

**Metaphors as Windows
on a Personal History:
A Beginning Teacher's Experience**

By J. Gary Knowles

The following account of Natalie's first year of teaching is crafted around one of her central metaphors for teaching. This particular metaphor represented a driving force in her thinking about teaching and working in the school and classroom. Despite the fact that the metaphor was eventually unproductive for working in junior high school classrooms, it did not prevent Natalie from holding hope, over the course of the year, that the premise of the metaphor, and the implied actions associated with it, would prove beneficial to her teaching.

Metaphors as Windows on Teachers' Thoughts

The study of teachers' metaphors has proven productive as researchers seek to understand the complex processes of teaching and working in classrooms (see, e.g., Hunt, 1987; Miller & Fredericks, 1988; Munby, 1986; Provenzo, McCloskey, Kottkamp, & Cohn, 1989; Russel & Johnson, 1988). That metaphors provide glimpses into individual's developing conceptions of teaching (Cole, 1990a, 1990b) is attested by a number of researchers who have recently used metaphorical analysis for that particular purpose (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Bullough &

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Knowles, 1991; Cole, 1988, 1990; Fox, 1983; Hunt, 1987; Marshall, 1989; Munby & Russell, 1989; Wodlinger, 1989). Moreover, the metaphors that beginning teachers bring with them to the classroom and school arenas are grounded in their personal histories as students in schools and in their childhood experiences of family. In **my** experience as a teacher educator inviting young, traditional students of teaching to share **their** teaching metaphors within the context of both general elementary teaching methods courses and general secondary methods courses, I have found that their statements usually do **not** incorporate influences or images beyond family, school, and after-school kinds of work experiences.¹

Because metaphors reflect experience, such as in stories of personal survival, they **are** snapshots of life (Norton, 1989) and obviously represent elements of personal histories. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state this point even more forcefully: “In actuality we feel that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis” (p. 19). In this way, metaphors that beginning teachers hold are reflections of elements of personal histories.

Developing an Account of Natalie’s First Year in the Classroom

The story of Natalie’s first year of teaching is a story that recounts many elements of other beginning teachers’ experiences. Natalie’s personal history and experience of schooling and teachers were ever present in her mind as she began her first teaching position. Elements of her personal history regularly surfaced in our conversations and her writing. Natalie’s personal history gave rise to some potent practical arguments about teaching. These guided her preparatory thoughts and actions and sometimes proved less than advantageous as she progressed through, as she called it, the “trial and tribulation” of the first year of teaching. Natalie’s central metaphor about teaching, and the behaviors and practices that revolved around it, reflected the heavy consequences of the foundation upon which she had laid her potential future professional existence. The following account revolves around the establishment of practices that centered on her predominant metaphor for teaching. Natalie, who has read my analyses, agrees with the tenor of the account.

I could have portrayed Natalie’s experience quite differently, and we could have also chosen to write together, but did not. Time constraints and the physical distance between us after Natalie’s first year of teaching drove thoughts of collaborative writing away. Although the essence of her experience could not be represented much differently without distorting the general turn of events, there were many aspects of her first year in the classroom that, if emphasized, could have shaped a different account of her work. Themes such as her isolation and alienation, her alternately developing and subsiding confidence, her changing concepts of

curriculum, or her perception of her place within the school all frame significant slices of that first year in the classroom. None of these, however, portray her overall experience as holistically as does this analysis that hinges on a central and pervading metaphor of teaching.

Natalie, the Person, and Her

Initial Concerns about Teaching

Natalie grew up in a lower middle class suburban family. Both of her parents had been teachers. At one time, her mother was a highly committed and successful teacher, but her interest had waned, and, following a “horrible experience” (which was never identified), she left the profession. Her father thought of teaching as a “nice secure profession,...[an] okay job [that] would get you through life,” and for this reason, when Natalie was in college, he encouraged her to consider teaching as a career.

Preparing to Be a Teacher

Although Natalie did not set out to become a teacher as a college student, she assumed that if other employment opportunities did not open up she could always fall back on teaching. With this thought in mind, she entered and completed a teacher certification program that culminated in an extremely frustrating and difficult ten-week period of student teaching in a large suburban high school, where she felt ill at ease with the students and the school environment. Uncertain about whether or not to pursue a teaching career, but lacking other options, Natalie sought employment and found it just prior to the school year at Markham Hall, a private, non-sectarian secondary school. She accepted the position because it was “the practical thing to do.” Other options were less inviting.

Initial Concerns about Teaching

As a single twenty-five year old, the position to teach at Markham Hall was not only her first teaching job, but her first “real” job as well. For a short time, her positive feelings about Markham Hall softened her deep-seated self-doubts about starting a new position and her ambivalence about being a teacher. Natalie anticipated that, unlike the school where she had taught as a student teacher, Markham Hall would be a comfortable place to work. Despite her positive feelings toward Markham Hall, Natalie worried. As a college student, when she had thought about teaching as a career, it was always in terms of subject matter such as History and Social Science, not Spanish, her minor area of study. Yet, the job she accepted was to teach Spanish to seventh and eighth Grade students, a responsibility that concerned her. An