filling in the academic gaps for students who are ill prepared for state mandated testing.

> It is like a brick wall that is built with all of these bricks and mortar missing. It is your job just to run back through and patch everything up and hope that everything stands up until it needs to. And you are just running around and filling holes (James, 2004, 2:333-337).

> James claims that he continues to believe in and hold a strong conviction for child-centered teaching. As a new teacher in the classroom, he viewed himself as the dispenser of knowledge but increasingly with time, James perceives that he has become more comfortable with turning learning over to his students. He urges his fifth-grade students to think on their own, attempt to solve problems on their own and just basically learn that they are capable of learning. "The challenge is 'I know you can do it and I am going to figure out how to make you do it whether you want to do it or not" (James, 2004, 2:527-529).

> The thing that I wrote for my belief was the front page of my portfolio and it is hanging by my mirror in my classroom. Every kid needs a voice. Every kid can learn. Your job is to find out how they learn best and [pause] let them hear what they say to give them ownership in the classroom (James, 2004, 1:1144-1149).

Yet, James recognizes a change in how he teaches and who he is in the classroom.

> I continue to believe that [child-centered teaching] but [pause] I feel that in reality what that translates to is I have to make sure that these kids don't let anybody make it look like they are stupid because they can't pass the SOL tests. And so it has changed [pause] it has changed what I do in the classroom. I have just become a jackass (laughter) in so many ways (James, 2004, 1:1150-1155).

> James admits that he no longer focuses on the whole child. His focus is solely on student's cognitive skills and their academic performance. He is tough on kids and has high academic expectations for them. "We don't watch a lot of movies and we don't hang out and play"(James, 2004, 1:1216).

> I have frequently vented to my team teacher [pause] "I have changed. I am worried about their brains and the rest of it [pause] we don't have time for". And I don't have time for it and I am not even fussing over it (James, 2004, 1:1429-1433).

I don't teach the whole child anymore. I teach [pause] I am responsible for the brain and the social stuff and the things [pause] I am like, "Not this year! [laughter] I expect everyone to come in here and treat everybody nice and we are way too busy for you [pause] you cannot be screwing around like that" (James, 2004, 1:1203-1207).

Due to the poor performance of his school on the Virginia Standards of Learning Tests, James has put forth an intense effort to improve the performance of his students.

I have put a lot of work into the last two years and a lot of it is to prove to other people, more than to myself, because I feel really confident that I can do this job, but to prove to other people that the kids could do it (James, 2004, 2:275-281).

James describes his students as making progress and he sees hope for his students to pass the SOL tests this year, which may result in the school receiving accreditation. It has been hard work for the teachers and for the students.

Christmas week worked really well from a management standpoint but like Tuesday was the social studies test. Thursday morning was the science test. Thursday afternoon was a timed write to grade them and Friday we did a released item test to get a benchmark. And so we worked our kids in every subject over four days. And I did feel really good about that. But at the same time, I feel horrible about that. It was Christmas (James, 2004, 1:1434-1443).

James gave this example of how hard he pushes his students:

It was like August and I started scanning the kids for what they know about multiplication. I actually personally quizzed every kid and built individual lists and anything that they could not do in three seconds was on their practice list. So every kid had a customized list and we did it again about six weeks later. I had three kids that could pass 100 facts in five minutes and it was getting on my nerves. I had some kids who were not showing any movement at all and finally I just said, 'If you are not done December 1st, we are not having recess anymore.' So the first week of December, I gave a math test. They had forgotten that I had said this. I had three kids go out for recess and I kept eleven children in. Well, I am down to four children in two weeks. I am keeping children in at recess literally (James, 2004, 1:1156-1175).

The pressure to pass mandated testing is a significant factor in James' practice of teaching

I had two kids that lost about a week of recess because they were stuck at about 94 and

they wouldn't get the last three facts. I am pinning it to their shirt. I am sticking in their backpack. I am telling them to go home and write it on their mirror. You know, I send them home with one of those FX window markers and say, "Just write this one on the mirror. If you can learn all of the facts and you can't remember 7 X 8, you are not trying." I am sure that I had kids crying and had kids cussing at me going home on the bus but I am down to [pause] I said, "Look, I can't teach division if you don't know. If you don't know this, I am not going to waste my time" (James, 2004, 1:1182-1194).

James' drive to assist his students in passing the Virginia Standards of Learning Test has resulted in an abundance of knowledge about the standards, the tests and the scores. He has studied the historical performance of students in his school and he has carefully monitored the ongoing development of the tests.

We are doing some things with the SOLs right now that are not above board, I don't think. I think from a psychometric standpoint, we are not doing it right. They have increased the difficulty of the descriptors on the math test (James, 2004, 1:1046-1050).

He also communicated a sense of distrust regarding the intention and use of the tests.

The SOLs are criterion referenced tests not a norm referenced test. The idea is that everybody is supposed to pass it. That is what no child left behind means. I think they are trying to make SOLs into a test that differentiates certainly at the top end (James, 2004, 1:1064-1070).

Clearly James feels the stress involved in teaching and he faces daily pressure to improve the performance of students on mandated standardized tests. Yet, James stays in teaching. He stays in teaching because he loves it.

I have never been good at going to work, so the fact that even with that underlying pressure of [pause] you know this is what you need to be doing [pause] it is a good job. It is a great job. You get along with the kids. No parent has ever been intimidated in my classroom. They walk in and they feel like they are talking to a peer. You get up every morning and you go in and you deal with a bunch of children (James, 2004, 2:485-495).

James' story is reflective of a broader understanding of teaching and what it means to teach within a political context. He has encountered several significant events which have influenced his practice of teaching. And although James claims that he values child-centered learning and the focus on the whole child, his practice of teaching in the classroom does not echo

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these values and beliefs. Let me explain the changes that I recognized in James.

Despite his confident self image as a student teacher, James quickly found out how difficult teaching can be and, although he was a confident student teacher, he recognized that he was unprepared for several aspects of teaching. Teaching in a large urban school district was challenging. James quickly realized that his knowledge of teaching and his behavioral management skills had not been tested as a student teacher. James perceived his first year of teaching as a failure and yet he learned a tremendous amount about teaching during that experience. Probably the most important lesson was humility and the need for support. Suffering through a tough year required James to reexamine his skills as a teacher; something he may not have done if he had not experienced the trials of his first year. As a result of his struggle with teaching, James strove to improve his knowledge of teaching reading skills and developing his knowledge of the social studies curriculum. He was proactive in seeking the resources that he needed to be successful. He took advantage of numerous professional development opportunities.

Since becoming a teacher, James has gained a broader understanding of school politics and the systemic problems that plague schools. James was a victim of the context and circumstances during his first year of teaching. He struggled to gain the academic and administrative support that he needed throughout that year because of poor instructional leadership and an ongoing conflict between district and state level management of the school.

Upon relocating to his current school, James again confronted the havoc that politics can bring to a school. He has endured two changes in leadership at his current school and he has witnessed the struggle to develop a united instructional team within his school building. James' own sense of responsibility as a teacher and his desire for teamwork has heightened as a result of these difficult experiences. He clearly sees the impact of his performance as a teacher and his contribution to the success of the entire school.

Likewise, he recognizes that the performance of other teachers affects his success in the classroom. James consistently holds himself and others to high standards. He has little patience for colleagues who he perceives as not doing their part. It seemed that a great source of frustration for James is the difficulty with creating change within schools, even when change is obviously needed.

James described numerous experiences that have influenced his beliefs about teaching.

Probably the most influential factor on his beliefs and values in teaching has been the context of his work. James' early experience in a large urban school district was defined by the setting, the population, the lack of resources, and a lack of support for new teachers. James recognized that his failure to survive within that context was more a reflection of where he was than who he was.

He relocated to his current school district with hopes of finding a more supportive and socially familiar environment. His current school placement is significantly more positive in comparison to the setting of his first year of teaching. However, the context of his current school continues to impact James' practice of teaching. His current school is one of the few schools in the school district that has not achieved passing scores on the Virginia Standards of Learning tests. It is a well known fact that his school has not yet received full accreditation from the Virginia Department of Education. James described his current practice of teaching as heavily focused on the academic achievement of his students which is seemingly different than his professed beliefs in educating the whole child. Thus, it appears that James' practice of teaching is defined by the context of his work rather than his values and beliefs as a teacher.

Linda

Linda has been teaching writing in a middle school since graduating from the Master's program at Virginia Tech in Curriculum and Instruction in 2000. As one might expect of a writing teacher, Linda is an introspective person, a deep thinker, and a deeply caring and sensitive teacher. In our conversations, Linda seemingly spoke effortlessly about her personal development and seemed extremely comfortable reflecting upon her personal development and her identity. She openly discussed her values and beliefs about teaching and her current practice of teaching. She greatly values reflection as a means of making meaning from experiences in the classroom and she was an eager participant in this project. "I do think it [reflection] is important in order for people to grow. I think that is what it is about otherwise you stay stagnant and that shows up in teaching styles, I think" (Linda, 2004, 1:665-670). Linda's teaching portfolio addresses her early commitment to the practice of reflection. "A personal commitment to reflective teaching practices - using my experiences with children as an opportunity to recreate what it personally means to be a teacher" (Linda's portfolio, 2000).

I met with Linda in her classroom after school on four occasions. At our initial meeting, Linda was enthusiastic about the opportunity to share her experiences as a teacher and discuss

shifts in her beliefs and values since beginning teaching. At times, I found it difficult to keep pace with Linda's self disclosure. She answered many of my questions before I asked them. I wrote this note in my personal research journal following that initial conversation with Linda:

> Interviewing is much more difficult than I thought. Listening to participants and processing what they are saying is very difficult when I am also conscious of the questions I want to ask (personal research journal, 2004).

In previous teacher interviews for this project, I viewed my role as an elicitor of memories, opinions, beliefs and the personal meanings of teaching. Often I perceived participants as struggling with the interview questions or as somewhat reluctant to share personal thoughts and beliefs. But Linda's conversation seemed effortless and she spoke easily about experiences as a teacher and how experiences have shaped who she is as a teacher. I had a difficult time keeping up with her!

> At the onset of our first interview, Linda offered a powerful picture depicting her teaching journey.
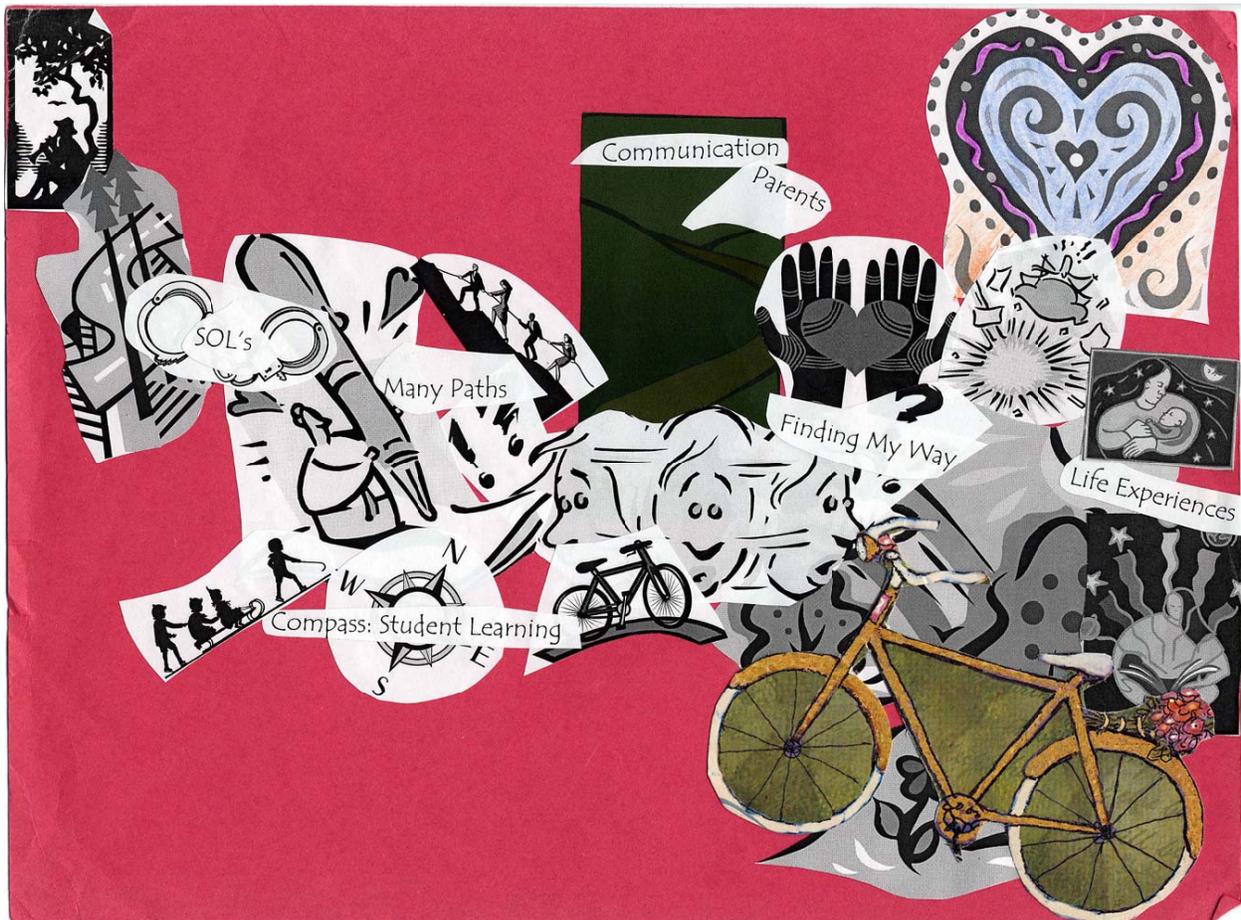
Most participants in this project were reluctant to draw or create any artistic expression of their teaching identity. The comprehensiveness of her portrayal surprised to me. Linda's detailed picture depicting her teaching journey was tremendous and demonstrated the depth of her reflection of personal values, beliefs and experiences as a teacher. The picture referenced her beliefs and values and her development as a teacher over the past five years. What follows is a description of this picture based upon my conversation with Linda.

In her visual representation, Linda's defined the starting point of her career as the bicycle pictured in the lower right hand corner of the picture. Linda described her early views of teaching as somewhat reminiscent of a bike trip she took several years ago with a friend. The two of them had dreamed about the trip, talked about the trip and finally planned the trip. As they began, both felt confident in what the experience would offer. Linda explained that they quickly realized how naïve they had been in their planning and expectations. The experience of the bike trip was very different from the experience they expected and predicted.

> I went on this bike trip, a five-month bike trip with a friend of mine. I learned a lot of things about myself during that trip because I knew nothing about bikes. I knew nothing about where we were going. We flew to this place in June and we thought, "The sun on our backs, traveling and it is going to be really great!" And then it was snowing and we were unprepared, ill-prepared for what was about to happen. Flat tires, we didn't have a change (Linda, 2004, 1, 50-55).

Similar to her experience on that bike trip, Linda described the reality of teaching as very different from what she expected teaching to be. "Teaching [pause] you have an idea that it would be a rosy colored path [pause] because you have this idea of what it is supposed to be like but that is not the reality" (Linda, 2004, 1:61). For Linda, teaching has been a journey of finding her own way and reaching a level of comfort with herself as a teacher, her values, beliefs and her responsibilities as a teacher. Teaching is more difficult than Linda predicted, but she enjoys her work. "I think teaching always changes and that is the exciting thing about teaching" (Linda, 2004, 1:331).

Linda strives to find the best avenue to teach her students and the many and varied paths to learning are depicted in her visual representation of teaching. Within the picture depicting Linda's teaching journey, several pictures symbolize the chaos and the overwhelming sense of confusion that can exist in the classroom at times.

This little crazy guy just means that there is chaos in all teaching. After coming out of graduate school and into the first year of teaching, there was all of this chaos. I was learning about students, learning about the politics of school, teaching two subjects and not really knowing what I was doing (Linda, 2004, 1:179-186).

Linda's pictorial depiction also includes two hearts representing the relationships between teachers and students. One large heart in the top right corner represents the teacher's heart. Slightly lower on the page is a smaller heart resting in two open palms representing the teacher's care of students. Linda firmly believes that relationships, love, care and nurturing are important ingredients in teaching. "Teaching is not just about the learning and curriculum. It is about the relationships really" (Linda, 2004, 2:1265-1266).

The words 'life experiences' are included in this visual representation because Linda views her personal experiences as powerful influences on her teaching. A very specific personal event depicted in this visual representation of her teaching journey is parenthood. Linda's son was a toddler when she began teaching.

I think being a parent has influenced teaching for me more than I think if I was not a parent. Especially having my child in school has influenced me more because I am very much aware of wanting to know what is he doing (Linda, 2004, 1:169-173).

Also in the picture, Linda described learning about the complexities of teaching including learning about students, learning to communicate with parents, learning the curriculum and learning about the politics of school. Managing these complexities, represented by a picture of a large pen in the hands of a teacher, was quite overwhelming at times.

Linda professed to view students as her teaching guide. A compass represents student learning in her picture.

There is a compass down here and it says student learning. Teaching writing is really hard. I don't think you really teach it. I think you expose kids to a variety of possibilities and different strategies that they can use (Linda, 2004, 1:251)

Linda's teaching is also guided by Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). A set of handcuffs represent the SOL tests and the restriction that Linda feels as a teacher due to the mandate for standards and standardized testing. Linda described mixed feelings about the Virginia Standards of Learning and mandated standardized tests.

There were times before I student taught, I questioned whether teaching was what I

wanted to do because the professors who were teaching us were so against the SOLs and saying things to us about [pause] "those tests are so damaging to kids and that is what you [pause] you are going to have to end up doing anyway." And I kept thinking, "No, I am not going to do that." But I mean, I am. But I can see now, and I guess that is the main thing. I can see that while there are these standardized tests, they don't need to run the curriculum (Linda, 2004, 1:807-817).

Linda's belief in social constructivism is also depicted in her visual representation. Encouraging students to scaffold and help each other learn is a key component of Linda's teaching approach. Her belief in learning relationships and the importance of community in the classroom is represented in a picture of four children; two children are walking uphill and one child is pushing a sled that carries two children.

The end of Linda's teaching journey is depicted by a silhouette of a man resting against a tree trunk playing a flute (top left corner). Linda described the significance of this picture representing a hope that perhaps someday she will be more relaxed about teaching and perhaps know more of the answers about teaching. "This little man up here in the tree because maybe at some point in my teaching, I can sit back and relax about what I know, but I don't know if I will ever get to that point" (Linda, 2004, 1:326)

In addition to this visual representation of her teaching journey, Linda graciously shared with me her teaching portfolio, a document that she constructed to specify her beliefs, values, and experiences as a student teacher. Both artifacts were useful in examining Linda's personal development as a teacher.

Over the course of three in-depth interviews that lasted approximately two hours each and a review of these artifacts, I became aware of distinct changes in Linda's view of her self as a teacher and in her understandings of what it means to teach. Allow me to take you through Linda's story of events in her teaching career so that you may see how her beliefs, values and understandings have changed over the early years of her career. First, I will describe Linda's experiences prior to becoming a teacher. Secondly, I will discuss distinct changes in Linda's identity and beliefs since entering teaching and finally, I will address shifts in Linda's understanding of what it means to teach.

At our first meeting, Linda shared details about her life prior to becoming a teacher. Linda completed an undergraduate degree in Geography and worked with middle-school age

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children in after-school programs and summer camps. Several questions posed during an interview for a graduate education program prompted in Linda recognition of her narrow understanding of issues facing inner-city and urban schools such as the problems of literacy, poverty, racism and inequality, and how these problems manifest in schools. In her teaching portfolio, Linda documented her questions about teaching within the context of poverty.

> How could I understand what schooling was like for a child living in poverty? How do I teach a child who lives in the margins of society - geographically, socially and economically? How can I bring them to the center when they do not find evidence of their world in that center? (Linda's portfolio, 2000).

In order to gain a better understanding of these issues, Linda delayed her enrollment in graduate school and volunteered with a program called Communities in School sponsored by Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). For twelve months Linda lived and worked in a Hispanic community outside of a large city in the southwestern portion of the United States. She worked to establish tutoring programs for elementary and high school students within the community.

> I worked for three varied school districts there. There were elementary schools and high schools and I made connections with the high schools. Basically my job was to develop tutoring and mentoring programs between the high school and elementary kids and college and elementary students. I did a lot of other things there. I lived there and was part of the community and got to know the people (Linda, 2004, 1:119-126).

She described her experience as a VISTA volunteer as a significant factor in shaping her beliefs about relationships, community, multiculturalism and poverty.

> It was frustrating because you saw these children had basically nothing. They had no [pause]when I look at the schools here [pause] nice equipment [pause] they had nothing. It was frustrating. It was very simple what needed to be done I felt. But people are reluctant to change and also there is the whole cultural thing that goes on (Linda, 2004, 1:127-133).

Following the experience with the VISTA program, Linda relocated to Virginia and enrolled in the graduate teacher education program at Virginia Tech. She completed requirements for a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 2000 and began teaching for a local school district shortly after graduation. Linda currently teaches writing to eighth graders

in a middle school setting.

Linda's teaching portfolio documented her thoughts, experiences, beliefs and values as a preservice teacher. Several documents in the portfolio showed that Linda's early view of herself as a teacher included a desire to be kind, supportive, and caring teacher. Developing relationships with students was extremely important to her in her early career.

> I believe the essence of teaching and learning lies in the 'feeling' and the 'being', the spirit that surrounds each of us, which brings life and meaning and purpose into the learning experience and which creates that critical common bond of humanity among the students as well as between them and the teacher (Linda's portfolio, 2000).

Linda's desire to develop relationships with her students surfaced prior to her student teaching experience. In her portfolio, Linda included the following quote from Herbert Kohl's book, _The Discipline of Hope (1998):_

> To teach well you have to be able to listen carefully and learn from your students. You also have to come to know the community in which you work and be sensitive to the issues that people take seriously (Linda's portfolio, 1999)

She included this response to the above quote:

> The significance of Kohl's words may be been overlooked by me if I had not had the opportunity to work as a VISTA volunteer. Living in a predominately Hispanic poor neighborhood, I quickly learned the value of listening to the issues that people took seriously (Linda's portfolio, 2000).

Clearly, Linda's work with the VISTA program transformed her understanding of relationships and the importance of building community. This perspective followed her into the classroom.

As a student teacher, Linda recalled valuing relationships with her students and early on, she decided that a relationship with students was an important goal. She believed that such a relationship was a basis for successful learning. "When I was student teaching, I was really wanting to make those relationships, develop relationships with kids" (Linda, 2004, 1:538). "When I was beginning, I took time to build relationships with kids" (Linda, 2004, 1:220).

Experiences during the student teaching assignment resulted in a slight shift in Linda's beliefs about relationships with students. She discovered that establishing and shaping relationships with students was a difficult task, and some students were unreachable. Despite her efforts to connect with students, she was not successful in making connections and building

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relationships with all students.

> I only dealt with certain students. I mean I knew all of them but there were a few that [pause] that is when I realized that there are a few students that you make connections with and you are not going to make connections with each of them. You are supposed to make connections with each of them but you are who you are and they are who they are. You do the best that you can and you do reach out as much as you can (Linda, 2004, 1:761-770).

Linda's portfolio referenced a shift in her beliefs.

> As beginning teachers, I feel we sometimes enter the classroom with rose colored glasses, expecting to 'reach' all of our students. Yet, the reality is that we will not reach every child. However, we must as Linda Rife explains - try every alternative to help them succeed. I have also learned that to 'reach' the unreachable, we must learn who they are as people. We must accept that we will not always be successful at this but we must try (Linda's portfolio, 2000).

As her teaching career began in the middle school setting, Linda continued to reach out to her students with hopes of forming a bond. She felt that such a relationship would lead to a better understanding of these students as learners. Although she recognized that she could not establish a close relationship with each student, Linda recalls investing time in developing relationships with students that she described as close and personal.

> I felt like my relationships with kids were more [pause] defined and I had more relationships. I knew those students better. I think that was my asset when I was beginning because I took time to do that (Linda, 2004, 1:218-221).

As a beginning teacher, Linda recalled counseling her students as much or more than she taught them. She talked with students with hopes of understanding who they were as individuals and what she could offer in order to help them learn. In her portfolio, Linda wrote about her belief in conferencing with students:

> As I reflected on those students who only completed half of their assignments or not at all, my intuition told me that I should first talk with them. How was I to understand what they needed if I did not know who they were - there is a deep connection to our sense of self and how we view ourselves as learner (Linda's portfolio, 2000).

Linda particularly recalls talking with students who were harassed or ostracized by their peers

and she remembers that talking with students took a lot of time. "I did not teach as much as I counseled kids, especially kids who were being harassed by other kids" (Linda, 2004, 3:75). "That kind of thing I think I did my first, both my first and second year of teaching; kind of more counseling than really teaching" (Linda, 2004, 2:384-386).

Due to her belief in building community in the classroom and the importance of getting to know individuals, Linda placed couches and soft cushioned chairs in her classroom. She was hoping to create an inviting and safe environment for her students. In this environment, Linda got to know several of her students well. "I had these couches and chairs in my room which would lend itself to conversations. You know, you are sitting somewhere comfortable and people will tend to tell you things" (Linda, 2004, 2:392-395).

Linda recalled the significance of her conversations with a student who felt isolated from his peers. He described himself as a misfit and as lacking self confidence. Linda took him under her wing and invested a lot of time in building a relationship this student.

> I remember just talking about stuff and just letting him know that just because you can't fit into this environment in middle school does not mean that your life is over with. Once you leave here, there is a whole world of opportunities and even in high school [pause] he had a hard time fitting in with the cliquish kind of things that happened. He was just different (Linda, 2004, 2:409-414).

The students' parents credited Linda's help during their son's eighth-grade year as significant in his development. Their comments validated her belief that the relationship between teacher and student was a vital part of her responsibility as a teacher.

> His parents would run into me every now and then, and the days when I would be feelings very, 'Why am I doing this?' They would say to me about how much I had changed their son's life. I would think, 'Okay, that is why I am doing this. That is why I am doing this. So I did reach somebody' (Linda, 2004, 2:398-403).

Despite a value for relationships and the memories of successes she had with students early on in her career, Linda described her current self as a different kind of teacher. She has changed. Linda shields her personal self from her students. She offers less nurturance to students than she once did, and she is reserved about developing close relationships with students. Don't get me wrong! I believe Linda is a nurturing, caring and sensitive teacher. I believe she deeply cares for all of her students and works very hard to meet their needs. Yet,

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experiences with students have led her to be watchful and more vigilant about establishing close associations with students. She concedes that those relationships were beneficial for some students, but she no longer pursues close personal relationships with students as she once did. She removed the couches and the chairs from the classroom and admits that her focus is now on the curriculum. "Now I am much more about the curriculum I need to do and what I am teaching. Sometimes I wonder if that is a bad thing or a good thing" (Linda, 2004, 1: 222-224). She shields her personal self from her students and is somewhat reluctant to become overly involved with children. "I know that those conversations had an impact [pause] but I don't have those with kids now. That is one thing that is different" (Linda, 2004, 2:417-419).

What brought about the change in Linda? Linda attributes this change in her teaching practice to events occurring during her second year of teaching. These events were significant in creating a considerable change in Linda's pursuit of close relationships with students in the classroom. "Two things happened that really made me kind of question my management of the classroom and also that relationship that you build up. I think I am less open to my students" (Linda, 2004, 2:141-144).

The first episode was receiving a threatening message accompanied by a pornographic picture via email from a student.

> I had this one student who sent me pornographic pictures through email through school
> and said that [pause] my life was nothing and that I was going to die or something like
> that. I can't even remember what the message was anymore, but I know it was something
> about dying and that my life was nothing (Linda, 2004, 2:149-153).

Linda was baffled by the young man's actions. She recalled encouraging him to do his work and putting pressure on him to complete his assignments in the classroom, but never felt that she had approached him in any negative or threatening manner. "I was always on him like [pause] 'you really need to get this done.' But not in a way like you know, 'you are never going to amount to anything.' I never said anything like that" (Linda, 2004, 2:209-211).

As a new teacher, this was a foreign experience for Linda and she was unsure of how to handle such a situation. The principal suspended the student for several days, but Linda did not have the opportunity to interact with the student or the student's parents, a fact that she now regrets. Linda was excluded from the conversation about the incident and she recalled the tension created with the administration over this incident. Linda was unsure about whether or no

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she wanted to continue teaching the student upon his return from suspension. She made her feelings known to school administrators who seemingly did not understand her concern regarding future interactions with the student. She questioned why legal charges were not filed as a result of distributing pornographic material using a school computer, but was told something along the lines of 'boys will be boys and he is sorry for the incident.'

As a result of this incident, Linda began to question what factors had contributed to the student's actions. She became more vigilant about her comments and interactions with students and began to consider how students might perceive her actions or her statements. "It made me realize that I don't know what kids are thinking or what they are thinking about you"(Linda, 2004, 2:212-215). "It just made me realize I needed to be more cautious with kids and what I say to them" (Linda, 2004, 2:262-264).

The second incident that contributed to Linda's reluctance in launching relationships with students occurred later that same year. A student accused Linda of physical aggression, specifically pushing him. The student's accusations were corroborated by friends who observed the physical exchange between the student and Linda. The incident culminated with the student's parents threatening to sue Linda for her aggressive handling of their child. Linda recalls these events of the incident:

> We had a fire drill or something. I went outside and I came back in. This one boy was on the floor and I did not know why he was on the floor and he was little. There was a group of kids standing around him so I had everyone sit down - the people who were standing around and the boy who was on the floor. It was right before lunch and I made them stay. Well, this one boy got up and walked out of the classroom. He is the one who had called me the name and thrown books and things like that so I just let him go because I wasn't going to [pause] but I really just wanted to find out what had happened. The boy that was on the floor wanted to get up and walk away and I put my hand out to stop him. I said, "No, I need to know what happened in here. You need to stay here." And he pushed into me and almost like I fell back so I kind of pushed a little bit back at him and he almost fell over. Then I held onto him. What happened then - he went home and told his parents that I was flinging him around the room. And so I [pause] and supposedly the other kids [pause] the two who were his friends corroborated that so it was this huge thing. His parents were going to sue me and all this crazy stuff (Linda, 2004, 2:321-340).

Linda's caring for her students and her willingness to offer nurturance and protection was misjudged by her students. As a result of this episode, she was deeply hurt and found herself in a vulnerable position as a teacher.

Following these two events, Linda grasped that she could not expose her love and care for students so openly in the classroom. At one point in her teaching career, she spent a lot of time talking to students about their personal lives, about their experiences or issues that they were dealing with. Linda admitted that such conversations robbed her of time to focus on curriculum and deprived her of the authority as a teacher. "Sometimes kids would be late to class because we would be talking about something" (Linda, 2004, 2:479). "I don't do it anymore because I don't have time and I am not sure that it is really effective" (Linda, 2004, 2:482). "I also knew there were students who really felt close to me and that kind of took away from my ability to teach at times so I had to really figure all that out" (Linda, 2004, 1:231-232). Now Linda admits that she focuses more on the curriculum and less on developing close personal relationships with students. "The stuff I do now is about the curriculum. It is not about that [pause] I don't want to say babysitting [pause] it is not about nurturing that side of them" (Linda, 2:387-389). Although Linda is aware that her conversations with students can be helpful and even meaningful, she is reluctant to offer herself to students as she once did.

Linda also finds that she must be on constant guard against becoming too involved with her students and cautious in what information she does share with them. Linda values the fact that students recognize power in writing and she encourages students to use writing as an avenue of self expression. Accordingly, Linda typically knows more about students' personal lives than what her colleagues are aware of. Thus, she is in a unique position of reading the intimate thoughts and details of these adolescents' lives and she has found that she must contemplate how to remain neutral and somewhat detached from their experiences and thoughts. It is not an easy task for Linda. "Sometimes I don't want to know" (Linda, 2004, 2:545). "I don't want to touch those things sometimes. I think sometimes it just needs to be written and not worked through or whatever. Sometimes that is part of the process for someone" (Linda, 2004, 2:522). "I am blown away that they are willing to share when they don't know me"(Linda, 2004, 2:535). "They do expose things to me and I respond to those things depending [pause] obviously if it is something severe, I will take it to guidance" (Linda, 2004, 2:503).

Linda continually monitors the boundary that she has established between herself and her

students. She is not always sure of what she should offer as advice and encouragement but at the same time, she wants her students to know that she cares for them.

> I mean, I'm sure there is part of me that is reluctant [pause] every once in a awhile there is a situation that occurs [pause] I think is last year, and some kids who have really bad home lives or bad situations and who have potential. After a while of hearing them over and over again making excuses for themselves about why then can't do something, I had said to those kids, 'I know what you are [pause] where you are living and what is happening with you is not the best situation and I've been where you are and I know that you can step outside of that, and you can move beyond here. The choice is yours and you need to make that choice. I have conversations like that but I keep thinking, "Oh, I guess this is going to come back and slap me in the face if a parent calls up." I am not sure that I should, but I do it because I think that sometimes kids need to know that they are not alone (Linda, 2004, 2: 426-442).

Linda described a recent experience with a student and her struggle to maintain her personal boundary with students.

> For the last three days, every time I walk into the room, this student jumps out of her chair and she hugs me saying, "Ms. Ingram, I love you. You are my favorite teacher." And she carries on and [pause] I kind of just [pause] the first day I was like, "Okay. Can you just please go have a seat?" And she said, "No, you don't understand." And she just kept going on and I said, 'I really need you to just sit down now." Yesterday, she did the same thing and today she did the same thing and she was complaining to one of our team teachers that "She won't hug me back." I was like, "Because then you will come in everyday and think that it is okay to hug me and it is not." The student was like, "But why?" and I am thinking to myself, "Yeah, why?" But I just need to keep that boundary. Maybe it is also because of being a parent and knowing that I need to have energy for my family. I will go above and beyond and so I have learned not to do that as much because then I leave myself with nothing (Linda, 2004, 3: 103-124).

> Along with Linda's caution about establishing relationships with students, a second shift in Linda's personal beliefs is the recognition that teaching is a reciprocal process and she has limited influence on her students. Contrary to the beliefs she embraced when she first began teaching, Linda no longer holds herself accountable for student decisions or student lack of

interest in learning. Learning requires student attention and involvement. Despite her best intentions, teaching does not always result in engagement. "You really don't engage all of them. No matter what you do, it is very rare that you have them all engaged because there are so many other factors that are influencing their lives" (Linda, 2004, 1:728)

> In seeing all that was going on [pause] I think recognizing for many kids that is not about learning and wanting to learn [pause] it is about can you get their attention, really? Can you do something that is going to get them to go "Oh yeah" and pick up their head and stop talking to their friend because they are going to become engaged (Linda, 1:720).

Linda described several students whom she has been unsuccessful in engaging. Initially she invested an abundance of energy, almost pestering them to participate in the class and take responsibility for their own learning. She allowed more student choice in the classroom. The interests and needs of her students were taken into account as much as possible when creating lessons and following the curriculum. Linda's description of her teaching follows a constructivist philosophy. Yet, even with choice and recognition of student's past experiences and knowledge, not all students become engaged in learning. Although she put forth tremendous efforts, Linda realized that she was unable to influence all students towards learning. "What I realized is the bottom line is that it has to come down to [pause] you can't make somebody do something and it has come down to them. It has to be important to them" (Linda, 2004, 2:1142-1144).

Linda encourages and guides students who are reluctant to learn, but unlike her initial plan, she provides encouragement only for a short period of time. Once she consistently observes a lack of engagement, she backs off. "I try to encourage them. I don't exclude them. I keep encouraging them and keep giving them things to do" (Linda, 2004, 2:1166-1167). "I will go through periods of trying to coax them and trying to figure out different things and the realizing that they are not realizing, that they are not wanting that [pause] I step back" (Linda, 2004, 3:388-391).

Linda learned her limitations as a teacher. She has limited energy and time. She invests her energy in students who are willing to engage in learning. Linda has come to understand that she does not have all of the answers and it is unlikely that she will experience the success stories that are so often published in books about teacher's work and teacher's stories. "I think that [pause] I am limited. I am one person and I can't do everything which I don't think I felt that

when I was first teaching" (Linda, 2004, 2:1216-1218). Unlike her early beliefs as a teacher, Linda knows that she can't rectify all the wrongs that students have experienced and she can't force students to overcome their lack of interest and investment in learning.

> It is a pattern that I can't change. I probably thought just talking to them and encouraging them until you get them to do something would make a difference. You read all of those books [laughter] you know, that make you think that people do these great things when in reality, that is not [pause] that is not reality and I can't, as a human being, BE that person for every child that I come into contact with. But there are a few who I can, and that is what I need to focus on (Linda, 2004, 2:1198-1205).

Although it sounds somewhat hard-hearted, Linda reserves her energy for students who want to pursue learning. For the students who are less involved in learning, Linda has come to terms with her constraints in changing their behavior and choices.

> I know that is just what their pattern is going to be and I can't break that. I guess maybe I could but there is not enough time in a day. That is what I realized. I can't really [pause] there are other kids who are on the boarder of trying to make those changes for themselves and I have to put more focus on that because they are wanting help (Linda, 2004, 2:1173-1178)

Along with Linda's recognition that she is not solely responsible for their success, she came to see the powerful impact of external circumstances upon her students and her lack of power to change these circumstances.

> I realized that I can't do anything to change [pause] I can't do anything to change that student's situation. I can't do anything to make that student's parents realize that she is doing much better here. This is where she needs to be (Linda, 2004, 3:76-80).

> It took me awhile to realize that you cannot change those situations [pause] instead of becoming too invested in something [pause] or involved because it is difficult. There are certain situations you don't have control over (Linda, 2004, 3:81-85).

Linda's previous experience in the VISTA program had taught her that environments are difficult to change. Early in her teaching career, she realized that she could not offset the negative influences in the lives of her students. "I have students in the classroom who have a tremendous amount of issues that are beyond what I am capable of even helping them with or solving the in-school miniscule issues" (Linda, 2004, 1:1064-1065). Linda also realizes that she

is often unaware of the external influences in a student's life.

> This student who was apparently in the seventh grade last year [pause] we just recently
> found out that she had a baby in July and nobody knew. And so trying to figure out
> [pause] and all of this time she has been tired. We didn't understand why no one is
> supposed to know and it is just kind of overwhelming. You just don't know what
> situations [pause] (Linda, 2004, 3:600-606).

Linda admitted she struggles with her own emotions at times when faced with the
awareness of her students' circumstances and her limitations in assisting students. "It breaks my
heart to hear some of the stories that I have to listen to knowing that, as a teacher, you are
limited" (Linda, 2004, 1:1076-1077).

> This student basically has just come to my class in the last three weeks because we just
> found out all of this stuff has happened to her. I just let her read in class. I know that she
> really can't focus on things. Then today when we were going to computers she was like,
> 'I don't know what is going on at home.' So she is crying out for help and I am like,
> 'Okay, I don't know what to do with this because I can't help her.' The only thing [pause]
> sometimes I think she needs a journal. Maybe I need to get her a journal. I mean that is
> the kind of thing we deal with. They aren't little things. I don't know. It is hard. Thanks
> for listening (Linda, 2004, 3:774-784).

> It is hard sometimes because I [pause] especially when I know that some of the kids that I
> have and their situations, I am just [pause] it is hard for me [pause] I mean we always talk
> about that [pause] if I had a big house, I just want to take them all and (laughter) but you
> know you can't (Linda, 2004, 2:1362-1366).

Along with changes in Linda's personal beliefs and practice in the classroom, Linda's
understanding of what it means to teach has intensified. After living in the classroom for five
years, Linda acknowledges that she has a better understanding of the complexities of teaching,
the influence of context in teaching for students and for teachers, and the value of supportive
colleagues.

Although Linda views herself as competent teacher, she admits that teaching is not any
easier than it was when she first started, and her first year was difficult.

> I don't think I had a clue as to what I was doing and I don't think you know that because I
> think I don't think you really understand the kids that you are teaching developmentally

where they are, what they need and you can't know that until you have taught for awhile (Linda, 2004, 1:204).

During her first year, Linda described her teaching as a copy of actions modeled by other teachers or strategies that she had learned about in the graduate education program. "Definitely my first year of teaching was not my own. It was my student teaching experience and it was other teachers that I knew who were teaching, they were helping me and trying things" (Linda, 2004, 1:201). She recalled feeling totally overwhelmed during the first year of teaching with the curriculum and the different dynamics of her classes. She worked hard to stay ahead of her students, to gain a solid understanding of the curriculum and to invent assignments, projects, assessments while also attempting to make her classes interesting and motivating for students. "I didn't know the terms of the curriculum [pause] I was completely overwhelmed" (Linda, 2004, 2:554). "I didn't ever want to appear stupid, so I always had to make sure I had read everything" (Linda, 2004, 2:565). "I had all of these things and these deadlines for when they were due, but I never really taught the structure of writing necessarily, or how you go about doing that" (Linda, 2004, 2:584).

Since that first year, Linda has become a more familiar with teaching writing. She is more aware of what to expect from eighth-grade students. She is well versed in the curriculum and her expectations in the classroom. She is more confident in the classroom. Yet, the act of teaching has not become easier. She views teaching as deeply challenging and filled with complexities.

I have had these jobs where you have certain tasks that you have to do and it takes you awhile to master the task and then you are efficient at what you do. But with teaching, I don't think that ever happens (Linda, 2004, 3:231).

She continues to experience challenges, frustrations, and success in teaching. For Linda, teaching is a constant seeking of different strategies to meet the needs of different students. She views the actual work of teaching as an ongoing endeavor in learning.

There are a million ways, possibilities of beginning and started something or figuring something out or teaching it or learning that you need to [pause] the challenge is trying to figure out what works for each kid (Linda, 2004, 3:381-383).

The ongoing quest for new and better ways of teaching is what keeps Linda in the classroom. "That is the thing that keeps me teaching, because I am not bored with it. I don't dread coming to

school. I get tired sometimes but I don't dread it" (Linda, 2004, 3:273-275).

Aside from a better understanding of the complexities of teaching, Linda has also gained a broader understanding of the politics of public education and the influence of context on teaching. Linda credits her work with the VISTA program as enhancing her awareness of the influence of background, culture, and context on behavior and beliefs. She has been able to apply this to her understanding of teaching.

> What I recognized was that the environment in which you were teaching was critical to how you were going to teach. I was very much aware that depending on the school district and the school, that would have an impact on what you could and couldn't do in terms of what you believed in and in terms of the kids (Linda, 2004, 1:366-371).

She has also come to recognize with more clarity that mass public education is based on the assumption that students are similar; therefore, students benefit from similar learning environments. This assumption has lead to inflexibility in how student needs are addressed. "There is an assumption that everyone is pretty much the same but that is not the case. It appears that everything is equal but really that is not the case" (Linda, 2004, 1:402-407).

Linda has struggled with the inflexibility that exists in schools. Several students would benefit from another type of learning environment, and yet, offering an alternative setting is not an option. "I am not sure the structure that we have set up is conducive to everyone. I am not sure you can set up for everyone but there could be a little more flexibility" (Linda, 2004, 1:1136-1139). "This environment isn't for everyone. It is not engaging everyone, and is there a possibility that you can do that?" (Linda, 2004, 1:1073-1075).

Early in her teaching career, Linda joined a group of faculty to discuss the specific needs of students. The group generated ideas, suggestions and alternative methods of working with an identified group of students.

> It was really good. There was a forum in a way for teachers to talk and reflect on their teaching [pause] but if you are talking and reflecting on things and you want to go a step further to actually implement changes or implement the things that you see so clearly [pause] you need to have the support and it all comes down to politics (Linda, 2004, 3:695-702).

The suggestions and alternatives generated from the group of teachers was not accepted or supported by the administration of the school. At that point, Linda recognized the difficulty in

influencing change within a political system. "What becomes frustrating is that you end up talking about these things and know very clearly what needs to be change but you are not able to do it" (Linda, 2004, 3:708-709).

> We brainstormed and came up with some ideas and different things. But what happens is that if the administration is not willing to accept the responsibility then it kind of takes away. When you put that much energy into something, it is hard to keep it going (Linda, 2004, 1:480-485).

Since Linda left student teaching, her way of being in the classroom, her beliefs, her values and her practice as a teacher have shifted. Initially, Linda viewed herself as a kind, supportive and caring teacher. She valued relationships with her students and believed in knowing students as a means of teaching students. Significant events with students prompted Linda to be less open about her love and care for students. She continues to care about her students, but she no longer works to establish close ties with students. She is reluctant and cautious in her relationships with students.

Linda has also come to appreciate teaching as a reciprocal process. Despite her best intentions, she does not engage all students in learning. Although she continues to encourage student choice and investment in learning, her experiences have taught her about boundaries and limitations. She cannot influence all students to learn. She has limited time and energy as a teacher. She invests her energies wisely and tries to make the most of the time she has with students who put forth effort.

Linda also has a deeper understanding of what it means to teach. It is a difficult and complex occupation. Teaching requires continuously seeking new strategies for students with different strengths and needs. Each school year presents new challenges and new rewards. The quest for perfection in teaching intrigues Linda and keeps her in the profession.

After six years in the classroom, Linda also has a broader understanding of the politics of public school. The bureaucratic system of public schooling assumes that all students are similar and offers a similar learning environment for all students. Linda has come to understand the inflexibility within the system for addressing the different needs of students. She also recognizes the difficulty in influencing change within a political system.

Patty

Patty is a 2001 graduate of the Master's program in Curriculum and Instruction and has been teaching kindergarten since the fall of 2001. Patty has four years of teaching experience, the least amount of experience among the six participants in this project. I met with her on three occasions in her classroom after school. She impressed me as a tranquil, quiet and soft-spoken person. She exudes the kindness, warmth and generosity one would expect of a teacher of young children. She was quick to laugh about her experiences and the mistakes she has made as a teacher but seemed somewhat reticent to discuss more personal issues. Patty volunteered in our first conversation that her image of herself as a teacher is evolving and she has no set image of herself. "I think it is still forming as to how I am going to be as a teacher and I change it a lot. With every child I meet, I change who I am" (Patty, 2004, 1:257-258).

Prior to returning to school, Patty was a stay-at-home mom for several years and her decision to become a teacher was prompted by her involvement as a volunteer in her children's school. "My undergraduate was in psychology. I finished that and then got married and started having children. So I took that time off. Then when my youngest son started kindergarten, that is when I went back to school" (Patty, 2004, 1:30-33). She described teaching as something that she just knew she wanted to do. "I was doing some volunteer work at their school and I just knew it. I just [pause] when I was there [pause] it was what I wanted to do. I just knew" (Patty, 2004, 1:41). Patty admitted she was nervous about returning to school after a long absence from school and she was unsure about what to expect. "I can honestly say that I was pretty clueless coming into the program. Especially feeling older and when I was in school, things were very different" (Patty, 2004, 1:188).

Despite her concerns, Patty's graduate school experience and student teaching experience were both positive. She felt comfortable with the graduate students in her cohort group and described her student teaching assignment as a tremendous event. She elected to student teach in a small rural elementary school, a setting closely resembling her own elementary school experience. She immediately felt at ease in the school and was readily accepted by the staff. Over the course of two semesters, Patty was invited into several classrooms and observed diverse teaching techniques of several teachers. She spent time in quite a few grade levels and was able to select her placement for the final weeks of student teaching.

As part of the student teaching experience, Patty compiled documents, lesson plans,

artifacts and journal entries into a portfolio. Patty generously shared this portfolio and allowed me to review her teaching philosophy and statement of beliefs about classroom management. Through this document, I was able to capture a sense of who Patty was when she began teaching four years ago. Patty also offered clip art pictures representing her identity and beliefs at various stages of her teaching journey. These depictions were helpful in prompting Patty's thoughts about her teaching experiences during our interview sessions.

Patty's teaching philosophy statement described her belief in treating all individuals with respect and dignity, a pledge to establish community within the classroom and a hope to involve the outside community (i.e. families and community resources) in her classroom. A highlight of her student teaching experience was family night. Patty and her cooperating teacher invited students and their families to the classroom for a night of fun and fellowship. Making this connection with parents and family was important to Patty.

The classroom management statement included in Patty's portfolio testified to her belief in social constructivism and the significance of community in the classroom. She described her belief that students learned best through interaction, brain storming, and group activities. "I believe the greatest learning occurs when children (and adults) are allowed to talk about issues and bounce ideas off of each other" (Patty, portfolio, 2000). The physical arrangement of her classroom was evident of her encouragement for students to interact and work with others. She attempted to encourage curiosity in students and pushed them pursue their own knowledge and ideas.   Patty encouraged student independence and responsibility. She felt it was important to teach children procedures and establish the expectation that students were accountable for their actions. "If children understand what is expected of them, they are then able to accomplish many tasks without my personal involvement or instruction. My classroom will be designed to allow as much student independence as possible" (Patty, portfolio, 2000).

In discussing how she has changed as a person and as a teacher over the past four years, Patty admitted that she continues to follow the beliefs documented in her portfolio. She views herself as a guide and continues to believe that children learn best through interaction, self motivation and group work. She invests time in encouragement of her students, giving them feedback, cheering them on and recognizing their hard work.

However, Patty also recognized changes in her view of herself as a teacher. She reported feeling more confident in her abilities as a teacher. She has handled difficult situations with

students and parents with some level of success. Patty senses that she has developed more patience with students over the past four years and she feels that she is more self aware of her personal shortcomings. Patty has faced challenging situations and has learned to control her personal feelings in order to make the best of these situations.

> I think I have learned a lot of patience. I have learned to control my anger because I have had some children that can [pause] they thrive on doing that, on seeing reactions in teachers. It is like that is what they need. I have really learned a lot about that (Patty, 2005, 3:343).

In talking with Patty about her early experiences in teaching, she acknowledged that one of her greatest challenges as a teacher has been finding equilibrium between a tendency to love and nurture with her role as an authority and teacher. Patty views herself as a loving, nurturing and caring person. She enjoys teaching kindergarten because of the openness of young children and their willingness to spontaneously hug, laugh and share themselves in the classroom.

> I think love and nurturing has to be the overriding part of it all because the most important thing is the relationship that you have with the kids. I mean, I know everybody says that and it sounds so trite but it is true (Patty, 2005, 3:535).

When Patty started the teacher education program, she had no real sense of what she was going to be like as a teacher. "I think I loved being in the classroom with my kids but the whole idea of what I was going to be like as a teacher wasn't there really. I kind of dove into this blind" (Patty, 2005, 3:253). Upon entering the classroom as a student teacher, Patty described herself as taking on the familiar role of mother. She became too attached to children and was quickly overly involved in student problems and family situations.

> My main experience with children was as a mom. So when I started, I was mothering everybody and getting so attached. I found myself overly involved. I found myself crying at night and upset and buying stuff and really going overboard (Patty, 2004, 1:4-8).

As Patty began her first year of teaching, she continued to struggle with loving and nurturing children and also managing their behaviors. She presented this picture as a representation of the emotional fluctuation she experienced over the course of her first year:
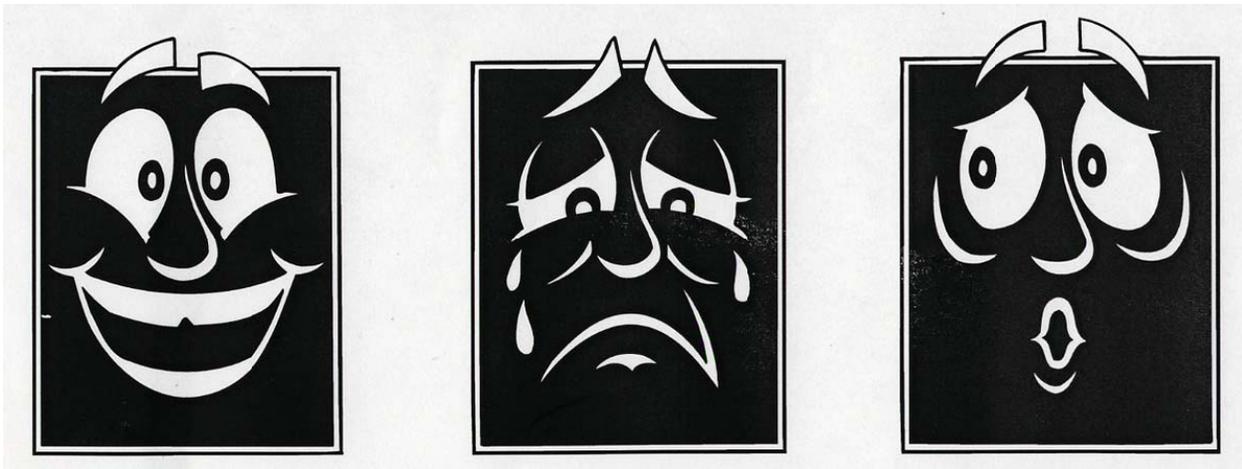
She felt confident and successful one day and the following day, she was buried in self doubt. Many nights she cried from the stress associated with teaching. Negotiating a change from the role of a nurturer and mother to a role of teacher and authority was difficult for Patty. "I had to really pull back and say, 'Okay, I am the teacher. I am not your mom." That was my hardest struggle (Patty, 2004, 1:9-10). Patty continues to view herself as a loving teacher; a trait that she feels is an important characteristic of a kindergarten teacher.

She is willing to go the extra mile for students and routinely shares her home phone number with parents. Patty recognizes the sizeable impact of her actions, her words and her demands on students and how they view themselves.

In kindergarten you can hurt them so easily without meaning to, so you have to be so careful what you say and what you do, even when you are correcting something that is going on, for a lot of them [pause] too harsh of a word and they are just dissolving (Patty, 2005, 3:554).

In creating a visual representation of her current values and beliefs as a teacher, Patty included a picture of a cheerleader and a guide. She described the portrayal of herself as a cheerleader, "I am really into encouraging them, celebrating. I kept thinking that is what I do. Every little step we take we just celebrate it so they will be confident" (Patty, 2005, 3:507). Patty also sees herself as a guide. She wants students to learn, achieve and to feel good about what they are doing. She sets a goal for herself to make learning and kindergarten fun. "I think fun is what kindergarten needs to be. Part of what I want to do here is to make it fun, make them want to skip in the front door and provide a good start" (Patty, 2005, 3:684).

a cheerleader

a guide
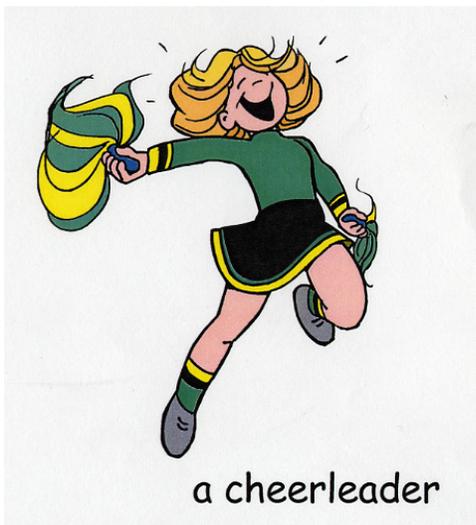
Yet, Patty continues to struggle at times with balancing her love for students, her mothering instincts and the reality of her limitations and responsibilities as a teacher.

I have made myself sick from worrying about my students so much. So on those days, I think 'what am I doing? I don't get paid enough. It is ten o'clock at night and all I can think about is this little guy in my room (Patty, 2005, 3:662).

It is a constant struggle to maintain a healthy balance between nurturing, loving, teaching and behavioral management.

Over time, Patty has come to realize that some students may need an extra dose of love and nurturing, but most of her students need her to be a teacher, an authority; and a task master

who challenges them to learn and achieve. This is how Patty described the change in her understandings:

> I don't want to say full circle because I am not doing what I was doing when I was student teaching but I think I went from the [pause] 'I am your mom. Come on, give me your personal problems and I will deal with it' to 'I have just got to teach this stuff. I have got to get through this. We have got to get through this by the end of the year. I am a teacher.' Now I am much more laid back about it. And I recognized with some of the children, you have to be a mother (Patty, 2005, 3:124).

Part of taking on the role of teacher rather than mother was the realization of her limitations as a teacher.

> I don't know what goes on at home and in so many situations [pause] I think what I am learning best is to look at each child and say, 'What does this person need to be successful by the end of the year? What do I need to give this person?' and to realize that I cannot meet every need everyday (Patty, 2005, 3:132).

At times, teaching is difficult and frustrating but Patty maintains her focus on individual students and attempts to teach those individuals based upon their needs.

> You sit back and say, 'Okay, I have got to look at all sixteen of them and I have to have this profile for each child in my head [pause] 'what does this person need today and what does this person need today?' Sometimes it is complicated but I think that is the best way to teach. You can do that and keep that up [pause] and I don't meet every need everyday but I think that is how I am doing to get anywhere. That is what I see as the best (Patty, 2005, 3:200-206).

She has come to realize that teaching is a work of art. Although she teaches the same concepts to children year after year, each school year presents different challenges, different dynamics, and different demands. "I think you present materials to children and they way that you do it [pause] I really do think it is an art form more than just giving a speech" (Patty, 2005, 3:487).

> Not only do you have to make it interesting but you have to make it apply to the child, you have to make it a part of something that they do and make it real for them [pause] and it changes a lot. It kind of feels like you are creating something, I guess (Patty, 2005, 3:492-495).

an artist

Patty's tendency to nurture children complicated her early success with behavioral management in the classroom. Patty described that she was initially shocked by student behavior and was unsure of how to redirect and discipline students.

> I was very mom oriented and the problem that I ran into was the authoritative type
> approach. As a mom, when I tell my children to do something, I expect them to do it.
> And when they didn't, I would be right there saying, 'Now! (Patty, 2004, 1:656).

The group of children in her student teaching assignment was challenging making discipline in the classroom a difficult issue for Patty. She felt unprepared to handle students who were uncooperative with teacher requests.

> I had a tough group that year. It was really just a tough group and I remember being so
> surprised at the behavior issues that we had. My only experience had been growing up
> and school was very different then. With my own children, I guess I am pretty strict on
> them and then in their classrooms, their teachers are pretty strict. So I hadn't run into
> quite what I did here. We had some pretty severe problems that year (Patty, 2004, 1:62-
> 68).

At the time of student teaching, Patty's behavioral management consisted of positive discipline, redirection and discussion of tolerance with students. "A well devised classroom management plan can often prevent much misbehavior from every occurring and firm, fair and consistent consequences aide in preventing repeat misbehaviors "(Patty's portfolio, 2000). Patty admitted that she did not have a toolbox of strategies for working with challenging students. "The toolbox [pause] the whole idea of having another approach and things to use [pause] I did not feel like I got a lot of that from the training" (Patty, 2004, 1:341). "The actual management,

the ideas, the creative ways, the reward systems and different ways that you can set up to negotiate with children. It was really hard for me to come up with" (Patty, 2004, 1:345).

Improving her behavioral management skills has been an ongoing project for Patty. She has read books, talked with other teachers and observed several teachers' management procedures. Patty recognizes that she continues to be more of nurturer than a disciplinarian, but also feels she has learned a lot about behavioral control.

> I am kind of a push over anyway. I mean I really am. Anyone that I have every taught with are like, 'You are too easy'. I mean I have rules but they are simple rules. I don't yell at kids. I am not in their face. I am not that kind of [pause] but I have expectations and it just didn't happen and I remember being shocked, 'You are not listening' (Patty, 2004, 1:333-336)

She learned a lot during her student teaching experience from observation of and talking with her cooperating teacher. "My cooperating teacher's style and some of her classroom management, they were wonderful and I was able to learn a lot from just doing that. She was hard to keep up with [laughter]"(Patty, 2004, 1:370). She was also fortunate to observe several other teachers in the building and picked up tips from them about classroom management. These experiences have been invaluable to Patty.

Patty was able to identify several changes within herself and her understanding of what it means to teach since she walked into the classroom four years ago. She readily admits that she was unprepared to teach when she left student teaching and she quickly became overwhelmed as a kindergarten teacher. "Coming in August, I am thinking survival. I am like so clueless. I have no idea of what I am doing. They give you a job and you are a kindergarten teacher" (Patty, 2004, 2:5). She described her first year of teaching as a process of becoming a teacher. She depicted herself as bubbling with enthusiasm but simultaneously feeling overwhelmed and somewhat fearful. She doubted her abilities to hit the ground running and be a teacher. "When you walk into a classroom, really getting it organized and really knowing how to talk to the children and how to handle the eruptions and things, I did not feel ready for that" (Patty, 2004, 1:197).

Patty began the year with unrealistic goals and great gusto, but reported that she quickly recognized the hard work of teaching.

In September I was thinking, 'My guys are going to read in May.' You know, I am

thinking [pause] 'I can do this. They are going to read (laughter).' And then by

December [pause] I am thinking [pause] 'If we just make it through this, we are going to

be okay' (Patty, 2004, 2:36).

Patty recalls her understanding of teaching as "clouded". She struggled with

incorporating the many facets of teaching and her responsibilities as a teacher. In hindsight, Patty

referred to her clouded understanding as "tunnel vision". She seemed more focused on the

curriculum and getting through the prescribed number of pages rather than focusing on the needs

and talents of her students. Patty offered this description of how she viewed her teaching in the

early years of her career.

I would do this [pause] this teaching a subject. I would get my math book and I am

teaching lesson 40 today and this is what I am doing. And things are going wild over

here [gestures to her left] and things are happening [laughter] and I am teaching math,

you know. I was horrible at that. I did that all of the time (Patty, 2004, 2:15).

Patty's understanding of teaching remained clouded throughout most of her first year. She

described herself as focusing on survival. "I think the lack of vision thing was what it was. I

was just in the middle of this situation and things were happening around me. You know, I was

just getting through it. I was swimming" (Patty, 2005, 3:70).

Survival
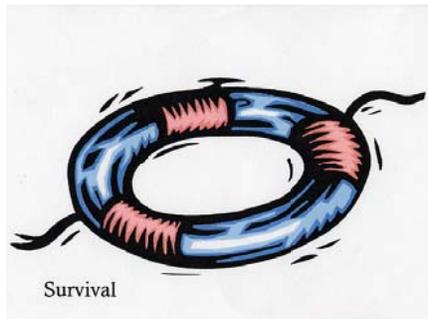
"I just didn't have a vision of what I was trying to do with my room and every child in it and

bringing it all together. I was really bad at that" (Patty, 2004, 2:20).

Tunnel vision

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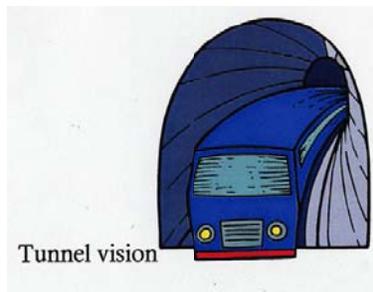
"That is what I felt like, the deer in the headlights [pause] the whole thing" (Patty, 2004, 2:22)

Deer in headlights feeling
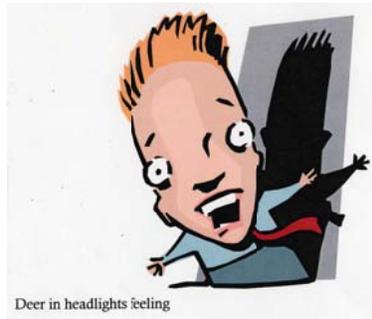
Gradually, Patty developed a better understanding of the students, of the curriculum and of what she needed to do in order to help her students learn. "In March, I felt like I was starting to get a handle on it and I went from drilling them to actually looking at the children" (Patty, 2004, 2:26). During that first year, Patty recognized a gradual shift from teaching subjects to teaching children. She recognized this shift as a transformation of her understanding of teaching. "The vision thing just wasn't there yet [laughing]. For me, that has been the biggest growth, I think [pause] is being able to see it" (Patty, 2005, 3:518).

Patty now sees herself as more confident, more knowledgeable and a better teacher. "I think I have a better vision of the kids coming and where I am doing to take them. They whole idea of kindergarten instead of just "Here they are, let's do something" (Patty, 2005, 3:37)

> My confidence level has changed since that first year. You know [pause] my ability to
> handle situations. I have had some rough situations in the past few years. Children who
> had emotional issues and a lot of family stuff that really frightened me in the beginning. I
> wasn't sure what I was going to do (Patty, 2005, 3:31).

The context of Patty's teaching is a significant factor in her self view as a teacher. Patty credits her success as a teacher and her love of teaching to the community within her school. She perceives that she is well supported by the principal and her colleagues. She describes the atmosphere of her school as a team of individuals working together for the greater good of the school. She feels a sense of collegiality with the staff and is confident in their interest and care for her as a teacher. "There is a great community and I could go to any of the grade level teachers and say, 'Okay, this is what is going on. What do you think?' and they would all pitch in" (Patty, 2005, 3:222). In years past, she has asked for teacher support and has received encouragement and assistance.

It is such a community and everyone is willing to help and pitch in. I have literally had

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kindergartners who, when they needed a break from the classroom, the second grade

teachers would say, 'Send him to our class' (Patty, 2005, 3:230).

The principal has also provided her with support. In cases where Patty has encountered

challenging behaviors from students or a tough situation with parents, she admits the principal is

her first line of advice.

I put our principal in the colleague group. That is how we think of each other, I think, at

this school and he doesn't put himself away from that. He welcomes that and he is the

first person that I usually go to. His door is wide open (Patty, 2005, 3:254).

It is not unusual for the principal to visit her classroom just to check in on students who may be

having a difficult day. "He comes to the classroom and he will peek in and say, 'How is he

doing?' He knows the kids so well that he can anticipate some of the needs" (Patty, 2005, 3:263).

In summary, the changes in Patty's understanding of teaching have followed a

developmental path. She recalled her first year as a time of uncertainty and anxiety, and she

recollected her lack of vision about teaching kindergarten children. At the end of her first year,

Patty began to sense the extensiveness of teaching. She discovered that teaching was not about

solely content or curriculum but teaching focused on students; their individual needs, their

experiences, and their approach to learning. Patty described this shift in her understanding of

teaching as monumental. She views herself as having an enhanced understanding of teaching but

also commented that teaching is not a set of fixed skills.

For me the whole thing of getting vision was such a slow process [laughter] and I hope to

continue into my tenth year. If you come back, I will be so much better. This is my plan

at doing this (Patty, 2005, 3:185).

On a personal dimension, Patty has seemingly experienced very few changes in her core

identity as a teacher. In my opinion, Patty had difficulty speaking openly about her experiences

and personal beliefs and identity as a teacher. Patty reported that she has little time to reflect

upon her practice of teaching.

I was thinking about that just the other day because somebody asked me about year round

school and I was thinking [pause] "That is a great idea." I think I must be the only

teacher around that thinks it is a great idea but I thought, "You know, if you went to

school for six weeks and then had two weeks off, you could reflect. This is where we

are". This is what we've done and you know, be able to do that. I just feels like you put

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your head down in January and you get to May (Patty, 2005, 3:757-761).

I think Patty's lack of time to reflect upon her teaching and her short time in the classroom contributed to my frustrations as an interviewer seeking to understand her personal values, beliefs and experiences. Our conversations were short in comparison to the length of time of other participant interviews. I was somewhat disturbed by her reticence to think more deeply about her personal development as a teacher. My interpretations regarding Patty's self development and negotiation of an identity as a teacher are limited due to our seemingly lighthearted conversations.

I was able to identity a subtle shift in the extent of Patty's emotional involvement with her students. Patty continues to love and nurture children, teacher characteristics which she views as inherent in kindergarten. However, Patty is conscious of the boundary between her personal desires to nurture students and her responsibilities as a teacher to teach and maintain order in the classroom. Maintaining an emotional boundary in the classroom requires a conscious effort from Patty.

Although Patty hinted at several significant events that have shaped her understanding of teaching and her belief system as a teacher, she did not offer many extensive descriptions of specific events she has experienced over the past four years. She described her struggle with students with significant emotional problems, tough discipline issues and the challenges of maintaining behavioral control. Patty conveyed vast strides in handling defiant behaviors and tough kids. Patty sought help and advice from her colleagues and her principal and she recognized the importance of the context in which she teaches as an influential factor in her practice of teaching. Patty described her school as a community of teachers who consistently display an attitude of teamwork. She credits her principal with creating this sense of collegiality and support.

Sally

Sally is a 1999 graduate of Virginia Tech. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She has worked as a full-time teacher in the same school and in the same position since being hired by a local school district in 1999. At the time of my interviews with Sally, she was in the beginning months of her sixth year of teaching in public schools.

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Sally was the first teacher to respond to my invitation to join this project. At Sally's invitation, I met with her for the first time in her home one afternoon in early October. She radiated warmth and exuded the inviting and nurturing personality that I have come to expect of a teacher of young children. Sally expressed her intrigue with the idea of reflecting over the past five years of her teaching career. Sally stated that reflection is something that she has had little time to do as a teacher. Time commitment was a concern for Sally. As a teacher and the mother of a young child, she was apprehensive about the time requirement for the project. The solution to this concern was to conduct interviews in her home during the evening after her daughter was tucked away in bed.

Sally and I met on three more occasions in her home. Our conversations took place over her dining room table in the presence of her dog, the baby monitor and sometimes her husband. We were usually together for about 90 minutes. Sally was easy to talk with and was a comfortable person to interview. She was prepared for every meeting and each time she had prepared a drawing representing various feelings, experiences, and memories of the stages of her teaching career. Her drawings were helpful in prompting her memories during our conversations about her teaching experiences and the meanings she attached to her experiences.

In conversation, Sally was upfront and open to discussing her experiences, both positive negative. Many times during our conversation, she filled the room with laughter and her joking spirit. At other times, the irritation and disappointment she has endured as a teacher was evident in her voice and in the stiffness with which she held herself. Sally was strong in her convictions, her beliefs, and her values about teaching but I also found her to be thoughtful, reflective and honest about her weaknesses and errors. Our conversations were rich and offered an amazing view of how her identity as a teacher has evolved over the past five years.

In her work, Sally teaches 16 four-year-olds who have come from impoverished backgrounds or whom are considered at-risk under the Virginia Preschool Initiative Program (VPIP). She is one of eight preschool teachers within a local school district but she is the only preschool teacher in her school. She has little contact with other preschool teachers in her school district. She has a full-time instructional aide with her in the classroom.

From my initial conversation with Sally regarding her experiences as an undergraduate student at Virginia Tech and a student teacher in the public school system, I quickly recognized that Sally's formation of an identity as a teacher was a painful experience for her due to a

contradiction between her beliefs, the context of her training and her work as a teacher in public schools. Not only did this dilemma between self and philosophy arise in her student teaching experience, but over subsequent conversations with Sally, it became clear to both of us that she continues to struggle with the philosophical differences in the school context. This dilemma has greatly influenced her journey to developing an identity as a teacher and the beliefs and values on which she bases her day-to-day activities and decision making in the classroom. Let me share with you what I learned from Sally's journey of self development.

Sally majored in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program as an undergraduate at Virginia Tech. In talking with Sally, I learned that she spent time as a teacher's assistant in the University Laboratory School for two semesters as an undergraduate student. Later, as a gradate student, Sally was employed as a lead teacher in the University Laboratory School.

From my own connection with the Human Development department, I was familiar with the overriding philosophy of the University Lab School, the adoption of the Reggio Emilia program. This educational philosophy is named for its city of origin, Reggio Emilia, located in the northern realm of Italy. This philosophy is based on a belief that children are competent individuals and are capable of directing their own learning. The curriculum is not a set of academic standards that are assessed but rather the curriculum 'emerges' from the interests of the children. In the Lab School, children are encouraged to learn through inquiry and exploration so each project in the classroom is based upon what the children want to do. A wide range of stimulating materials is available for children to use as they discover and learn. The teacher's role is to be the guide and supporter of learning rather than an instructor or a dispenser of knowledge. The teacher encourages children to take time to develop their projects and facilitates collaboration among children and families. Community within the classroom among children is strongly encouraged and families are invited to join and participate in the classroom and school community.

While in the University Laboratory School setting, Sally observed the benefits of an emergent curriculum and the involvement of parents and families within the classroom. Sally described her early beliefs about teaching as closely aligned with the Reggio philosophy. In her portfolio, Sally described this belief.

With the Reggio Emilia philosophy, lesson planning is not done in advance. Instead, we wait until the children discover something they would like to know about. We immerse

them in numerous materials and activities that pertain to the ides they want to learn about. The children being to question more and more, while together and we find more information. Sometimes the children will stray from topic to topic until they find something they are really interested in. In this case, we still provide a learning environment that is filled with as many 'languages' as possible to enhance each learning experience. Using the ideas of the students is such a fun way to teach and learn, because the students are truly interested in what is happening in the classroom (Sally's portfolio, 1998).

Sally also valued the responsibility of love and care of children. Sally's mission statement included in her teaching portfolio testified to her belief in the importance of nurturing students, providing a secure environment and boosting individual self-confidence and pride.

As a future educator at the elementary levels, I have three goals I want to accomplish with all of my students. I want my students to feel loved and secure when they walk into my classroom every morning. Second, I want all of my students to walk out of my classroom at the end of every day with self-confidence and pride. These are traits that will stay with them for a lifetime. Third, I want every child that leaves my classroom at the end of the year knowing that they have been given the best education possible. These are three easy things to provide. I am committing myself to these goals for every single student who I will teach (Sally's portfolio, 1998).

To this day, Sally believes that an emergent curriculum that allows interest to drive learning is the absolute best way for children to learn. "I really bought into the lab school and I still do [pause] to a certain degree" (Sally, 2004, 1:285). Sally's current teaching philosophy and values somewhat mirrors the Reggio philosophy. When asked for specific details of her teaching philosophy, Sally included terms such as "emergent curriculum", "creativity", "developmentally appropriate practice", "documentation of the inquiry process", "child-centered" and "thinking outside of the box."

During her undergraduate education, Sally also admitted to adopting negative views of public schools and the instructional methods and curriculum promoted within public schools. Sally describes being heavily influenced by her undergraduate professors to reject the instructional methods, the academic standards and the disciplinary practices employed by public schools. Sally recalls a strong influence of mistrust of the mission of public schools and the

instruction that goes on within a public school. Prior to getting to the student teaching assignment, Sally recalls Early Childhood Education professors speaking negatively of the teaching practices in public school. She recalls being told, "what was happening in public schools was NOT beneficial to children" (Sally, 2004, 1:257) and "that to be a good teacher, you had to really be different and really think outside of the lines" (Sally, 2004, 1: 260).

We had been taught that if you were going to the public schools, you have to be different. You cannot follow this model that everyone else is doing. So there was a lot of pressure to go in there and be different (Sally, 2004, 1:96-98).

For Sally, the student teaching assignment loomed ahead. She went in with the expectation that she would experience a philosophical struggle between her experience and education in the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching and the culture of public school. She began student teaching with the discomfort of knowing she was expected to 'fit into' the public school as a student teacher and follow along with the teaching and discipline of her cooperating teachers, the very actions and instruction that she had been warned against. Due to her belief in the Reggio philosophy and her experiences as an undergraduate student in the Lab School, Sally described herself as hesitant about her role as a student teacher in public school as a senior at Virginia Tech. "Going from years of being taught in the lab school to student teaching [pause] that was really difficult" (Sally, 2004, 1:79). "We did not have any experience in the public school setting until our first day of student teaching" (Sally, 2004, 1:306)

Sally's mother was a teacher for many years during the time of Sally's childhood. Sally is a product of public schools and recalled having a positive public school experience as a student. "I had a good perception of public school. I enjoyed my experience and kind of always wanted to be a teacher" (Sally, 2004, 1:276-277). Yet, after her Lab School experience, it seemed that Sally was convinced that the methods of instruction within public schools were lacking, inferior and not beneficial to children. She adopted a belief that a set curriculum, mandated testing and the emphasis on formal assessment in public school was morally wrong and resulted in damage to children. "We were going into this place [public school] that we thought of as evil" (Sally, 2004, 1:309). "Teaching the way that we had been taught was not the way to teach" (Sally, 2004, 1:261).

Through reflection, Sally has now recognized that negative opinions held by her professors regarding public school heavily influenced her own beliefs, despite her own positive

experiences with public school.   Her adoption of the Reggio philosophy and a newly held belief that public schools employed inferior means of teaching and disciplining children, contributed to a great sense of foreboding, confusion and anxiety about her role as a student teacher. "I was very nervous because I was trying to think how can I be different and how can I be this teacher who is not 'teachery', if that make sense" (Sally, 2004, 1:342).

> We had to somehow coexist and teach these kids and be so different and yet we were also told we had to [pause] follow along with your cooperating teacher and you know, go with their rules and you can't come in and change everything (Sally, 2004, 1:310).

For a preservice teacher who was looking for security, confidence and strength in her abilities, Sally began her teaching experience with feelings of confusion and frustration that she remembers very clearly and describes poignantly. Sally documented the confusion, frustration and division that she perceived in a visual representation.
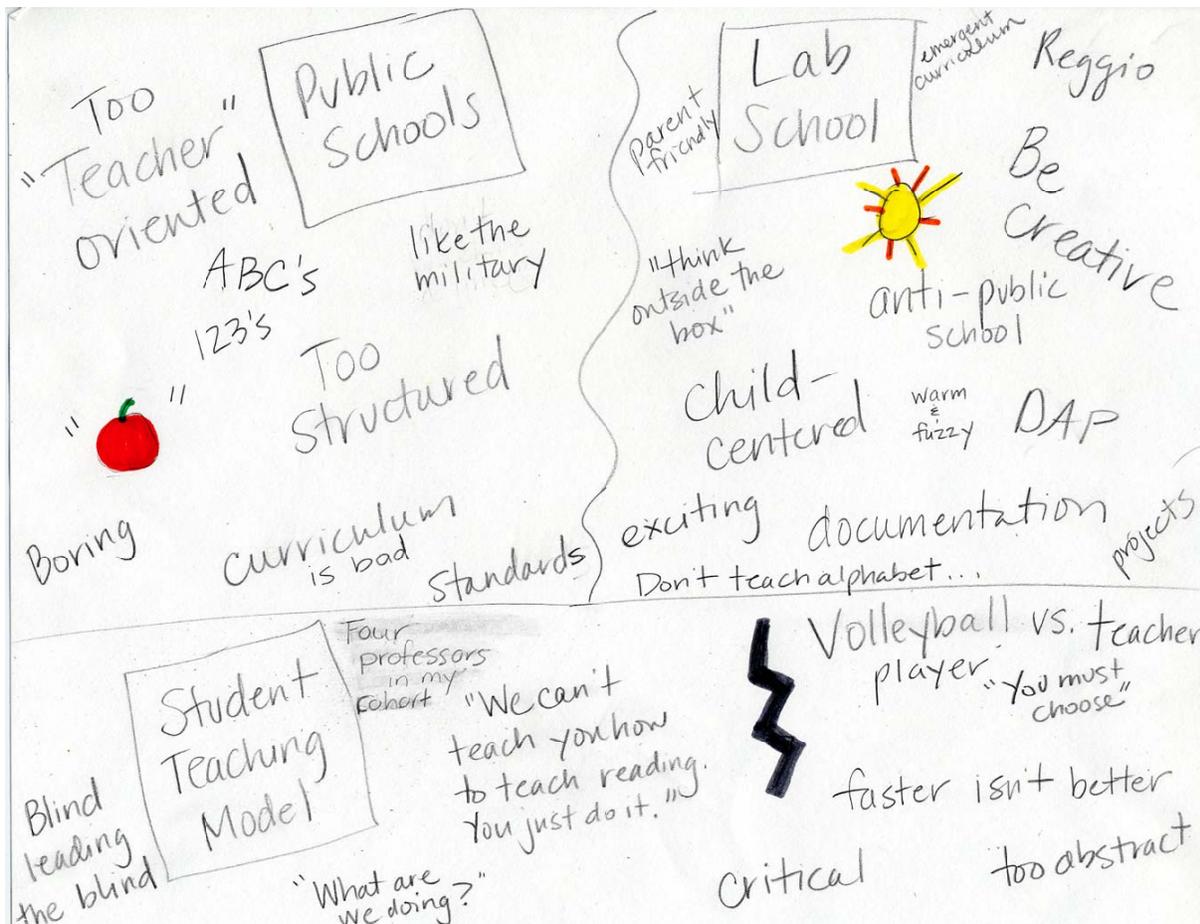
To compound her personal struggle with rectifying her beliefs about teaching within a context that she now viewed as negative, Sally's senior year of college was spent with new

professors, professors from the Elementary Education program who directed the student teaching experiences for both ELED and ECE students. As an ECE major, Sally had taken classes with several ECE professors and had worked closely with two of these professors while in the University Lab School. As a student teacher, her contact with ECE professors became nonexistent and she was expected to quickly form new relationships with professors in the Elementary Education department.

Sally quickly recognized a contrast between the teaching values that she experienced in the University Laboratory School and the beliefs and expectations of the ELED professors. "You go from all of your professors teaching this way to all of a sudden [pause] we did not see those professors anymore. We only saw these four people and it was totally different thinking" (Sally, 2004, 1:320). "These four people [Elementary Education professors] did not necessarily agree with this [Lab School philosophy] so that was difficult" (Sally, 2004, 1:316). In hindsight and with reflection, Sally recognizes the extremes of the situation. "There definitely could have been a happy medium but there wasn't. It was very extreme. Like public school was way over here [gesturing in one direction] and the Lab School was way over her [gesturing in the opposite direction]" (Sally, 2004, 1:266).

Compounding the feelings of insecurity and confusion regarding a philosophical base for teaching, Sally recalls several events resulting in her feelings of anger towards and mistrust of the professors in the ELED program. Sally described the first negative experience with her new professors involving the assignment to produce a list of grade placement preferences for her student teaching assignments. She was subsequently assigned to two placements that were listed as her two least favorite placements. Several other preservice teachers reported the same experience. Sally recalls being informed by the Elementary Education professors that the assignment to their least favorite grade was purposeful. Placement in a student's least likely or least favorite grades would change perceptions and preconceived notions about teaching. "They wanted us to change our perceptions" (Sally, 2004, 1:245). Sally was disappointed by her assignments, but she seemed more disappointed with the lack of honesty in the means of making assignments for student teaching.

This beginning mistrust of professors continued throughout the student teaching year. Sally was a full scholarship athlete during her four years at Virginia Tech (which is quite an honor at a Division I university). Sally describes herself as a conscientious student who kept her

sports involvement low key in the university. Her sport did require some time away from school throughout the season but she was careful with her schedule and assignments, always turning assignments in ahead of time or making arrangements to take any exams prior to a game day. Yet, she got the distinct feeling from professors that she needed to make a choice between her education and athletics. Sally recalled one professor questioning her, "Are you going to be a professional player or a professional teacher?" (Sally, 2004, 1:127). The lack of respect that professors had for her athletic abilities, commitment, and scholarship requirements was hurtful, and for Sally, it contributed to a sense of discomfort and distrust with her professors.

Probably the most intriguing dilemma that Sally experienced during student teaching was an overwhelming feeling that she had not been prepared to teach academics. She felt the conflict of the philosophical contradiction between her experience in the University Lab School as a teaching assistant and the coursework preparing her for public school teaching. What she had learned and implemented as a sophomore and junior in the University Lab School was based upon the Reggio Emilia philosophy of emergent curriculum and child lead inquiry. Her practice of teaching in the University Laboratory School did not match the teaching methods offered by her coursework which focused on preparation for instruction in public schools. "We were totally unprepared, completely unprepared. We had never been taught how to teach anything. The lab school is definitely not public school" (Sally, 2004, 1:302-304). "We did not learn math, social studies, science and English" (Sally, 2004, 1: 184). "We cannot teach you how to teach reading, you just do it" (Sally, 2004, 1:187). "You teach kids how to read by reading to them" (Sally, 2004, 1:196).

Reading instruction was an area in which she felt extremely vulnerable. She recalled being told not to probe further in the area of reading and she gave up on seeking more information. In the classroom, Sally recalls feeling ignorant about teaching reading.

> We got to the first day out [pause] cooperating teachers were like [pause] "Do you know about this type of reading philosophy?" and we were like, "No, we don't know any of this. What is reading recovery?" I mean we had no idea (Sally, 2004, 1:190)

Not surprisingly, Sally found herself acting in a manner during student teaching that was contradictory to her teaching philosophy. For example, she never thought she would be listing names on the board of students who misbehaved, or spending days reviewing for tests and creating formal assessments. Yet, at the same time, she found comfort in opportunities to

employ the type of teaching that she had learned to love in the lab school. She began to look for ways to allow children more choice. She worked with a fourth-grade class on a writing workshop, a student-driven activity that utilized peers and classroom community as a part of the writing process. Along with these experiences and an increasing comfort in working with school-aged children, Sally recalled coming to a place during her student teaching of thinking she could employ some Reggio techniques in a public school classroom. "I felt like I could [pause] after student teaching [pause] I felt like I could definitely co-exist in a school with my own philosophy. I was hopeful for that" (Sally, 2004, 1:419).

At the end of student teaching, Sally felt confident about what she had done and felt more confident about teaching. She continued to feel that she wasn't strong in her knowledge of specific methods of teaching but she held onto her view that an emergent curriculum and more student choice could be offered in a public school classroom. She reported finishing the year thinking, "once I have my own classroom, I will be able to do all the things I want to do" (Sally, 2004, 1:522).

In the spring of 1998, Sally was accepted into the master's degree program in curriculum and instruction. She began her graduate studies the following fall as a lead teacher in the University Laboratory School. Sally recalls quickly easing back into that setting and falling into the familiar pattern of thinking about teaching. "I wanted to be all Reggio!" (Sally, 2004, 1:424) Yet the confusion regarding her basic beliefs and identity as a teacher continued. Sally recalls realizing upon her return to the University Laboratory School that the staff was unrealistic in their approach to teaching.

> They were so overboard about the Lab School. I don't think I was ever that overboard about the Lab School. I bought into it fully. I thought Reggio is the way to go but they were even further along [pause] I mean they had been to Reggio Emilia [a school in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy] several times. I never went. I read the book and I studied under them but I never had the full comprehension of what it was (Sally, 2004, 1:770-776).

Sally also recognized the lack of consistent discipline in the Laboratory school and learned to avoid asking ECE professors or the lab school director about disciplinary issues because they were ineffective in helping with discipline. Sally relied heavily on a graduate student who had worked in public school previously to help her with discipline issues in the

classroom.

> Her discipline wasn't the discipline that I thought of from public school. It was not Lee Kanter's assertiveness. It wasn't that. That was very important to my teaching experience, not my student teaching experience, but when I got my job (Sally, 2004, 1:779-783).

Regardless of these nagging conflicts, Sally was convinced that she could carry out a totally Reggio philosophy in public school upon the completion of the graduate education program. She had switched from a perspective of balancing Reggio and public schools to a renewed perspective of total Reggio.

> In my student teaching experience, I felt like I could find a happy medium [between Reggio beliefs and the requirements of public school]. Then when I went back to the Lab School [during her graduate school experience], I thought I don't need a happy medium. I can do completely my own philosophy and be fine (Sally, 2004, 1:427-431).

Sally described herself as excited about having a job in public school as a teacher of high-risk preschool children. She viewed herself as excited and enthusiastic about her position and the opportunity to teach young children. "It was wonderful" (Sally, 2004, 2:457).

> I went and saw this dirty disgusting room but you know it was the middle of the summer and all of the furniture and stuff [pause] I was like, "It is wonderful. I think it is perfect." It had pee-pee yellow walls and dirty orange carpet and I was like, "It is the best!" (Sally, 2004, 2:459).

> I would go once a week and just sit in the room and dream about where I was going to put things. It was this tiny little cracker box room that [pause] it is against all regulations. If someone from the state had come in to see [pause] like you are supposed to have a certain square footage per child [pause] no way! No way! I don't even think the room I am in now would cut it. But I thought it was the best (Sally, 2004, 2:465).

In looking back on her first year of teaching, Sally describes herself as holding on to tightly to the Reggio Emilia philosophy she had followed in the University Lab School setting. She arranged the physical environment of her classroom to promote independence, exploration and creativity. She purchased clear plastic bins for storing supplies and toys. She arranged these bins within the classroom at a level for the children to be able to locate and access whatever they were looking for. She brought in upholstered furniture, a sofa of her sister's, to promote a caring,

nurturing, safe and comfortable atmosphere for children. Sally described her desire for kids to have fun while they were learning, to feel loved and to feel secure within the walls of her classroom. It was her goal for the children to drive the curriculum and as a Reggio teacher, she would guide and encourage their creativity, their independence and their discovery.

Sally recalled the quick criticism offered by other teachers and the alienation she felt during the first few years of teaching. "There was some definite dissention at the beginning of the year and really throughout the whole [pause] through the first three years" (Sally, 2004, 2: 181). As Sally organized her classroom, she received criticism from other teachers about this and interpreted it as a disagreement with her beliefs about teaching children. Her first recollection of feeling "different" involved her decision to arrange plastic tubs in order for the children to know where things were stored and to speed the process of clean up. "I remember people walking by going, 'wonder how long that is going to stay that way?'" (Sally, 2004, 2:493). The art teacher came and said, "I didn't think they would ever be able to do it" (Sally, 2004, 2:498).

Within her first week on the job, Sally was also questioned about her choice of a sofa in the classroom and in her explanation of her beliefs, she felt misunderstood, and different. Sally described the incident like this:

> So my husband brings it in. He helps me move it in. Well, everyone is just looking at me as I am lugging this sofa in on the first day. I am the talk of the town of course for awhile because I brought in a sofa (Sally, 2004, 2:549).
> Everyone is like, "So why do you have that?" You know, like they did not understand and I was like, "Well, it will just be fun. It will be a nice soft place when a child is tired, he can go lay down. He can read books. Everybody needs a soft spot in their classroom." And they were like, "Why?" and I was like, "It is a place to feel comfort and to feel safe" (Sally, 2004, 2:553-560).

Sally's feelings of alienation were confirmed at the first faculty meeting. The principal had supplied each teacher with a notebook with their name containing school information, schedule and work orders. However, Sally was not given a notebook and was left out of the discussion.

> The first day of school, I would never have the kit that every teacher would get. You know, like supplies and paperwork and scheduling and stuff. Like everyone would get

their stuff and I would be like "I didn't get one." They would all be out with names on it and there would be noting for me. In fact, this is still happening (Sally, 2004, 2: 107).

As the year went on, Sally was increasingly convinced that she was unaccepted and not respected by other teachers. "Really more teachers thought of me as the black sheep than didn't. So, it has taken me a really long time to fit in" (Sally, 2004, 2:164). Sally handled her sense of rejection and alienation from other teachers by volunteering for committees and chairing committees. She put herself in situations where she could show her talents, her insights, her problem solving and her values as a teacher.

I wasn't like this little quiet [pause] you know [pause] I wanted them to know. I think they thought, "Oh, she teaches preschool because she couldn't really do anything else". I made it known that I had a Master's degree and that I could teach anything up to fifth grade. People were like, "You don't get paid what we do, do you?" And I was like, "Yeah, I get paid the same" (Sally, 2004, 2:170-176).

She recalled feeling that teachers failed to view the importance of her job or how she helped prepare children for kindergarten and eased their transition into the academic and social world of school. She felt that teachers in her building viewed her as a glorified babysitter and that she really had no part in the community of their school. "So, that was my introduction [pause] we really don't want you here, but we are one of the schools that had a space for a preschool [pause] we are stuck with you" (Sally, 2004, 2:146).

With more time in public school, Sally recalled confronting more issues with the "way things are in public schools" versus her philosophy and methods of operation within her classroom. She ran her classroom more freely and more openly than traditional teachers. Her daily lessons were not guided by the Virginia Standards of Learning or a set curriculum, so Sally had freedom to teach as she saw fit. Following the Reggio belief that learning should emerge from the interests of the children, Sally encouraged children to focus on their interests. She brought in literature from the library on topics the children want to learn about. She used art as a means of creativity, documentation of inquiry and engaging her students.

Repeatedly, Sally confronted criticism that her teaching style allowed for too much independence and resulted in a mess. The work that her class created for the custodian became a source of sensitivity for Sally and a source of criticism from other teachers. "So when people walk by, it looks like utter chaos. It really does. Like if you didn't look at what is happening and

this is so much happening. We are organized within our chaos" (Sally, 2004, 2:669). The custodian offered negative remarks each day about glitter on the floor and glue on the tables. This criticism worried Sally and she found herself cleaning up a lot of her students' mess at the end of the day to avoid the criticism of the custodian. Sally was so concerned about this that she recalled creating a bulletin board display describing why preschoolers are involved in art everyday and the value of art in learning in the classroom. "You should have seen the documentation on my walls. I had it out in the hallway. This is why we do messy stuff "(Sally, 2004, 2: 201).

She also felt that the rules and discipline of her classroom differed from that of other teachers. She had rules that focused on the positives of being safe with one another, showing respect and trust and negotiating decisions. Sally felt her ways of running her classroom, particularly her lack of traditional disciplinary rules, frustrated other faculty members. "It is a lot of modeling, negotiating with friends, hands on and "Let's talk about this". That was very frustrating to some teachers" (Sally, 2004, 2:721).

> I don't do time-out and that was another big thing. 'What do you mean you don't do time-out?' And I was like, "Well, they are four. It is important to teach them the correct way instead of punishing them for the wrong way". And they were like, "Well, what do you mean?" They just didn't understand (Sally, 2004, 2:713-718).

Sally admits that over the course of that first year in public school, several events eroded her practice of the Reggio philosophy in her classroom and contributed to a change in her view of herself as a teacher. She documented many of her feelings and experiences about that first year of teaching in visual representation.

Mr. Moore

Some enjoyment to being different

excitement

My "own" Classroom

no support

Compromise

McDonald's Coke

Children

professionalism

disillusionment

my philosophy vs. "fitting the mold"

Mrs. Miller & Cindy Brown

alienated from school

fun/creative

"the sofa"

Sally slowly began to realize that perhaps her belief of adopting of a total Reggio philosophy in a public school was an illusion. "As a first year teacher, I started realizing, 'Okay, things are going to have to happen" (Sally, 2004, 3:465). One incident in particular she referred to as the "line" incident. One day early in her first year of teaching, Sally was taking her class to the cafeteria for lunch. She was reprimanded by the principal for the conduct of her children and the lack of her employment of a straight single file line.

> Because we were walking in a big clump down to lunch and that was not okay. We walk in lines now, which there is really no way around. I mean, I asked him, "When, other than at a grocery store, do we have to [pause] we don't walk in lines anywhere in real life. What are we preparing for by doing this?" And no one could give me an answer (Sally, 2004, 2:652).

"I had to walk in lines. Some developmentally inappropriate things [pause] like line walking is very frowned upon in Reggio" (Sally, 2004, 2: 608-609).

Over the course of the two or three years that followed, Sally was forced to give up on

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some of her Reggio values. Sally's view of teaching and the emergent curriculum did not include academic concepts such as letter recognition, letter sounds and the association between the two. Yet, the Virginia Standards of Learning and mandated standardized testing penetrated the preschool setting in 2000 and Sally recognized that some part of her teaching practice would have to change to accommodate the demands of the public school system. A huge source of irritation and anger for Sally was the requirement that preschool teachers administer the Phonemic Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) test at the beginning and end of the year to measure the academic progress of at-risk four-year-olds. "The first year that we had to do PALS, I was so against it and writing emails to people" (Sally, 2004, 3:753). With time, Sally realized there was no getting around the administration of these tests. "You just do it. I think that is on of the things that I had to learn to accept" (Sally, 2004, 3:457). "I am going to have to do things that I don't agree with, but it is part of being in public schools" (Sally, 2004, 3:458). She has changed her morning routine with the children to include more academic information, but she continues to insist that she is more concerned about nurturing young children than teaching academics. "I feel like I am still a teacher who is more concerned about a safe, caring, loving classroom than a classroom that all the kids can write their names and know their letters" (Sally, 2004, 2:729).

Sally reflected back over the first five years of teaching and recognized that she has lost some of her conviction for teaching with an inquiry based approach. She admitted that she has changed in a way that she would have never believed or predicted five years ago. "I think for me as a first year teacher [pause] if I had known what I was going to be doing at this point, I would probably have been horrified" (Sally, 2004, 3:461). "I think I would be horrified to think that I was going to be administering the PALS test" (Sally, 2004, 3:468). "The pre-first year teacher in me would say, "Absolutely not. I will not administer this test" (Sally, 2004, 3:470).

Sally admitted that recognizing the change within herself, giving up on what she felt was the right way to teach and the right things to value, was a difficult process that lasted several years. She described the process of acknowledging the changes as emotional and painful.

> I think Reggio is wonderful but you just can't do it like you are supposed to in a public school setting. I am comfortable saying that now. Before, I think I tried to lie and be like, 'You can do it. It is possible.' But I just don't think it is. You can definitely do pieces of it. But I think that is what made me comfortable in my own skin [pause] by

being able to say and believe that (Sally, 2004, 3:491-498).

It has been a transition to that [pause] to being okay with that. It was very frustrating, very annoying and very upsetting and then it gradually got a little easier (Sally, 2004, 3:503-504).

I felt guilty about the change away from the Reggio philosophy for several years. I felt very guilty about that I was doing certain things in my classroom that were not Reggio (Sally, 2004, 3:866-867).

That was probably three years of serious anxiety, guilt and feelings of betrayal. You don't ever want to go against your philosophy and you feel like a lesser person if you are going against something like that (Sally, 2004, 3:887).

In hindsight, Sally acknowledged that the conflict between the Reggio philosophy and the ways of public school surfaced in her mind long before she arrived at the door of the school house as a public school teacher. The conflict originated in her undergraduate education and the philosophical differences among professors in two departments. These external forces formed her values and beliefs about teaching. "I had battles to fight before I even got there" (Sally, 2004, 3:895). "It wasn't until last year [pause] last year it hit me [pause] the Lab School Director was not watching my classroom and giving me marks and that there are other things that are more important" (Sally, 2004, 3:477).

Sally views the change in herself as a teacher as a result of the context in which she is living on a day-to-day basis and she concedes that the changes she has been required to make as a public school teacher have lead to a situation in which she does not love teaching as much as she once did. "Just being around other teachers who do it without even thinking [pause] and you kind of become sucked into what you have to do and you just do it" (Sally, 2004, 3:505-507). "Just ever year, there comes another little assessment that we do and they just keep adding tiny little things along the way and so that has made me love it a little less" (Sally, 2004, 3:747). Now her teaching reflects her core beliefs and the needs of the children within the context that they are in. "Your core beliefs are what you have to worry about [pause] not doing Reggio" (Sally, 2004, 3:870). "I feel like as long as I am treating them with respect and they are treating me with respect, we are doing okay" (Sally, 2004, 3:1041). "I am less Reggio. I am more academic like in the sense of [pause] like before, I never cared if we talk about letters and numbers" (Sally, 2004, 3:579). "Now I would like not to care but I know it has to be done. And

these kids [pause] that is what they are here for. They really need a little help before they get to kindergarten" (Sally, 2004, 3:583).

On a more personal dimension, Sally became more pragmatic about the task of teaching and her self expectation to love and nurture all children. Her encounters with children who live in emotional, behavioral, and familial turmoil prompted Sally to reevaluate the responsibility of a teacher. Initially, Sally loved teaching and was enthusiastic about her role as a teacher. She also believed that providing love, security, and nurturance to children was an essential piece of being a teacher. Her beliefs were challenged during her second year of teaching when her class included two children with momentous emotional and behavioral issues.

From Sally's description, her second year of teaching was filled with chronic stress as she attempted to manage behavioral outbursts such as physical attacks on herself and other children, children running from the school building into the street, and children's use of explicit language. "It was a nightmare. I don't think the kids learned anything all year long except how to be scared" (Sally, 2004, 2:841). At the end of that year, Sally questioned her decision to become a teacher. The excitement and enthusiasm for teaching had evaporated. She described a daily process of struggling through each day. Success at that point was defined as making it to the end of the school day and placing her children on the bus toward home.

Sally recognized two truths about teaching that she had not experienced or known before. First, Sally learned that regardless of her intentions, her energy, her enthusiasm, her love and her skills as a teacher, there is no guarantee for success in the classroom. "I was just so frustrated, so unbelievably frustrated which is not my personality at all" (Sally, 2004, 2:987-988). "I had no spirit that year. My spirit was broken" (Sally, 2004, 2:989).

Second, Sally learned that she will encounter students whom she does not love or even like. "I am not perfect and there are going to be kids that I teach who I do not like" (Sally, 2004, 3:24). "That is part of teaching. You are going to have kids that you love, kids that you don't like but you teach them all the same and act like you love them all the same" (Sally, 2004, 3:26). This self revelation was disappointing for Sally. "I never wanted to believe that [I wasn't capable of loving all kids] and I never wanted to, I guess, admit that but it [having tough behavioral problems] made me" (Sally, 2004, 3:25). "I think that was the hardest part to swallow because you would never want to say that about yourself but it [teaching tough kids] made me (Sally, 2004, 3:31). Sally described the self-disgust that she felt as the second year of teaching ended.

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"I felt disgusted inside with myself but I could not wait for that student to walk out of that classroom on the very last day" (Sally, 2004, 2:890-891). "My philosophy turned into 'Just make it through the damn day and get the kids home on the bus"(Sally, 2004, 2:903-904). She learned to put aside her own feelings of anger, frustration and negativity and teach all children despite her personal feelings. She realized that she must have the confidence that she will recover and be able to go on to teach another child and make a difference in a life.

In summary, Sally's sense of herself as a teacher has changed and evolved and her understanding of teaching has blossomed although this journey has not been without emotions, anxiety, confusion and disappointment. Sally arrived at college knowing she wanted to teach children. She was familiar with teaching as a child of an educator and she was a product of public school. Sally felt fortunate to be accepted into the Early Childhood Education program based upon the competition to get into the limited number of teaching slots.

In the Early Childhood Education program, Sally quickly absorbed what professors taught and believed to be true. She adopted the Reggio Emilia philosophy of teaching as her own without much investigation or exposure to alternative teaching philosophies. Like most college students, Sally did not have a clear sense of her own beliefs, her own values and her identity. Sally was seeking to establish her beliefs and obtain sense of self by modeling her professors, people whom she viewed as all knowing authorities. Magolda (2001) described this early stage in identity development as the stage of absolute knowing; a stage where identity, values and beliefs are based on external sources

Once Sally entered the student teaching phase of her education, she experienced an inkling that the authorities to whom she had looked to for knowledge, her professors, perhaps did not have all of the answers. Sally began to recognize different ways to teach and alternative beliefs about teaching. The transition to the public school, a context that she had been warned of as evil and misinformed about children, was unsettling for Sally. She conceded that she was uncomfortable in a new setting that challenged her beliefs. From her description of student teaching, Sally seemed to grasp only the fringes of alternative perspectives of teaching. Perhaps she was hindered by her feelings of discomfort with the context (public school) and a sense of distrust of her new professors.

When Sally was invited back into the familiar context, the University Lab School, she was accompanied by familiar authorities preaching familiar truths. Once again, she was

comfortable in a well-known domain and fell in step with established values and beliefs about teaching. However there was no challenge to introspectively look at her own beliefs and values or to define what she felt was true about herself as a teacher. At this point, Sally had not found an internal definition of her values, her beliefs or her self as a teacher. Sally left graduate school relying on the process that her professors had taught her for knowing and teaching. Her teaching, her values and her beliefs were not her own.

Once employed in a public school and encountering a different landscape, different philosophies, and different beliefs, Sally experienced a pesky sense of discomfort and dissatisfaction with what she had been taught and what she believed. She was 'different' from other teachers and felt isolated and ostracized. Over time, she recognized that the familiar Reggio approach was not what was working in her classroom, was not accept by her colleagues, and she admitted it was difficult to carry out within the context of public school. Sally faced the conundrum of denying what she had been taught to believe in and what she was experiencing in her work. Sally described the struggle to define and establish internal beliefs and values as painful and anxiety provoking. Admitting that she was unable to follow the external formulas (Reggio) of teaching that she had been taught in college was a catalyst in forming her own identity as a teacher.

Sally looked inwardly and to define her own beliefs, her own values and her own perspective of who she was and what was important in her work. It became clear that she had based her beliefs and relationships upon acquiring approval from others, notably her professors, rather than on a mutual negotiation with herself, others and the context of her work. Sally had to discover her own ideas, use her own mind and define herself for herself. Magolda (2001) would define this as a search for an independent way of knowing. The discovery of the ability to formulate her own ideas and to use her own mind represents the process of becoming one's own, or as Magolda terms it, the author of one's life (Magolda, 2001).

Has Sally achieved self authorship? Has she established her own beliefs and values about teaching and defined who she is as a teacher? I believe Sally now feels that she is comfortable with where she is. She created a visual representation of how she currently sees herself as a teacher.
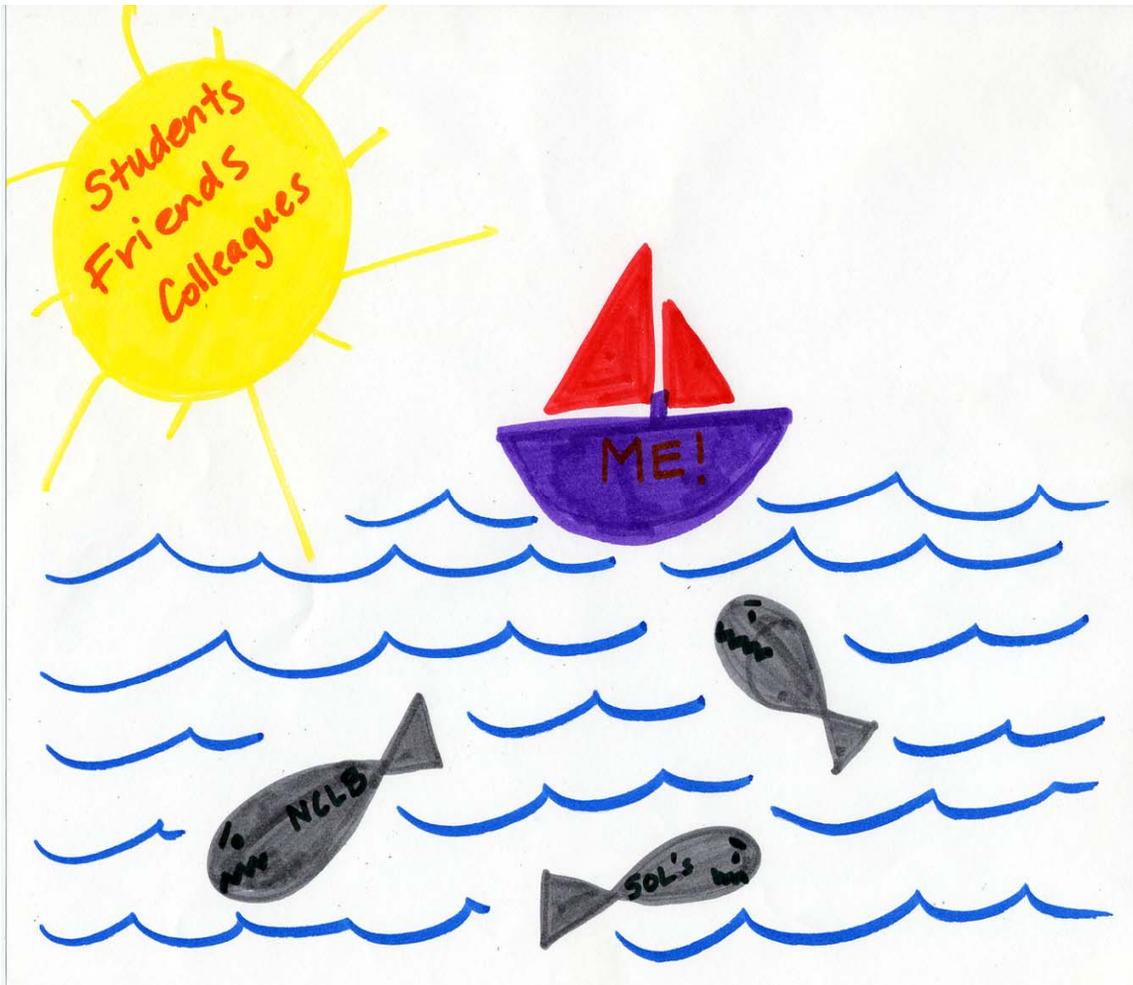
In this drawing, a she is represented as a sailboat sailing on an ocean. A large yellow sun with radiating rays of warmth is in the left hand corner of the page. Within this yellow sun, Sally placed the words 'students', 'friends', and 'colleagues'. It is a picture of warmth, calm, comfort and tranquility. In the water, under the sailboat are three teeth gnashing sharks. Sally labeled two sharks with SOL (representing Virginia Standards of Learning) and NCLB (representing the mandates of Federal Legislation, No Child Left Behind). From Sally's point of view, the sharks threaten the tranquility that she enjoys as a teacher.

> This is me sailing on the educational seas and the bright things are my students, friends and colleagues. Then there are these little SOLs, No Child Left Behind. They are sharks or mean fish [pause] or whatever you want to call them [pause] waiting to nip at your tail (Sally, 2004, 3:370-374).

Sally has only started to negotiate her own identity as a teacher. She is beginning to listen to her internal voice following a painful journey. Sally now believes that caring, nurturing,

loving and teaching children is more important than stubbornly holding to one philosophy of teaching. She recognizes that the context of where she works will always threaten how she teaches, but perhaps the context should not change who she is and what she believes in.

Sharon

Sharon teaches fourth grade in an elementary school in a local school district. She enrolled in the Master's degree program in Curriculum and Instruction at Virginia Tech upon her completion of an undergraduate degree in Psychology. Sharon graduated from the program in December of 2000 and has been teaching in public school since that time. Sharon is the mother of two children and she is married to an elementary school teacher. Sharon has numerous responsibilities at her school including co-chair of the School Renewal Committee. Due to her commitments with work and family, I met with Sharon in her home on two occasions for several hours to discuss her teaching experiences and the shifts in her beliefs and identity as a teacher. Sharon did not produce artistic representations of her teaching identity or a timeline of significant and influential events experienced throughout her teaching career. Despite several requests to review her teacher portfolio, I was not successful in obtaining or reviewing her document.

At Sharon's request, she teaches in a low socioeconomic rural area of the school district. She was eager to talk about her experiences in the classroom. I found Sharon to be highly energetic, expressive and animated during our conversations. Her love and enthusiasm for teaching was unmistakably evident. She is wholeheartedly devoted to her students and their families. Sharon impressed me as an eternal optimist and at times, her 'Polly-Anna' attitude seemed almost illusory. She seemed able to find the good in even the most challenging situations, or as my grandmother would say, 'She readily makes lemonade out of lemons.'

Sharon volunteered that she wanted to be a teacher as far back as she can remember. She was so intent about becoming a teacher, she failed to investigate any other careers.

> That is all I have ever wanted to do. I don't remember ever wanting to be anything else.
> I think in high school I thought about being a lawyer for a little bit of time but that was
> very fleeting. I just really wanted to be a teacher (Sharon, 2004, 1:210-213).

Both of Sharon's parents were teachers and she recalled that both tried to dissuade her from pursuing a career in teaching. Her parents' reluctance about a career in education stemmed from

their own challenging experiences and the lack of compensation for the vast amount of work teaching demands. Yet, because of her parents' involvement in education, Sharon felt she was knowledgeable of the burdens of teaching prior to entering a teacher education program.

> I had seen my Mom bring the grades home, the papers home to grade and I had seen her trying to do her lesson plans every Sunday night. She would get in bed with her book and she would say, "Alright, go entertain yourself. I have to work on this." So I had a clue about what was involved (Sharon, 2004, 1:657-660).

Sharon credits her mom as a significant influence on her decision to become a teacher. "My mom is a teacher, you know what I mean? She is just one of those incredible teachers that you don't often meet" (Sharon, 2004, 1:362).

> I would go into work with my mom on some days to her classroom and just see how she ran her classroom. It was different from the classrooms I was in at my school. I would think, "I want my classroom to be like this. Where you joke around and have fun while you are at school" (Sharon, 2004, 1:459)

Sharon credits her mom and an elementary school teacher as influencing her values as a teacher. Sharon held a general idea of the type of teacher she wanted to be before she entered the classroom. She sought to be child-centered and to focus her teaching on the needs and interests of her students. She wanted to establish an environment that encouraged positive relationships, kindness, and mutual respect. Family involvement in the classroom was also important to Sharon. In addition, she strongly believed in inclusive classrooms and differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Sharon described her student teaching assignment as a perfect fit with her budding philosophy of teaching. She experienced an immediate kinship with her cooperating teacher. "It was perfect. My cooperating teacher was just so warm and friendly and just everything I wanted to be as a teacher, she was. Everything was about the kids and putting them first" (Sharon, 2004, 1:84-86). "My cooperating teacher would say, 'We are a family here' and that was her whole philosophy"(Sharon, 2004, 1:482). Sharon described the cooperating teacher's approach to teaching as complimenting her own values and beliefs about teaching.

> One of the things that stands out [pause] the first day of school [pause] the kids came in with their supplies and I remember asking "Do you want me to put their names on it as they are coming in?" And she was like, "Well, no. They are classroom supplies and we

do not need to know who brought that. If someone didn't bring something [pause] no one needs to feel badly because they didn't bring something or if they didn't bring the nicest stuff." And that just stood out to me and that set the tone for the classroom (Sharon, 2004, 1:468-473).

Sharon wanted to mirror her cooperating teacher and sought to become a loving and supportive teacher. During the student teaching experience, Sharon was able to observe several teachers in classrooms throughout the school. She was quick to recognize teachers and teaching strategies that did not match her own view of teaching and how she viewed herself as a teacher. Sharon recalled the challenge of working within a team of strong teachers during her student teaching experience and one member of the team had very different ideas about what was important in the classroom.

She and I disagreed on different things. I would say, "Well, you know, they are trying hard" and she was like, "Look, we need rules for these kids." It was just that kind of thing. We did not agree on classroom management. I gave a lot of choice to kids and she was like, "No!" (Sharon, 2004, 1:511-515).

According to Sharon's recollection, her student teaching experience was a time of exploration. During this time, she began to solidify a view of herself as a teacher. Sharon recalled her belief that the atmosphere of the classroom was paramount to teaching.

I knew I wanted to have a warm, friendly classroom where the kids felt they could be themselves and then go home and be themselves. That they could trust me and that they could say things. A lot of times if a kid says something like they are angry, they are told, 'Well, you need to keep that to yourself.' I did not want that. I wanted them to be able to say 'that sucks.' Maybe not that way, but I could say, 'Well, I am sorry you feel that way but we are going to do it anyway.' I think they should have the opportunity to say, 'This is stinky and I don't like it' (Sharon, 2004, 1:442-447).

Sharon recalled her transition from student teaching to her first year of teaching as rocky but Sharon described herself as an enthusiastic despite the challenges. The social-emotional aspect of school continued to be her main focus. She recalled how she spent her first days on the job as a new teacher:

I definitely valued the social aspects of school because I remember spending all of the time trying to figure out "who is going to sit with who?" and "How am I going to set up

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my behavior plan?" I did all of that and the day before school, I realized I had not planned academically for the first three days of school at all [laughter] (Sharon, 2004, 2:224-229).

I had to set up how I was going to communicate with parents and all of that [pause] and then all of a sudden [pause] I hadn't done anything about [laughter] academics [pause] but I had that day to do it and I got it done (Sharon, 2004, 2:234-235).

Despite her comfort with teaching and her prior experiences with the work of teaching, Sharon recalled the entire first year of teaching as full of surprises. Prior to taking the job, she was aware that reputation of the students in assigned school. She knew that many students lived in poverty and many struggled academically. Sharon had been told by friends and teacher colleagues that she would be teaching a "tough crowd." Sharon did not expect the extent of behavioral problems or the severity of student disabilities that she experienced as a first year teacher. "When they said tough crowd, I thought they meant some back talk [laughter], a little destructive behavior, academically struggling [pause] but I didn't expect them hiding and trying to set the playground on fire" (Sharon, 2004, 2:211-213).

Sharon's classroom in her first year included several children with significant physical, emotional and mental disabilities. Due to the number of students in need of special education assistance, the principal decided to house the majority of students with special education needs in one classroom. Grouping the students in this manner seemed sensible for delivery of special education assistance and scheduling.

That first year I had a girl with cerebral palsy. I had a student who was blind. I had a student who had been retained and could not read. No one else could understand what he said [due to poor articulation]. I had another student who had been retained twice and had been thrown out of school for behavior. He had brought a knife to school or something. I had the big ticket student in the school where everyone said, "Oh, you have him!" (Sharon, 2004, 2:97-106).

Sharon quickly realized the challenge associated with teaching these students. She admitted that she went home exhausted and frequently in tears. "I cried every night that first year" (Sharon, 2004, 1:1173). In addition to the special needs of her students, Sharon described numerous incidences of extreme behavioral outbursts. "They [students] tried to set the playground on fire. At one point, they brought a lighter to school" (Sharon, 2004, 2:203).

I had a student who was on a rampage. You could not let him have a sharp object. He was really bad off. The kids were scared of him. He almost hit me more than once. He had thrown stuff at me (Sharon, 2004, 2:582).

One of them had thrown rocks at my car by the end of the year (Sharon, 2004, 2:205).

In the midst of dealing with students' significant disabilities and extreme behavioral problems, Sharon was challenged to focus on academics and learning. Sharon's description of this first year was horrifying, but in our conversation, she was able to focus on the positive outcomes during that first year of teaching. "We had lots of good things happen. I taught the student with cerebral palsy to jump rope by the end of the year. The whole class worked with her and helped her to learn how to jump rope" (Sharon, 2004, 2:199).

I had one kid who just wanted me to yell at him and I wouldn't. He wanted me to tell him to go away and I just remember him crying and I said to him, 'I am not going to yell at you. I like you. I don't like your behavior, but I like you.' He just busted out crying (Sharon, 2004, 2:189- 191).

Sharon credits her colleagues as supporting her during the first year of teaching. The two teachers assigned to Sharon's grade level were also new teachers and they quickly bonded. Each of them endorsed similar beliefs, values and teaching styles. The three of them continued to support each other throughout the first year of teaching. "I had the most supportive teammates. The other two teachers [pause] the three of us got so close so fast because we were all in the boat together" (Sharon, 2004, 2:324-325).

Sharon also developed a good working relationship with her principal during her first year of teaching. She depended on the principal for support and was typically successful in receiving it.

The principal and I got along great. For some reason other people have trouble and they go to him and he can sometimes make things difficult for you if he gets angry but for some reason, he and I get along and I am able to tell him things (Sharon, 2004, 2:343- 346).

When asked to reflect on subsequent years of teaching, Sharon's descriptions included similar challenging students and experiences but she continued to profess the positives of her job. She described her continued love of teaching. In challenging times, Sharon has maintained a positive outlook. She indicated that her colleagues frequently lose patience with her rosy

outlook. Even after the first year of teaching, which was a nightmare by anyone's standards, Sharon continued to profess her love of teaching to her friends and family. "I told my husband right after that first year, 'I still love this. So if I still love it after this [pause] I am in the right place" (Sharon, 2004, 2:303). "At the end of the year, I still wanted to teach. After that year, I figure I am set" (Sharon, 2004, 1:1195).

Sharon's love for her job and her students is evident in her excitement and her attitude of gusto.

I enjoy it. I honestly enjoy my job. I love it. I love going to work. I have a good time everyday. I can think of nothing else I would rather do than be with those kids even when they drive me crazy (Sharon, 2004, 2:667-669).

According to Sharon, witnessing those rare and few moments of learning give worth to the trials of teaching.

I enjoy it [pause] actually getting to teach with kids and getting to see them understand something; getting to see them feel proud and happy when they do get it; getting to see them follow through on something and be proud of it. Even if they are not proud of it, just seeing them finish a product at the end. It is neat to see this kid [pause] who before hated school [pause] but got this done [pause] to see that kid who everyone thinks is a jerk, do something nice for someone all of a sudden (Sharon, 2004, 2:1071-1074).

When asked to reflect upon shifts in her beliefs and values as a teacher, Sharon reported little change. She viewed her identity, beliefs and values as consistent with her early beliefs and practice. "I don't think I have changed that much" (Sharon, 2004, 1:876). Sharon described herself as a teacher guided by children's needs. She reported that she continues to offer choice to students, although she limits student choices more so than she has in previous years. She attributes the lessening of choice to time constraints.

I gave a little bit more choice to kids, I think, as far as projects and stuff go than I do now. I think a large part of that is just time constraint [pause] if you are going to offer many projects, you have got to prepare those tic-tac-toe boards for them and all of that. That takes a lot of time (Sharon, 2004, 1:943-945).

Sharon indicated that she continues to value the social aspects of school and continues to encourage the development of positive relationships within the classroom.

So far as my teaching within my classroom, things have not changed that much and I feel

like I just [pause] my content and my academic areas get better. I feel like socially, I set up my room very well that first year and that I have just continued the same things. "You will treat each other respectfully. You will be kind. You don't have to like everybody but you will be courteous and respectful" (Sharon, 2:785).

Sharon values her relationships with students and works hard to honor every student with attention, love and nurturance. "I enjoy students because they are funny. Even the kids who are obviously disturbed, I can still enjoy them" (Sharon, 2004, 2:673). Sharon recalls developing relationships with students who had severe behavioral problems and social deficits. She prides herself in being able to find the positives in students, to form a close bond with these students and to influence their social and emotional development.

> I was able to tell him, "Look, yeah it was funny but look what happened to so and so. You may think it is funny, but they are not thinking it is funny." And once he was able to see that [pause] he stopped doing it so much (Sharon, 2004, 2:1256-1258).
>
> I have kept relationships with several of my kids who graduated last year or who are in middle school now. They call me on the phone because I did, I made that bond with them and it is important to me (Sharon, 2004, 2:1313).

Sharon also strives to establish solid relationships with parents of her students. "Parent communication was very important to me" (Sharon, 2004, 2:231).

> Every week the kids write a letter home to their parents saying this is what I learned. And I write a letter to the parent on the back. It is a way for me to say all of the good things. I always think of the positives (Sharon, 2004, 2:1348-1357).
>
> When I questioned Sharon about specific changes in her understanding of teaching and

what it means to teach, she explained that her skills as a teacher have improved. She described herself as more confident in her subject matter and the curriculum. "I realized how unprepared I was that first year. I realized that I was not [pause] that I did not have the content as strong as it needed to be for my students" (Sharon, 2004, 2:366-367).

> Within my classroom, things have not changed that much and I feel like my content and my academic areas get better. I felt like socially, I set up my room very well that first year and I have just continued the same things (Sharon, 2004, 2:785-789)
>
> Along with increased confidence, Sharon also described a broader understanding of the

complexities of teaching. Sharon often struggles to find ways to address the multiple needs of

individual students. For Sharon, teaching is a constant quest to find new materials and to reinvent the materials she used in previous years.   She often has wonderful ideas for teaching concepts, but is unable to carry through with many ideas due to time constraints.

> A lot of the things that I valued academically [pause] I still have them and would love to do them. I just don't have time to implement them. That is where the big stress comes in [pause] is time [pause] I don't have time to do all of the things I want to do for the classroom (Sharon, 2004, 2:815-818).

Sharon also acknowledged the influence of the school community on her practice of teaching. She has grown to understand the lives and values of her students and their families. In this rural community, there is little help or support at home for school work. Sharon's expectations regarding school work and projects reflect the expectations of the community. "I have a lot of kids who [pause] it won't get worked on at home. There is no help at home" (Sharon, 2004, 1:1030). Sharon gives her students very little homework. She insists that students work on projects at school rather than relying on parents at home to assist with long-term projects.

> I do all of my research papers [pause] they get done at school. That is class work for the day because if it is supposed to be educational and you are supposed to be teaching them how to do it in addition to whatever the content is, then why should it be done at home? (Sharon, 2004, 2:1021-1024).

Another contextual matter that influences Sharon's practice of teaching is the limited world experiences of her students. Sharon reported that very few of her students have traveled outside of their small community. "Very few of our kid shave been outside of that community. I mean, literally, most of them have not been to the neighboring town except when schools take them" (Sharon, 2004, 3:419-422). She described students and their parents as uncomfortable with newness and differences. Therefore, many families rarely go on outings, rarely explore new settings or participate in events outside of their community. As a teacher in the community Sharon has come to understand this mindset. "The whole idea of anything different is new" (Sharon, 2004, 2:396). Her understanding of the viewpoint has been instrumental in her introduction of a field trip to Williamsburg and Jamestown for her fourth-grade students. Sharon described the anxiety of parents and other teachers regarding the possibility of an overnight field trip for her group of students. "The parents are really reluctant to let their kids go. They are

hesitant. They are nervous about it. Everybody went to Williamsburg last year and everybody is going this year but they are nervous about it" (Sharon, 2004, 3:425-430).

Sharon also shared that she is much more aware of the political relationships within the context of school. Throughout the past four years, Sharon has witnessed an ongoing tension between teachers and the principal, and at times she has struggled with her relationship with the principal.

> I am on the planning team. I am one of the co-chairs for the planning team for my school and we had to redo our biannual plan for this year. We worked our butts off on it and my principal then wanted to change things the day before it was due. I was so furious with him. I ended up going a couple of rounds with him that day and was just in tears because I was angry. That really affected how I view him (Sharon, 2004, 2: 701-710).

Sharon described the task of negotiating with the adults in school as often more problematic and distracting than working with difficult students.

In summary, Sharon is extremely optimistic and is energized by her work. She conveyed a level of excitement about teaching and a love for students that is remarkable given the challenging context in which she teaches. Sharon stands by her decision to become a teacher and denied having any doubts about her decision to become a teacher or continuing her career as a teacher.

Sharon's understanding of teaching has broadened since she entered the classroom four years ago. She hinted at the recognition of the extreme complexity of teaching and the ongoing need to assess and rework her instruction and activities to address the needs of the students. She has encountered tough situations with explosive student behaviors and extreme emotional disturbance. Sharon has also witnessed the tension of relationships and politics within the school.

Seemingly, Sharon has experienced little change in her beliefs and values about teaching. She continues to value an atmosphere of security, warmth and nurturance. She devotes time to the social emotional development of her students and her relationships with students. She values the involvement of parents and yet recognizes the reluctance of parents to become involved in their children's school work. Sharon has come to understand that parents in her school community are reluctant to be involved in their children's school experience.

I view Sharon's zealousness for teaching as extraordinary. Given the difficult

circumstances she has experienced with student behaviors and extreme outbursts, I find her positive attitude hard to believe. She came into teaching expecting to work on the social-emotional realm of development with students in her classroom. Based upon her stories of teaching, she has plenty of work to do. Perhaps the seeming lack of shift in her beliefs and values reflects the fit between her needs as a teacher and the needs of her community. However, I noticed that aside from speaking to her love of teaching and her love of students, Sharon rarely spoke of her own emotions or her own struggles to make meaning of these tough situations.

Themes and Research Questions

In this section I discuss the interpretations and comparison of themes among participant interviews and among the supporting documents; preservice teacher portfolios, visual representations of self and event timelines.

Research Question #1: What has it meant to be a teacher across the first five years? How do early career teachers perceive that their understandings have changed since receiving a degree and licensure?

When asked about shifts in perceptions of what it means to teach, each participant described a deepened understanding of the complexity of teaching. For each participant, the act of teaching was a good deal more demanding than they had envisioned as a graduate student or as a student teacher. The most common topics mentioned by teachers with regard to initial challenges of teaching were a lack of preparation for teaching curriculum and subject areas, and management of behavioral problems in the classroom. In addition to these obvious changes in their understandings of what it means to teach, each participant discovered the hidden complexities of teaching which are seemingly evident only to those who have lived the experience of teaching. Each participant spoke of learning the political ropes of a school and several participants spoke about the emotions of teaching.

Overwhelmingly, participants spoke of their lack of preparation for teaching and the foreboding sense of inadequacy when they were assigned to their own classrooms. For example, Patty had this to say about her reaction to her first job as a teacher, "They give you a job and you are a kindergarten teacher. 'Go teach kindergarten.' I am thinking, 'Kindergarten!

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But I don't know. I don't know the SOLs. I had never looked at anything" (Patty, 2004, 2:5-11).

Sharon also recalled feelings of inadequacy, "I realized how unprepared I was that first year"

(Sharon, 2004, 2:366).

Each participant discussed their lack of knowledge of curriculum, but four of the six

participants recalled explicit inadequacies in the area of reading. "All I could think of was,

'Crap! Nobody taught us how to teach kids to read.' It was a glaring weakness. I mean nobody

taught us how to teach kids to read. We did not know anything" (James, 2004, 1:818-821). "If I

had been in the first grade setting where I was actually teaching reading skills, I would not have

had any idea of what to teach" (Sally, 2004, 1:362). "I don't remember having a class

specifically going over letter sounds and teaching those to teachers" (Patty, 2004, 1:531). "I

don't think I learned very much about reading because the professor was so into whole language"

(Sharon, 2004, 1:554).

Since that first year of teaching, each participant described an increase in confidence with

regard to curriculum knowledge and their ability to carry out the task of teaching. Although it

might be expected that teaching would get 'easier' over time and with increased experience, not

one participant described teaching as becoming easier. Linda, Barbara, James and Patty

described teaching as a continual challenge. "I had thought and I wrote down "I was expecting it

to get easy. I was expecting it to be easy. Fourth year. I have it down pat, but it was such a bad

year"(Barbara, 2004, 3:998-1000). "There are days that I leave here [pause] saying 'Oh, my

gosh, I don't know how [pause] how do I deal with this?' And you have to mull it around and

you figure it out" (Linda, 2004, 1:578-581). "You could put the perfect book, exactly what they

needed, in their hands and it is high interest and you still couldn't get them to do" (James, 2004,

2:225). Patty also spoke of the difficulty in teaching, "Not only do you have to make interesting,

you have to make it apply to the child. You have to make it a part of something that they do and

make it real for them [pause] and it changes a lot" (Patty, 2005, 3:492-494). Linda offered these

thoughts about teaching, "It is not a task that I accomplish and I can keep going. It is always

reevaluating what the next possibility could be and trying to figure it out" (Linda, 2004, 3:248-

249).

Several participants referenced teaching as a "quest", or "a journey", and as a task never

mastered, but continually worked on.

There are a million ways, possibilities of beginning and starting something or figuring

something out or teaching it or learning that you need to [pause] the challenge is trying to figure out what works for each kid (Linda, 2004, 3:381-383).

In kindergarten you think you are teaching the same boring stuff [pause] you are teaching phonics, you are doing all of this stuff but the kids are so different. Every time you teach it, something different comes up and so it is never the same, even with the same stuff (Patty, 2005, 3:459).

A second common theme regarding participants' shifts in the understanding of what it means to teach was recognition of the importance of managing behavior problems in the classroom. Linda offered this comment upon recalling her early struggles with student behaviors in the classroom:

That is what I remember about those years. Not being able to teach, really having kids with these behavior issues that were not [pause] that I had never experienced before [pause] and feeling really ineffective and not really feeling like I had any control of what I was doing or what was happening or no support at all (Linda, 2004, 2:354-359).

Each participant shared stories about severe student behavior problems and spoke of the significant impact of such behaviors on their lives as teachers. Linda received an obscene and threatening message via email from a student. She was also falsely accused of physical aggression towards a student. One of Barbara's students threatened to hit her. James encountered students plotting to beat him with pool cues. Sharon was confronted with students attempting to set fire to the playground and throwing rocks at her car. She also described a student outburst which resulted in the school calling the police for assistance.

He was breaking stuff, throwing stuff and like the door opened a crack and he saw me. 'Shut up you bitch. I hate you!' in that screeching voice. He saw the special ed teacher and said, 'I am going to cut you up into little pieces and burn your carcass'. It was like something had taken this child over (Sharon, 2004, 2:593-600).

Several participants commented that these situations created unbearable stress in the classroom and interfered with their ability to teach. For Sally, the stress of attempting to manage a student's behavior outbursts impacted her marriage. "I had this kid that second year who was horrible. Having him in my classroom affected every part of my life. My husband would say, 'Sally, this kid is ruining our marriage" (Sally, 2004, 2:779).

Over time, these participants perceived they had gained skills and they saw themselves as

more capable of managing behavior. Their skills have improved based upon experience, research, reading and asking for support from colleagues.

> It has gotten better and I have read everything that I can get my hands on. I have tried to do things to make that better. I have watched everybody and observed other people and tried to use their ideas (Patty, 2004, 1:351).

Patty and Sharon were fortunate to have supportive colleagues and school administrators to help in situations involving extreme behavior outbursts in the classroom. Both also mentioned their involvement with their school district's Behavioral Assessment and Planning Team, a group specifically assigned to work with teachers and parents of students experiencing behavioral difficulties.

> However, other teachers were not supported by their administration when faced with significant behavioral problems. Barbara, James, Linda and Sally described situations where they did not feel supported by their administrators or colleagues. Sally was the most vocal about her principal's shortcomings in supporting her efforts with a student who frequently ran out of the school.

> This kid would just knock a kid, knock another one. It wasn't for anyone's attention or benefit. He just did because that is what he did. It was so awful. It was constant. He would leave the classroom and run up the elementary school, and I am chasing this kid. I would say, "Mr. Moore, what can I do? I can't be chasing this kid. And he was like, 'Let him go. He will come back' (Sally, 2004, 2:790-796)

> Participants also discovered that teaching involves more than developing a working relationships students and parents. Working in a school requires interactions with and relationships among numerous adults. Each participant described the challenges presented by difficult relationships. Sharon described her frustrations with an instructional aide assigned to her classroom who did not respect Sharon's teaching style.

> I got another aide and she was a woman set in her ways. She did not like a lot the things that I was doing. She hooked onto one of the kids and worked with him mainly. She tried to tell me how to do things. I don't mind suggestions but when you tell me what to do [pause] I really don't appreciate it. So that made things difficult. There was this tension going on (Sharon, 2004, 2:132-140).

Barbara's team teacher struggled for two years with depression and anxiety. In their team

meetings, Barbara listened to her colleague's woes, encouraged her, and on many occasions took on more responsibility for teaching in order to support her colleague.

> My teaching partner at the time was a wonderful person. She was having a lot of [pause] she had always had a lot of self confidence issues. She has always thought that she was a terrible teacher. I felt as though I was constantly having to prop her up and pat her on the back. She had some personal issues and it was just a really hard year (Barbara, 2004, 3:902-908).

James described the atmosphere at his school among the faculty as tense. Upon the arrival of a new principal, the entire faculty was required to participate in an inservice focused on personality and working styles. The goal was to create a sense of acceptance among the faculty and improve the collegiality in the school.

> This inservice was brilliant. It was wonderful. It helped everyone on the faculty. As you looked around the room, the librarian and the fourth-grade teacher were over there and we were laughing hard at each other. They made us come up with a slogan and a theme song. One of the main things it did was to help improve the climate of the school (James, 2004, 2:973-980).

Related to the discovery of the numerous complexities of teaching, participants frequently described the emotions associated with the work of teaching. Interestingly, throughout my conversations with the participants, I noted a continual theme of the emotions of teaching. The female participants were quick to describe and explicitly name their emotions while James' emotions related to teaching were more evident through his body language and tone of voice than in his conversation.

For example, several of the female participants spoke of their care for students and an initial belief that they could make a difference in the life of a child. Barbara admitted that she had an initial hope and belief that she could turn students around and motivate students towards success. She described this belief as a 'pie in the sky' attitude. Although Barbara later accepted the fact that she had little influence on students, she continued to care for her students.

> I don't think it is healthy to go home and lose sleep about students' lives that you can't, I can't fix. I can't adopt them. I can't take them home with me (Barbara, 2004, 1:497-500).
> Similarly, Sally began her career with the somewhat of an unrealistic belief that she could love and care for all children. In her second year of teaching, Sally encountered a child who was

difficult to like. Sally described the child as stubborn, uncooperative, and manipulative and Sally invested an abundance of time attempting to form a relationship with the child. It was difficult. Sally was not successful in reaching this student and she found it difficult to like the child. Sally finally admitted to herself a dislike for this student. Sally described this realization about herself as disheartening. "I felt disgusted inside myself but I couldn't wait for her to walk out of that classroom on the very last day" (Sally, 2004, 2:890-891).

Sharon spoke of her love and care for students who were difficult to love, but, unlike Sally, Sharon had been successful in creating positive relationships with tough kids. "I have this one kid [pause] who I did get him for two years in a row. I made sure he was in my class because I loved him" (Sharon, 2004, 2:1246-1247). Sharon claims that her caring attitude towards her students has helped her in the classroom. Sharon spoke of students who experienced significant behavioral problems and severe outbursts, and yet these students have succeeded in her classroom. Many times she has worked with parents and doctors in order to keep students with significant emotional and behavioral problems in her classroom. Sharon is proud of the close relationships she forms with students and reported that several students continue to call and visit her once they leave the elementary school setting.

Linda also described herself as a caring teacher. She began student teaching with a strong desire to build relationships with her students. She believed a close relationship would benefit students and enhance their ability to learn. Linda quickly realized that creating a close connection with each student was unrealistic and yet she began her first year of teaching with the hope of building relationships with students. She cared for her students. She invested time listening to their problems and giving them advice. Patty also discussed the importance of connecting with students:

> I think that [nurturing] has to be the overriding part of it all because the most important thing is the relationship that you have with kids. I mean, I know everyone says that it, and it sounds so trite, but it is so true. I mean, some kids, you can just bond with immediately. You know, it is there. And some kids you have to work so much harder to get to it. I think if you don't have that, then you can't teach them anything else that we are doing (Patty, 2004, 3:535-542).

The emotions of teaching are not always positive emotions. Teachers also spoke of the hurt, worry, disappointment, and frustration associated with teaching. Several participants

referenced feelings of overwhelming frustration and the frequency of tears in reaction to their experiences in the classroom. James' frustration with other teachers' lack of preparation and dedication to teaching was evident in this comment:

> I would really just love to talk to some people and say, 'It has been 15 years of you being in this building, screwing children and not doing the work. Making our families not look good and making our school not look good and making our kids not look good. The greeter job at Wal-mart is great. You know [pause] 'How are you? You need a cart? Can I see your receipt, please? How are you this morning?' (James, 2004, 2:439-445).

Linda described feelings of disappointment and hurt following two noteworthy events which hampered her willingness to reach out to students. These events were hurtful for Linda and she became less willing to invest her personal emotions in the lives of her students. Similarly, Sally described her emotional struggle in dealing with a difficult student and the tears shed in light of her frustration. "I was constantly speaking out of frustration and exasperation and pulling my hair out, which is not my personality at all" (Sally, 2004, 2:986-989). "I would come home in tears"(Sally, 2004, 2:782).

It was common for the negative emotions and frustration associated with teaching to result in misgivings about continuing in the profession. Linda expressed her doubts about teaching, "I sometimes think, 'Why am I doing this?"(Linda, 2004, 3:857). Likewise, Sally recalled occasions when she had questioned her decision to become a teacher.

> Why am I doing this? I didn't help him. I didn't help her. None of the kids in my class had a good year. I was miserable. Why am I doing this? This is a thankless job. This is not rewarding I was so bitter about everything (Sally, 2004, 2:930-933).

Similarly, Patty recalled questioning her decision to be a teacher:

> So on those days, I think, 'What am I doing? I don't get paid enough. I don't make half of what my husband makes and here I am. It is 10 o'clock at night and all I can think about is this little guy in my room.' But it usually works out and you come back and it is just worth it. It is hard but it is worth it (Patty, 2004, 1:663-668).

The emotions of teaching call for maintenance of a strong balance between the positive and the negative; the ability to care for students and to push students towards growth and achievement while also balancing the personal frustration, hurt, worry and fatigue that teaching creates. Barbara and Patty commented on having a fear of losing the ability to care for students.

I sometimes have this fear that is what I am going to become (burned out). I hope that I would quit on my own before [pause] that I will be able to recognize [pause] that I will have enough self awareness to recognition it if I lose heart in it (Barbara, 2004, 3:1291-1295).

I enjoy it and if I don't someday, I won't stay. I remember teachers that I've had personally in elementary school that should not have been anywhere near the school building. So I would never want to do that because I think one of the thing that I have realized is the influence that you do have on children (Patty, 2005, 3:716-718, 726-732).

In summary, within the first five years of teaching, these participants underwent a significant shift in their understandings of teaching. Participants quickly recognized the difficulty, the complexity and the multidimensional nature of teaching. Each participant spoke of initial feelings of inadequacy regarding teaching curriculum and managing student behaviors. Over time, each participant described an increase in their confidence and knowledge-base but acknowledged that teaching continues to be a challenge. Participants also described the work of establishing and maintaining relationships with students, parents and colleagues. Finally, these participants spoke of the emotions, both positive and negative, that accompany the work of teaching.

Research Question #2: How do these teachers perceive that their sense of self or identity has changed since becoming a teacher?

For the most part, participants in this study described little change in their core values and beliefs as teachers in comparison to their values and beliefs as student teachers. Each teacher was adamant that their beliefs and values as defined and described during their preservice years continues to hold true. "I was very enthusiastic. I still am. I don't think I have changed. I asked my husband [pause] I am like, 'I don't think I have changed very much'. He is like, 'I don't think you have either' (Sharon, 2004, 1:837).

I have had to adapt. I have had to change things and I have had to go against a lot [pause] some of my philosophy but the basic core is still there (Sally, 2004, 2:727-729).

I wouldn't change a thing. There is nothing that I wrote (teaching philosophy) that I don't totally buy into now (Barbara, 2004, 1:492).

The thing I wrote for my beliefs was the front page of my portfolio and it is hanging by

my mirror in my classroom. Every kid needs a voice. Every kid can learn. Your job is to find out how they learn best and let them hear what they say to give them ownership in the classroom. And I believe that [pause] I continue to believe that (James, 2004, 1:1144).

Yet, an inconsistency between professed beliefs about teaching and the practice of teaching was evident. In the case of three participants, James, Linda and Sally, the professed beliefs and values about teaching were not mirrored in their description of their practice of teaching. Sally clearly experienced the most difficult transition into teaching among the six participants. She described herself as struggling to match her belief in child-centered learning with the established practice of didactic teacher-led teaching in the public school. Sally admitted that, although she has increasingly adopted the established practice within her school, she continues to believe in a more child-centered approach to learning and regards the child's process of inquiry as the best method of teaching children. Sally's practice of teaching no longer mirrors her implicit theory and beliefs about teaching. "Just being around other teachers who do it without even thinking and [pause] you kind of become sucked into what you have to do and you just do it" (Sally, 2004, 3:505-507).

James entered the teaching profession with a conviction to empower students and to give them ownership in the classroom and a voice in their learning. Yet, his practice of teaching does not reflect the gift of choice for students. James admitted that his belief in focusing on the whole child is 'out the window' and that he concentrates on academic achievement. He felt pressure to improve his students' performance on mandated standardized tests. James' implicit theories and beliefs about teaching are not evident in his descriptions of his teaching.

Linda approached teaching with a desire to build relationships with students. Her teaching portfolio documented her implicit theories about the connection between learning and relationships in the classroom. Linda began her teaching career with the intention of developing close ties with her students. The physical arrangement of her classroom reflected her belief in creating a safe environment and the emphasis on conversation. Indeed, Linda recalled making a difference in the lives of a few children with her caring approach in teaching and she continues to believe in the importance of relationships with students.   However, Linda no longer reaches out to students. Her practice of teaching and relating to students has changed. She is cautious about her interactions with students, even in her written comments on their papers. Linda's

implicit theories about teaching are not evident in her practice of teaching.

Barbara, Patty and Sharon described their teaching practices as mirroring their professed beliefs about teaching. Barbara seemingly entered the teaching profession with her beliefs and values firmly established. She had numerous previous experiences with school from several different perspectives and seemed to adjust well to teaching.

Sharon also professed little change in her values and beliefs about teaching. She claims that her practice of teaching follows the same beliefs and values she carry with her from student teaching. Sharon described the social-emotional piece of teaching as a highlight in her teaching and she has encountered students whom have benefited from this approach in the classroom.

Patty seemingly entered the profession of teacher with the idea of mothering her students. She described herself as a loving, caring teacher and one that encouraged and cheered students on. Patty's beliefs seem to go hand-in-hand with expectations of kindergarten. She is able to provide the nurturing that comes naturally to her. However, Patty seemed more reluctant than other participants to discuss her identity as a teacher. She commented that her perception of herself as a teacher is still forming and changing.

In summary, these participants described little change in their personal beliefs and values since beginning teaching. Three participants (Barbara, Sharon, and Patty) described their practice of teaching as aligned with their teacher identity, beliefs and values. The remaining three participants (James, Linda and Sally) described their current practice of teaching within the classroom as failing to match their beliefs and values about teaching.

Research Question #3: What significant events or experiences are perceived to have been influential in teachers' identity formation and understandings of what it means to teach?

By far the most influential factor in the formation of identities as teachers, and in the development of understandings of teaching was the context in teaching took place. Patty spoke favorably of the political climate in her school and credited her success and continued work as a teacher as a result of the principal's work to make the school a community of teachers and learners. "It is a great school. I will stay here as long as I can, as long as we have this principal" (Patty, 2004, 1:588). Barbara and Linda also spoke positively of their school settings and specifically the support they receive from colleagues and team teachers. "Colleagues are wonderful" (Barbara, 2004, 2:913).

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If I didn't have this group of people that I work with that help me and support me [pause] then I don't think I would feel the same way about teaching. It would just become a source of huge frustration. If you have support within the schooling environment, it makes all the difference in the world (Linda, 2004, 3:179-182, 188-190).

Frequently, the political climate of the school was described as a hindrance in the practice of teaching. James experienced the negative impact of school climate on his teaching practice. In recollection of his first year of teaching in a large urban school district that was plagued with a multitude of problems and scarce resources, James quickly recognized the impact of context upon his beliefs and practice of teaching. He encountered difficulty teaching in that setting due to the violence, poverty, family dysfunction, and the significant behavioral difficulties that plagued the school system. Although he was frustrated and unsuccessful as a teacher, James refused to give up on teaching because he recognized the influence of the setting upon his success. "I just decided [pause] I am not that bad of a teacher and I need to go somewhere else" (James, 2004, 2:56).

A move to his current position was a welcomed change for James. The setting was familiar and more supportive. While James was hopeful that a new setting would yield more success for him as a teacher, James' practice of teaching continues to be influenced by the context of his teaching. As a fifth-grade teacher in a school that has not achieved full accreditation from the Virginia Department of Education, James and his colleagues are under pressure to raise test scores. James admitted that his focus is on academic success. He has little time in his classroom to focus on the social-emotional aspects of teaching, something that he initially valued as a teacher.

Sally's struggle with identity formation as a teacher was deeply complicated by her experiences within two contradictory settings. As a college student, Sally was deeply invested in the Reggio Emilia philosophy of the University Lab School where she spent time as an undergraduate and graduate student. Shifting from the setting of the Lab School and the corresponding approach of emergent curriculum to a public school setting and the accompanying regimented approach to learning was a difficult experience for Sally. Working in a setting that supported a more traditional teacher-oriented, didactic approach to teaching created turmoil in Sally. She continues to believe in the Reggio approach to teaching, but described that she is not teaching in a context which supports an emergent curriculum or child-centered learning. Sally

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described that she has increasingly given up on her own beliefs in order to fit in with her colleagues and the expectations of her school district.

> I think that is one of the things that I had to learn to accept. That I am going to have to do things that I don't agree with, but it is part of being in public schools. The titles change and you just gotta go with the flow at times (Sally, 2004, 3:457-461).

The politics of a bureaucratic system were also influential in teachers' practices of teaching. Participants described the frustration of working within a in a system of rules and spoke to how rules become so important so as to eliminate the possibility of change or ingenuity. Several teachers commented on the discovery of unwritten rules within their schools and the energy spent on learning the 'system'. For example, the extra work Barbara completed for grant funding was overshadowed by her failure to go through the proper channels and receive authorization prior to competing for grant monies.

> I had a parent from Tech who I had gotten to help me with it (a contest) and he did a little computer modeling thing that the kids practiced and tried out. I submitted it and was real excited. The last workday, I found out that I had won $500. I went to my principal and I said, 'I want to tell you I have just won $500 and it would be a check for the school.' Her first reaction was 'Did you get approval for that?' Not 'That is wonderful!' or 'You did extra work!' (Barbara, 2004, 3:1115-1129).

Sharon teamed with two new teachers her first year of teaching and as a result was not informed of many of the unwritten rules about the politics of her school.

> It was hard because all three of us stepped in and there were all of these unwritten rules of how things are done at that school and lots of traditional things that we didn't want to do. You know, lots of worksheets and nobody went on field trips and the three of us all wanted to lots of field trips and [pause] so it was hard. We never knew what was going on. There were things that they did every year and we would get hit all of a sudden with it (Sharon, 2004, 2:46-51, 62-63).

Sharon's first year of teaching was also heavily influenced by the unwritten rules of her school. She described how the administration arrived at the decision to place the majority of special education students in Sharon's class.

> None of us had a say in how the kids were going to get divided up. They were already set up when we got there. They decided to ability group the kids. So, all of the gifted

and upper-end kids were in Jane's room. All of the middle of the road kids, who were actually probably below average, lots of [pause] some ADHD kids [pause], but mostly academically middle of the road kids [pause] were in Polly's room. And then I got all of the special education kids and the kids who had been retained. They have always done it that way (Sharon, 2004, 2:71-79).

Participants like James and Linda, came to recognize the limitations of a bureaucratic system and the frustration in attempting to influence change within that system.

I needed help in the classroom [pause] and they [a state assistance team] would say, ' Well, you know, we can't come and help you yet. Not until we have done our formal observations.' And I was like, 'Come in my room. Come help. Come work with me'. Finally it was like October before they got to me (James, 2004, 1:501-511).

One of the things they did here [pause] teachers would get together and basically what they did was they got books and they read. They would discuss them and how they applied to the school. One of the things that prevented them from maybe continuing to participate is that they took issues [pause] For example, we had a really bad problem with discipline in terms of our kids saying whatever they wanted to you and that not ever really being addressed [pause] We brainstormed and came up with some ideas and different things. But what happens is if the administration is not willing to accept the responsibility then it kind of takes away. When you put that much energy into something, it is hard to keep it going (Linda, 2004, 1:470-485).

In addition to context, several participants credited past teachers and parents as factors influencing their perceptions of teaching and their early identity as a teacher. For Sharon, her mother, who was a teacher, was an influential in shaping her understandings and perceptions about teaching. Sharon also viewed her cooperating teacher during her student teaching experience as influential in her development of values and beliefs about teaching. Sally and Linda also recalled teachers from their childhood who modeled the qualities they wanted to portray in the classroom.

Barbara, Patty, Linda and Sally identified the experience of parenthood as a significant factor impacting their identities as teachers. Parenthood influenced how they approach teaching, how they approach parents and how they approach students. Barbara and Patty decided to become teachers based upon their experiences as parents of children in school. Barbara

described the numerous ways that her experience as a mother continues to influence who she is and how she teaches in the classroom. Sally described how motherhood created a change in her view of students in the classroom.

> Having my child has really influenced me as a teacher. I am so much more compassionate to things. You know, I really see kids as my own kids rather than somebody else's kids, or that this is my job. I did not realize how much that was going to affect me. I used to be the type of teacher that if a kid fell, I would be like, 'You are alright. Hop up. No bruises. You are fine.' Now I am like, 'Oh, honey! Oh! There is dirt on your pants. You mama is going to get mad. Let's wash it off' (Sally, 2004, 3:237-245).

Linda described herself as a person who tends to over-invest her personal energy and time in her work. Having a child brought about a change in how she spends her time and invests her energy. She is also more aware of the parent perspective on schooling.

In summary, the events and experiences described as influential in teacher identity development and their perceptions of teaching included the context of their teaching, parenthood and memories of influential teachers and parents. The context of teaching greatly impacted teachers' understanding of what it means to teach and their practice of teaching. Participants specifically identified the political climate of a school and the often hidden set of laws system within their school system as impacting their practice. Participants recognized the influence of past teachers, parents and colleagues on their perceptions of teaching and their development as a teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Implications

Teaching is a demanding occupation. Teachers are asked to teach students from a multitude of backgrounds and with a variety of needs and they are often expected to teach often with less than ideal support and limited resources. Meanwhile, teachers face an abundance of public criticism. They are criticized by parents, politicians, other teachers and the media for inadequacies in their abilities to teach children.

Traditionally we have assumed that an effective teacher is one with subject matter expertise and knowledge of methods for teaching and instruction. But is that all that teaching consists of? Is teaching solely a technical competence? What about the personal dimension of teaching? What about the beliefs and values of teachers which affect teacher thoughts, decisions and classroom behavior? Increasingly, educational researchers have shown that effective teachers are aware of the influence of the personal dimension upon teaching (Fang, 1996). The focus on identity development in teachers has become increasingly recognized in recent decades, further, university teacher education programs have fused self-development activities and assignments into content courses (Beijaard et al., 2004; Hargreaves, 1998; Tickle, 1999; Tusin, 1999; Van den berg, 2002; Zembylas, 2003). For example, the teacher education program at Virginia Tech requires preservice teachers to complete journal entries describing and reflecting upon their experiences. Preservice teachers are grouped into cohorts for professional seminars and group discussion. They are required to create teacher portfolios for documenting their reflections upon, feelings about, and understandings of their experiences and to look towards the future and develop goals for who they want to become as teachers. The goal is to clarify the values and beliefs of preservice teachers and to encourage students to develop a lifestyle of reflection and meaning making about their experiences.

Yet, within the public school setting, the personal dimension of teaching is seemingly overlooked. Arthur Jesild (1955) first wrote about the connection between beliefs and values on the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom and yet 50 years later, the teaching profession largely ignores this dimension of teaching. As they face a multitude of problems, challenges, ethical and moral dilemmas on a daily basis, classroom teachers have little time to think about who they are as teachers, to make meaning of their experiences and to clarify their beliefs and values (Gratch, 2000; Lortie, 1975; Schempp, Sparkes & Templin, 1999; Wildman & Niles,

1987b).

My interest in teacher development and developmental theory motivated me to conduct this study. The purpose of the study was to examine the shifts in the professional identities of teachers; specifically shifts in their understanding of teaching and their beliefs and values as teachers, and the events and experiences that influence teachers' perceptions of teaching and early identity formation. This chapter offers a discussion of the findings of the study. Assertions that were gleaned from teacher statements, experiences, reflections and meaning making are discussed in the following sections.

Preparation for the Complexities of Teaching

Overwhelmingly, these participants reported dramatic shifts in their understandings of teaching once they began teaching. Despite having had positive experiences in student teaching, participants found that they felt overwhelmed and unprepared for the management of their own classrooms, the curriculum, and behavioral management. Each participant spoke of the exhausting work of becoming a curriculum expert and the simultaneous challenges of managing the behavioral problems of students.

The initial struggle of teachers to achieve confidence with both curriculum issues and behavioral issues is not new to research on teacher development. In fact, the first year of teaching is often characterized as negative (Adams & Krockover, 1977; Herbert & Worthy, 2001; Fessler, 1995; Veeman, 1984). Several researchers have described early teaching experiences as being plagued with unrealistic optimism followed by pain, anxiety, curriculum inadequacies and poor behavioral control (Berliner 1994; Fuller, 1969; Huberman 1993; Katz, 1972; Olson & Osborne, 1991; Schmidt & Knowles, 1995; Weinstein, 1988). Over the course of four to six years of teaching, participants in this study recognized a definite improvement in their skills as teachers but participants failed to describe teaching as becoming easier over time. Participants viewed teaching as more than a set of skills to attain but as ongoing labor towards achievement of goals that is continually filled with challenges and problems.

Things to think about

It seems that an understanding of the multiplicities of teaching is incomprehensible until one lives within the work of teaching. Nevertheless, university teacher education programs are charged with the responsibility of preparing preservice teachers for the realities of the classroom.

What can university education programs do to offer to support preservice teachers? What more can universities do to prepare preservice teachers for teaching curriculum, handling behavioral problems and student outbursts?

Early and ongoing exposure to different school contexts definitely benefits the preservice teacher. Cruickshank (1985) pointed out that new teachers often have too short of an apprenticeship as preservice teachers and that perhaps too many teacher education programs limit preservice teachers to only one teaching experience and one teacher as a model (Liston & Zeichner, 1991; Snyder, 1994). Several participants in this study recalled the importance of observing a variety of teachers in their classrooms during their preservice experiences. These observations seemingly assisted preservice teachers in clarification of who they wanted to "be" in the classroom. Preservice field experiences also provided a variety of models of teacher behavior.

Another suggestion for teacher educators in their endeavor to support preservice teachers in developing complex understanding of the multiplicities of teaching is a comparison of preservice teachers' field base experiences and with the subject matter of the college classroom. Do college classrooms truly prepare preservice teachers for the pressures of the classroom? Do the philosophies of the college classroom translate easily to the public school classroom? Are we preparing preservice teachers for the realities of the classroom? For example, each of the participants in this research described extreme and sometimes distressing struggles with behavior management. Are preservice teachers exposed to explosive student behavior in the public schools, and do university classrooms offer strategies for handling a variety of kinds of behavioral challenges? Although it is difficult to teach students how to manage behavior in a university classroom, the use of case studies and problem based learning models are excellent methods of producing rich discussion about tough issues like student behavior problems. The use of scenario based teaching methods may prove beneficial in preparing preservice teachers for the behavioral challenges they will face in the classroom. Based on the experiences of these participants, it appears that much more intensive and in-depth preparation for dealing with behavior problems in the classroom might have made the entry into the teaching profession less painful and less stressful.

Additionally, a collaborative partnership between the university teacher education programs and public schools may offer further support in the education and preparation of

preservice teachers. Collaborative partnerships, similar to the concept of Professional Development Schools as promoted by NCATE, would allow university faculty to spend time in the public schools teaching classes, mentoring teachers and coaching preservice, early career, and veteran teachers. Within contexts such as Professional Development Schools, teacher educators would also stay abreast of the current political and institutional pressures of teaching as they themselves would be engaged in confronting the ongoing complexities of teaching in public school. In "exchange" for services from university faculty, veteran public school teachers would teach or co-teach university teacher education courses. The inclusion of veteran teachers in preservice teacher cohort seminars provides a rich opportunity for personal discussions about the complexities of teaching (Barksdale-Ladd, Rudden, Oaks, Nedeff, Isenhart, & Johnson, 1995; Barksdale-Ladd, Isenhart, Nedeff, Oaks, & Steele, 1997; Field & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997). Such collaboration may also encourage cooperation among university faculty, preservice and inservice teachers in research regarding teacher practice in elementary and secondary schools (Dunkin, 1996).

Within the public school setting, more needs to be done to support teachers in their work. With regard to beginning teachers, school administrators need to be cognizant of the challenges placed upon new teachers. Beginning teachers should not be assigned to grueling teaching situations. More arduous assignments, like Sharon's first year assignment, should be reserved for veteran teachers who have more confidence, knowledge and savvy in handling tough students and parents. Reduced first-year teaching loads would also be helpful in providing new teachers with the time to reflect upon their work. Participation in a mentoring program may also prove helpful. New teachers may specifically benefit from partnering with other beginner teachers and developing a peer mentoring relationship (Eick, 2002). Ongoing dialogue with others may be helping in promoting deeper reflection upon the practice of teaching and the meaning of experiences in the classroom (Roth & Tobin, 2002).

Many school districts provide mentoring programs for beginning teachers but why limit participation in such a program to the first-year teachers? Several participants in this study experienced difficulty with curriculum and behavioral intervention strategies well beyond the first year of teaching. Thus, mentoring programs should be extended to all teachers desiring support, regardless of their years of experience in the classroom. It seems that school districts need to commit to providing a mentoring program on an ongoing basis. In order for mentoring

programs to be more effective, mentoring relationships among colleagues need to be encouraged and cultivated. Teachers need time to establish collegial relationships. Teachers need encouragement and permission to talk with other teachers and observe other classrooms. Teachers need time out of the classroom to visit other programs, other districts, attend conferences and to coach each other in their work. This means providing provide structural support for mentorship such as additional planning time, ongoing training and seminars about how to be a coach and a mentor and salary supplements for the extra work and time required for a mentoring program.

If school districts created systems in which mentoring could be provided for all teachers who request mentoring support, it might be that teachers changing to new schools or different grade levels might seek support after many years of teaching experience. Clearly, a teaching culture that provides support to all who request it could lead to stronger teaching, and mentoring relationships of this kind could provide a "place" for both reflection on teaching and the examination and refinement of teaching identities.

The Emotional Lives of Teachers

Another theme that emerged from teachers' explanations of their understandings of their work was the talk of emotions associated with teaching. The participants in this study described numerous situations in which they dealt with the emotions of teaching. For example, Linda felt immediately vulnerable when faced with a student who sent her a threatening message and yet her emotions were not brought into consideration when administrators addressed this incident. Linda was not encouraged to speak with the student or his family. She was not included in decisions regarding the student's consequences, nor was she asked whether or not she felt comfortable in continuing to teach the student. Other participants spoke similarly of the lack of support for their emotional lives. For instance Sally felt unsupported by her principal and colleagues in the face of dealing with a behaviorally explosive student.

It was this emotional talk that characterized the personal dimension of being a teacher and the view of self as a teacher. The participants' use of emotion laden terminology to describe their responses to events included their personal thoughts, judgments and beliefs. Participants in this project described positive experiences using words such as "love", "happiness", "exciting", and "pleasure". Teachers also described negative experiences using words such as "frustration",

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"hate", "fear", and "disgust".

Emotions are central to the occupation of teaching due to the personal and relational basis of teaching (Hargraeves, 2000; Osborn, 1996) and studies on teacher emotion have called attention to the link between emotions and teachers' lives (Zembylas, 2004). Yet, the emotional issues of teaching have long been overlooked in the research on teachers and teaching. Zembylas (2003) argues that it is impossible to understand who we are as individuals and what we believe and value without considering the meanings of our experiences and the emotions we assign to those experiences. Emotions play a central role in the negotiation of self with experiences and context. Consideration of methods of addressing teacher emotions in both the university setting and the public school setting is needed.

Things to think about

How do we as university faculty support the emotional lives of teachers? Are preservice teachers encouraged to talk about their emotions, or do we dismiss the emotions of teaching and ignore the need of teachers to talk about their personal feelings and experiences? At the university level, do professors in teacher education programs provide support for preservice teachers who are confronting the emotions of teaching? Are preservice teachers encouraged to reflect on their emotions and talk about the personal issues that accompany teaching? Research providing answers to these questions is lacking; thus, it is reasonable to assume that the answers to these questions is "no."

The neglect of the emotional dimension of teaching is disturbing (Hargreaves, 2000). As teacher educators, we need to ask ourselves if the talk of emotions is suppressed and ignored in the education of teachers. Emotions are an integral part of the experiences of life and cannot be divorced from actions, practice or experience. As university faculty encourage preservice teachers to reflect upon their practice and understanding of teaching, faculty must also encourage preservice teachers to reflect upon the emotions of teaching. Nias (1989) argued that teachers need to look at their emotional experiences because teaching is not just a technical skill, it is a practice that is intricately linked to teachers' personal lives.

Hargreaves (2000) argues that educational researchers have little understanding of how teachers' emotions play out in the interactions with students, parents, administrators and colleagues. Little research on teaching has looked into how emotions are shaped by the context of teachers' work. As teacher educators, the agenda of emotions in teaching should be brought to

the forefront of our educational research agenda.

Within the public school setting, teachers are bombarded with technical inservice trainings on topics such as methods of behavioral modification and analysis. Other than periodic inservice training, what support does the public school offer to teachers with regard to their emotional lives? Do we encourage teachers to talk about the emotions of teaching or are teachers encouraged to keep silent about their personal dispositions?

Talking about the emotions of teaching is important and yet, opportunities for teachings to talk about their work and their emotions are not provided in the context of school life. Several participants in this project offered words of appreciation for the opportunity to talk about their teaching and the emotions intertwined in the act of teaching. Within public schools, an offering of teacher inservice workshops focusing on the personal dimension of teaching is a must. We can no longer ignore the impact of teachers' emotions upon their work.

Teacher Identity

A specific focus of this research was the formation of teacher identity, specifically teacher beliefs and values, over the early years of teaching. Surprisingly, the teachers participating in this study reported little change in their identities as teachers. All of these participants claimed to hold continued beliefs in their original teaching philosophy statement drafted during their preservice experiences. This lack of change in identity, beliefs and values within these participants prompted several questions. First, did these participants really formulate their beliefs and values about teaching as preservice teachers or were their philosophy statements simply empty words with no true personal meaning, written on paper for an assignment? Secondly, if these participants did indeed sincerely draft their beliefs and values about teaching in their preservice years, have they really encountered no shifts, no growth, and no challenges to these philosophies over the past four to six years? And if in reality they have not encountered shifts or challenges, what does this lack of change suggestion about early identity formation and professional growth of these teachers? Or, thirdly, is it possible that these teachers have indeed experienced change in their beliefs and values and yet they have lacked the time and commitment to reflect upon these changes and have failed to realize that their beliefs, values and philosophy of teaching have actually changed? And if this is the case, what does this say about the profession of teaching and our valuing of the importance of reflection?

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It was evident that three participants; specifically James, Sally and Linda, described classroom behaviors and practices of teaching that were contrary to their professed beliefs and values about teaching. Research regarding teaching beliefs and practice suggests inconsistencies in the match between the beliefs and practice but overwhelmingly, research supports the notion that teachers' theoretical beliefs shape the nature of their teaching practices (Fang, 1996; Goodson & Cole, 1994; Stipek, Givvin, Salman, & MacGyvers, 2001). The claimed lack of change in these participants' beliefs and values and the inconsistency between identity (beliefs and values) and practice (teacher behavior in the classroom) also raised questions about early teacher identity formation; a) did these participants form a belief system about teaching during their preservice teacher education program, truly believe in it, and want to strive toward a practice of these beliefs but the pressure of the context makes it impossible to practice their beliefs?, b) did these participants actually form a belief system about who they were as teachers during their preservice teacher education program, walked into a classroom as a new teacher holding these beliefs and values close to their heart but simply, in practice, betray their beliefs?, or again, c) did these participants simply write a belief system on paper for the teacher portfolio assignment while failing to actually recognize and clarify what was important to them as teachers, giving no thought to it later in their day-to-day activities?

Based on the earlier literature review, it was established that most researchers examining identity have agreed that identity is: a) a constantly changing entity, b) identity formation requires a constant process of renegotiation over time, and, c) the process of forming an identity is greatly influenced by society and the interpretation of oneself within a social context. According to poststructuralist though, identity is constantly challenged and under alteration (Zembylas, 2003). Indeed, in Magolda's (2001) work with college students, she has identified four seemingly consistent and ongoing stages of identity and belief development throughout early adulthood. Her work testifies to the evolving developmental nature of identity. Given this accepted definition of the development nature of identity, it seems that the lack of shift in the identities, values and beliefs of the teachers participating in this research signifies a lack of growth and personal development.

What has contributed to this lack of change in identity? The context of public school is certainly suspect. Although research has repeatedly shown that teachers need time to reflect upon their practice of teaching and time to make meaning out of their experiences, we know that

the school contexts fail to encourage teachers to participate in reflective activities (Wildman & Niles, 1987a). Participants reported that teacher inservice workshops rarely if ever focused on the personal dimension of teaching.

Thus, this brings me to a final question. Are we, as teacher educators, also contributing to the lack of growth in teachers by our trend of requiring Master's degree for initial certification? Identity development is ever evolving and constantly changing. In her work with college students and their transition to young adulthood, Magolda (2001) has found that the task of formulating one's own ideas, beliefs, values and way of interacting with others takes time. In fact, Magolda (2001) reported that few participants in her study were capable of defining or establishing their own ideas, beliefs and values prior to the age of 30. Yet, there is a current trend within university teacher education programs is a requirement of a Master's degree for initial teacher certification. When this occurs, undergraduates usually move directly from a Bachelor's program straight into a Master's that provides all of the requirements for initial licensure, making them basically "advanced undergraduates." More traditionally, after obtaining the Bachelor's degree, students enter the workforce and gain work and life experiences, then return to graduate school for advanced study in their fields, reflecting on their previous (and sometimes current) work experiences while engaging in scholarship and research activities. Through Master's level initial certification programs in education, are we, as teacher educators, attempting to rush the developmental process of identity development? By requiring a graduate degree prior to initial teacher certification, are we denying teachers an avenue of growth and further examination of their beliefs, values and philosophies about teaching further down the road of their career?

Could it be best for teachers to begin teaching upon completion of a Bachelor's degree and then later, teachers would be encouraged enroll in a graduate program on a part time basis while they are teaching. Later enrollment in college courses would provide a structured opportunity to reflect on teaching while actually teaching. Participation in a graduate degree program after participating in several years of teaching would allow teachers the time and encouragement to address, refine or even discover beliefs and values about teaching. Further research could examine this possibility, however it is clear that ongoing support may be needed for sustaining teachers' personal and professional growth and identity development.

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Influence of Context

By far the most influential factor in the development of these participants' identity formation as a teacher was the context of their teaching. Researchers have noted the influence of context upon teachers' abilities to attend to their own beliefs and values (Beijaard, 1995; Bullough & Baughman, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Fang, 1996; Kelchtermans, 1993; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Context was most clearly an influential factor in James', Sally's and Linda's actions in the classroom; however, the impact of the school context on teaching identities and practices was profound for all six participants. For James, the political pressure for his students to achieve passing scores on mandated standardized tests has directly influence his practice of teaching. James described his teaching as targeting solely the academic realm despite his stated beliefs in the importance of educating the whole child. The activities within his classroom strictly address the subject areas of the upcoming Virginia Standards of Learning tests and his energies are directed at a constant monitoring of student progress on academic standards. Although he claimed to believe in educating the whole child, his day-to-day activities in the classroom are narrowly focused on the addressing student academic achievement.

Sally's experience is yet another example of the influence of context upon teaching practice. Sally was forthright in discussing the tension of working in a setting that did not support her early identity as a teacher. As a teaching of young children, Sally believed in the benefits of an emergent curriculum and the process of learning through inquiry. However, she consistently encountered a different philosophy of teaching and student management within her school faculty, administration and school district. Sally communicated that her values and beliefs about teaching are inconsistent with the traditional teacher-centered methods employed and expected in a public school setting. Sally described a painful journey of reconciling her beliefs with the expected teaching practice in her school.

Another example of contextual restraint was Linda's experiences with significant behavioral outbursts and her resulting reluctance to share herself with students. Linda seemingly abandoned her belief and practice of establishing relationships with students as a result of personal hurt, loss and vulnerability. The context of her work offered little support to her as she encountered threats from students. In order to protect herself from future hurt and vulnerability, Linda withdrew from establishing close ties to students. Although she continues to believe that effective teachers have open and close relationships with students, she does not feel safe or

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supported in practicing her beliefs within the context of her work.

Things to think about

Preservice teachers may profit from teaching at several schools that are different from one another. Discussion about these differences (i.e. social, cultural and economic) can enhance preservice teachers knowledge of the various external constraints imposed upon them in school contexts. Promoting conversation about the external factors that influence public school may prove beneficial for teachers. As they begin to work in public schools, a heightened awareness of how schools work, the politics of schools, the influence of society, and the limitations of the bureaucracy may lessen frustration as teachers begin their own careers.

Also, preservice teachers need to be encouraged to maintain a practice of strong, research-based instructional methods they have learned in their teacher education program. In states, like Virginia, where high-stakes teaching creates a high pressure environment focused on improving test scores, teachers can easily feel pressured to encourage memorization of facts rather than employing strong teaching skills and concepts through lessons designed to meet children's needs and guided by children's interests. High-stakes testing should not take away the creativity of the teacher to provide high interest activities to their students. It may be helpful for universities to work harder to provide preservice teachers with strategies for meeting standards such as the Virginia Standards of Learning while simultaneously providing child-centered instruction.

It is crucial for preservice teachers to recognize that they can continue to use creative and constructivist strategies to facilitate learning in the classroom despite the pressure to teach from a traditional teacher-oriented model for the purpose of addressing the Virginia Standards of Learning. For example, the Virginia Standards of Learning require second grade students to learn the life cycle of the butterfly. Addressing this SOL provides the prefect opportunity for teachers to use a constructivist approach and to integrate art, language, and science while providing rich and meaningful content of the lifecycle of a butterfly. In the classroom, desks can be grouped together to allow student interaction and collaboration on projects. Students may rotate through small group activities that focus on the butterfly but also address other curriculum goals; one group might write in their journals about the larvae stage of the butterfly lifecycle, another group might work on definition related word puzzles; another group might paint the stages of the butterfly life cycle; and another group might read about butterflies and their lives

with the teacher.

Unfortunately, No Child Left Behind legislation has seemingly reduced education to test scores and accountability. Despite the ongoing pressure of mandated testing, school administrators and principals need to look beyond standardized test scores. Strong administrators and instructional leaders are key in creating a school climate that is conducive to teacher growth and student success.

School administrators are obligated to providing conditions for teachers to invest in professional development. In addition to the typical inservice sessions focusing on instructional methods and curriculum, teachers need time and encouragement to reflect on their work and to build their knowledge. Teachers need encouragement to share their knowledge with others and to pay attention to what others are doing in the classroom.

How can we reconfigure the context of schools to promote the development of self and identity in teachers? In her ongoing work with young professionals and investigation of identity development, Magolda (2001) identified three assumptions consistently conveyed within the work environments which enhanced self authorship. Magolda (2001) found that a) employers frequently solicited the employees' perspective and respected employee judgement, beliefs and interests; b) employers also recognized that the employees' previous experiences and existing knowledge were a basis for continued learning and decision making; and, c) employers recognized the value of connecting their knowledge with that of their employees in order to arrive at a more complex understanding and decision making.

What would the context of school look like that operated on these three assumptions? Teachers would be asked to participate and contribute to the policy making process within their school. Principals would recognize the expertise of teachers and offer opportunities (i.e. participation in professional conferences, collaboration on grants, inter-district visitation, peer coaching and mentoring) for teachers expand their knowledge and to share their knowledge with others. Additionally, a school dedicated to the promotion of professional growth would allow for a distribution of leadership among teachers. Spending time collaborating and building shared meanings results in a team that holds a clear and shared sense of what they are doing and why they are doing it. The encouragement to think, reflect and understand can make all the difference in the work of teachers.

Reflections and Ideas for Future Projects

        I am very grateful to the teachers who participated in this project. They have provided me with a gift that I will never be able to repay. They invited me into their homes, their classrooms and their lives and graciously volunteered their time to accommodate my questions about their personal development as teachers. As I look back over the past several months and my work with these teachers, I am awed by what they have taught me about the personal dimension of teaching and about myself as a researcher.

        Their stories have fueled my interest in the personal dimension of teaching and the development of self within the context of public education. Although I am close to ending my journey as a graduate student, I realize I am only beginning my search for answers about how teachers form an identity and how their personal beliefs, values and emotions influence their practice of teaching. I have many more questions to ask.

        As I take on the role of educational researcher, I have several future research projects resulting from this initial work focusing on teacher identity formation. I am curious to know if participation in this project had an effect on the teachers who took part in it. Did our conversations regarding identity and personal development, specifically their values and beliefs about teaching, stir their curiosity or prompt them to reconsider their professed beliefs and values about teaching? If I revisit these teachers in a year, what would they tell me about their experience of participating in this project?

        I am also hopeful that I can convince a local school district to work with me to create a series of inservice workshops for teachers focusing on the personal dimension of teaching. I am confident that a combined research agenda exploring identity formation and the emotional lives of teachers could be supported through a Department of Education Quality Teacher Research Grant. I am hopeful about working collaboratively with schools in pursuit of funding to develop an inservice program/research project to continue investigating these topics.

        This dissertation project has also prompted questions regarding teacher identity formation and the different paths of teacher education/certification. A specific future research includes a continuation of the investigation of teacher development and identity formation with specific consideration of differing types of teacher education programs and routes to teaching; a) teachers who completed a four year degree in education, taught for several years and then pursued a graduate degree on a part time basis while teaching; b) teachers who completed a five

year graduate teacher education program; and, c) teachers who obtained Bachelor's degrees in other fields and worked in those fields, then returned to college to earn a Master's degree with initial teacher licensure, and d) teachers who completed a four year teacher education program and no additional graduate coursework.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

Date Sent: Monday, September 20, 2004 3:52 PM

From: Terry McCoy <temccoy@vt.edu>   Add to Address Book

To: kdhale

Status: ☐ Urgent ☐ New Update Status

Subject: 04- 436

Message:

04-436 Investigation of teacher identity formation
has been approved and you may begin. An approval letter will go in campus mail soon.

Thanks,

--

Terry McCoy

Research Compliance Officer
Virginia Tech Research Compliance Office
CVM Phase II, Duckpond Drive (0442)
540-231-1835

Semi structured interview guide

Interview 1:

Focus on the where and when:

    a.   Why did you decide to pursue a degree in teaching?

    b.   You were at Virginia Tech during what years?

    c.   You were working towards what degree in what area?

    d.   Where did you do your student teaching? What grade level(s)?

    e.   The amount of time spent student teaching?

Focus on image prior to student teaching:

    a.   Before entering a classroom as a student teacher, did you have an image of what teaching would be like?

        1.   What were you expecting?

    b.   Do you remember that image you held of teaching or those beliefs prior to student teaching? Describe that image for me.

Focus on image during student teaching:

    a.   What was student teaching like for you?

        1.   What part or parts of student teaching was/were difficult?

        2.   What was easy for you?

    b.   How did you view yourself as a teacher during that time?

    c.   Looking back on it now, how would you describe yourself as a student teacher?

    d.   What do you recall about yourself at that point in your life?

    e.   What was important to you at that point in your career?

        1.   What did you value?

        2.   Were there things that as a teacher, you were dedicated to, perhaps things that you were or were not going to do?

        3.   What were those things?

    f.   What did you think about kids and how they learned at that point?

    g.   Was there a specific philosophy or belief that you held as a student

teacher about teaching or how you were going to be as a teacher?

h.   During that time of student teaching, did your image of teaching change?

        1.   Did your image of teaching or the image of yourself as a teacher change?

i.   Many people and events impact us during times of transition and student teaching is such a time. Can you think of people or events that were influenced the image you held of yourself as a teacher when you were in the college phase or student teaching phase?

j.   How did you feel about the cooperating teacher you were working with?

        1.   Do you feel that he/she influenced your thoughts about yourself and the image you held of yourself as a teacher? If so, how?

Reflecting on the student teaching image of teaching and how it may have changed during that experience:

a.   Considering the time of student teaching, do you feel that your image of yourself as a teacher changed from the time you began the experience and the time you finished?

b.   What did you find out about yourself during that time that you were not aware of?

c.   When you left the student teaching experience, how did you feel about yourself as a teacher?

        1.   How did you feel about the profession of teaching?

        2.   What was different and what was the same about your feelings compared to how you were prior to or at the beginning of that experience?

Interview 2:

Focus on the where and when:

a. Where was your first job?

b. What grade level did you teach?

Focus on image of teaching at the point of student teaching:

a. when we talked last time …. You pointed out ….

b. You described yourself as …[pause]

c. Your beliefs about teaching at the time you finished student teaching….

Focus on image of teaching/self during that first year of teaching:

a. How did you feel about having your own classroom?

b. What were you expecting? Was having your how classroom anything like what you expected?

c. What do you remember about the first days of teaching?

d. What do you recall about yourself as a first year teacher?

a. what did you value?

b. What things/ideals were you dedicated to?

e. How do you think other people viewed you at that point in your career?

f. Describe "defining events" that took place during that year. Describe moments that contributed to your thoughts of yourself or image of yourself as a teacher.

g. Did your image of yourself as a teacher change during that first year?

h. Was there a specific philosophy or belief that you held about how your were "going to be" as a teacher?

i. Given the expectation of reflection on your teaching that you practiced during your education at Virginia Tech, did you find yourself practicing reflection during that first ` year of teaching? Did you keep a journal of your thoughts and experiences?

1. If so, was this habit helpful?

2. If not, why not?

Focus on the first year of teaching and how it may have changed during the experience:

a. Thinking back on that first year of teaching, do you think your image of yourself as a teacher changed during that year?

1. did you find out anything about yourself that you did not know?

b. What was different about you at the end of that first year of teaching?

c. How would you sum up that first year of teaching? What was it like for you personally?

Interview 3:

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What is teaching like now?

Think about your current image or view of yourself as a teacher. Describe that image or view to me.

> How do you see yourself at this point in your career?
>
> What is important to you as a teacher? What do you value?
>
> What are your philosophies about teaching?
>
> How do you think other people describe you as a teacher?
>
> Are you comfortable with who you are as a teacher and with the school in which you are employed? Is this a good fit?

How have you changed?

I feel like I have been on a journey of reflection with you about teaching, how you began, what that first year or so was like … and now you have shared with me how you see yourself now as a teacher.

Thinking back, how has your image or view of yourself as a teacher changed since you began teaching?

> How do you feel that your identity as a teacher has changed since your student days at Virginia Tech or since your student teaching experience?
>
> Who are you? What do you believe and value?
>
> How is this different from who you were?

What has contributed to or caused these changes?

What significant events, experiences have you felt to be influential in the formation of your identity as a teacher?

How have you sustained your perceptions of yourself as a teacher over time?

How have you maintained your love of teaching in the face of political, social and institutional change?

How do you know you have changed?

Have you actively engaged in self reflection?

Have you remained actively engaged in self development? If so, how?

Do teachers talk about the personal journey of teaching among themselves or is the development of identity a sole journey?

Have you attended inservice/workshops focused on the personal dimension of teaching?

Have you benefited from these interviews and assignments? Is so, how?

If staff development focused on the personal dimension of teaching, would you chose to attend?

Would that be an area of interest for you --- or do you feel that teacher identity is a personal journey?

__Prompts to be used during interviews to elicit further information from participants:__

Tell me more about that.

Would you elaborate on that?

Could you say more about that?

That is helpful. I would appreciate more detail about that.

Okay, I am beginning to get the picture.

Let me stop you for a minute. I want to make sure I thoroughly understand something you said earlier.

I appreciate your willingness to share your experiences and feelings. Tell me more about ….

We are about halfway through the interview and from my point of view, it is going very well. How is it going for you?

Appendix C

Brief explanation of drawing assignments

__Assignment 1__

I want you to take me on a journey of recalling your teaching career over the past five years. The initial interview will focus on student teaching, the second interview will focus on the first year of teaching and the final interview will focus your current experiences in teaching and how you view yourself as a teacher.

I am interested in how teachers' beliefs and values change during the first five years of their career and events that influence their lives.

Prior to our first interview session, take time to reflect upon your experience as a student teacher (or the period of time that you were teaching as a VT student and under supervision of VT faculty).

What do you recall about yourself as a teacher?

What did you value?

What did you believe in?

What define you as a teacher at that time?

What was important to you about teaching at that time?

How did you see/view yourself as a teacher?

What was that initial teaching experience like for you?

Capture thoughts about yourself and your experience as a student teacher in a visual representation (pictures, symbols). Remember, this visual representation only serves as a prompting of thoughts -- and as a way to record your thoughts to share with me -- so you do not forget about something that you want to share during our first meeting. I also think drawings sometimes allow people to express emotions that are not easily expressed in words. Please don't stress about this assignment -- just reflect upon who you were at the beginning of your teaching journey.

If you have artifacts from that time of your life -- find them and recall what teaching was like at that time. If you feel comfortable sharing artifacts with me (portfolio, journals, teaching packets,

notes from students or parents, gifts, or perhaps something you displayed in your classroom, etc) - please do. Many times, we save items that are meaningful to us and can recall more vividly our thoughts and feelings about an experience in relation to these items. I am very interested in hearing and seeing what that student teaching experience was like for you.

Assignment 2

I want to hear about your first year of teaching! Take time in the next two weeks to reflect upon that first year of teaching. I want to focus specifically on 'if' and 'how' your identity, your beliefs, your values as a teacher changed during that year. I am also wondering if your understandings/perception of teaching changed during that time.

Recall that first year. I am interested in hearing about where you worked and what grade level you taught. How did you feel on that first day of school? What happened during the year that was important to you as a teacher and personally (both positive and negative)? How did you feel on the last day of school? Was having your own classroom anything like what you expected? What do you recall about yourself that first year as a teacher? What were your beliefs and values about teaching, about learning and about children at that point? How would you describe yourself as a first year teacher? How do you think other people would describe you?

Capture your thoughts about yourself within that first year of teaching in a drawing. Do you have any artifacts from that time (journals, lesson plans, notes from kids and parents, gifts you received that were meaningful, something you displayed in your classroom, etc.) reflecting your values and believes at that point in your teaching journey?

I can't wait to hear about your experiences!

Assignment 3

In this 3rd interview, I want to capture how you feel that you have changed as a teacher since beginning in the classroom several years ago. We have talked about this some already but I want to investigate this topic more. This is probably the most critical interview of the series of interviews.

Prior to the third interview, think about who you are now as a teacher.

What are you like?

How would you describe yourself?

How do you think others (your students, parents of your students, your colleagues, the principal) would describe you as a teacher?

What do you value?

What are your philosophies about teaching?

How do you think you have changed since arriving in the classroom as a teacher?

Come up with a visual representation of yourself as a teacher.

Also, I would like for you to create a time line of your teaching career.

Include people who and events that have influence your identity as a teacher or your understanding of what it means to teach. I am not concerned about the form of this timeline. I am more concerned with your recollection of the past five years and the critical events (positive or negative) and influential folks. This timeline is a method of prompting your thoughts about your career and your identity as a teacher.

Thank you very much for taking me on this journey.

Appendix D

Dear _____,

My name is Kim Hale and I am a Ph.d. candidate at Virginia Tech. I am inviting you to take part in a research project focusing on the personal dimension of teaching and teacher identity formation in early career teachers.

I am working with several folks from Virginia Tech whom you may know including Mary Alice Barksdale, Sue Magliaro, Janet Sawyers and Jerry Niles. Dr. Kitty Rodgers, Assistant Superintendent of Montgomery County Schools, has also expressed interest in this research and has granted permission for Montgomery County teachers to participant in this project.

I am looking for five teachers who have been employed for at least four to five years in public school and who are graduates of the Virginia Tech graduate teacher education program. It is my understanding that you fit these criteria. Your name was initially mention to me be Roberta Snelling, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Education. Martha Ann Stallings, Staff Development Coordinator of Montgomery County Schools, also recommended that I contact you.

I am very excited about working with Montgomery County teachers. I am a product of Montgomery County Schools and a graduate of the Early Childhood Education program at Virginia Tech. Jerry Niles, the current Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, was my supervisor during student teaching many years ago. I spent 10 years in public schools working in the area of school psychology. I am currently working towards at Ph.d. in Human Development with hopes of working in higher education.

This research on teacher development is my dissertation project. While working in public schools, I recognized a great need for teacher support, ongoing encouragement and increased time for teachers to reflect upon their personal journey as a teacher. As part of my dissertation, I will be interviewing teachers about their teaching career and their personal development as

teachers. I am specifically interested in what happens to teacher beliefs and values along the journey of the teaching career. What happens to diminish or extinguish the love of teaching? And how do teachers sustain their love and devotion for teaching while facing political, institutional and social constraints? Although this is not an evaluative project, teacher thoughts and insight will be shared with Virginia Tech faculty and administrators of Montgomery County Schools. A focus on the personal dimension of teaching the formation of teacher identity, beliefs and values is an emerging area of research in teacher education.

I would like to talk with you and explain this project in more detail. Please indicate on the enclosed form your level of interest in this project by Monday, October 4. I have enclosed an addressed stamped envelope for your convenience.

Thank you for taking time to consider this request. I look forward to hearing from you. If you have immediate questions, I can be reached by email kdhale@vt.edu.

Sincerely,

Kim Hale

Enclosures

NOTICE OF INTEREST

Please indicate your level of interest in this project and return this form to me by MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, EVEN if you are not interested in participating in this research project.

Name: _____

_____I am interested in participating in this project and know that I would like to be involved. It is best to reach me by email _____ or by phone _____.

_____I may be interested in participating in this project but I would like more information prior to making a definite decision. It is best to reach my by email _____ or by phone _____.

_____I know of another Montgomery County teacher who might fit the criterion for participating in this research (Graduate of the VT graduate teacher education program; 4 to 6 years of teaching experience in public schools) and who may be interested in participating in this research project. His/Her name is _____ and he/she teaches at _____.

_____ I am not interested in taking part in this research.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE even if YOU ARE NOT interested in participating in this project. Thank you!

Curriculum Vitae

Kimberly Hale
Education

Doctor of Philosophy, Human Development, specialty Child Development, May 2005, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
Dissertation: *Identity formation and the development of self in early career teachers*

Advisor: Dr. Mary Alice Barksdale
Committee Members: Dr. Susan Magliaro
Dr. Jerry Niles
Dr. Janet Sawyers

Educational Specialist in School Psychology, May 1992, Radford University, Radford, VA

Master of Science in Psychology, May 1991, Radford University, Radford, VA

Bachelor of Science in Family and Child Development, July 1987, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

Professional License

Postgraduate Professional License, Commonwealth of Virginia, License number 01-360990; School Psychologist, Early Education NK-4, Middle Education Grades 4-8

Research Interests

Child/adolescent typical and atypical development
Teacher development
Identity formation and self-authorship
Family Law

Teaching Interests

Human development
Psychology
Family and school Law
Early childhood education and developmental disabilities

Teaching Experience

Summer Teaching Faculty, Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech, Summer Session II 2004

- Responsibilities required full development of the course: developing the course syllabus and objectives, selecting specific content of the course, selecting required texts and resources, writing and presenting lectures, designing interactive class activities, writing and administering exams and quizzes, development and grading of written projects

Adjunct Faculty, Department of Special Education, Radford University, Radford, VA, January 2004 - May 2004
- Responsibilities included development and teaching of an undergraduate course focused on special education process and academic assessment
- Course included: basic statistics and testing/measurement concepts; administration and scoring of several commercial norm referenced achievement tests; written comprehensive educational diagnostic reports based upon observations of children, test administration and test results; implementation of recommendations for a variety of case studies

Adjunct Faculty, Department of Special Education, Radford University, Radford, VA, August - December 2001
- Responsibilities included development and delivery of a graduate course focused on special education law, special education process and norm referenced/criterion referenced achievement testing
- Developed lectures, interactive class activities, individual and group projects, quizzes, tests
- Course included: history of special education law, advanced statistical concepts; administration and scoring commercial norm referenced and criterion referenced achievement tests; written comprehensive educational diagnostic reports; oral explanation of test results; recommendation for teachers and parents based upon diagnostic test results

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Human Development, Virginia Tech, August 2001-May 2003
- Responsibilities included teaching a large introductory human development on a part time basis
- Developed lectures and class activities for 250+ students per semester
- Utilized Excel and SPSS to manage grades for 250+ students per semester
- Created and graded assignments, interactive class activities, written assignments and exams
- Utilized Blackboard for posting on-line assignments, quizzes, grades, email announcements and posting of supplemental course resources

Adjunct Faculty, Department of Psychology, Radford University, Radford, VA May - June 1995
- Responsibilities included full development and delivery of the course
- Course focused on learning theory and behavior modification; addressed common problems experienced by children in school

Research

Dissertation, "*Identity formation and development of self in early career teachers"*

Research Team Member, "Revisiting the role of family specialist in the legal arena", third authorship, expected submission for publication to the *Journal of Family Relations* in June 2005, faculty sponsor: Dr. Tammy Henderson, Assistant Professor, Virginia Tech

Research Team Member, "*Violence and Victimization Research in Adolescent Peer Relations: Promising Practices from Research*", third authorship, presented at the annual National Council on Family Relations Conference, November 2002, faculty sponsor: Dr. Mark Benson, Associate Professor, Virginia Tech

Professional Work Experience

Graduate Assistant, Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Education (CEUT), Virginia Tech, May 2003 - present
- Research topics related to teaching in higher education including assessment of critical thinking, student motivation, student evaluation of teaching, grade inflation and undergraduate research
- Organization of faculty development workshops
- Member of faculty study group targeting the use of electronic portfolios as a teaching tool

School Psychologist, Roanoke County Schools, Roanoke, VA, July 1992-June 2001
- Conducted psychological evaluations of students ranging from preschool to 22 years of age; specialty in early childhood development and preschoolers with developmental disabilities
- Consultant to teachers, parents and administrators regarding special education laws, 504 regulations, psychological assessments and educational programming for students with disabilities
- Provided individual counseling to students based upon recommendations from IEP committee and physicians
- Collaborated with community service agencies and private service providers (such as Department of Social Services, early intervention agencies, pediatricians, neurologists, psychiatrists, and social workers) as needed

Field Examiner, American Guidance Services Publishing, Circle Pines, MN, December 1999 - August 2000
- Recruited examiners and subjects (children ages 4 to 18) for the administration of national tryout versions of clinical instruments
- Administered national tryout version of the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children -II(KABC2) and Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement - II (KTEA2)
- Critiqued proposed administration and standardization for revised KABC and KTEA

School Psychologist Intern, Area Education Agency 9, Bettendorf, IA, August 1991-June 1992
- Provided psychological services to public schools within two school districts
- Conducted psychological evaluations for students in grades K - 9th grade
- Worked extensively with students diagnosed with developmental delay, mental disabilities, learning disabilities, autism, Williams Syndrome, Down Syndrome, neurological impairments, and hard of hearing
- Counseled students with emotional and learning disabilities in individual and group settings
- Conducted weekly social skills training for students with mental disabilities

Papers and Publications

"Review of School Reform" - Suggested Lecture Topic, Instructor's Manual to accompany John W. Santrock's *Child Development, 10th edition* (CD-ROM)

"*Violence and Victimization Research in Adolescent Peer Relations: Promising Practices from Research*", presented at the 64th annual national conference of the National Council of Family Relations, Houston, Texas, November 2002, second authorship

Funded Grants

CEUT mini grant $500 towards instructional enhancement project for introductory child development course, Virginia Tech, August 2001

Virginia Preschool Initiative Grant, grant-writing team member, $200,000, Roanoke County Schools, August 2000

Professional Affiliations

American Psychological Association
American Educational Research Association
Child Life Council
Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Council on Family Relations
Phi Delta Kappa
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
Society for Research in Child Development
Southern Early Childhood Association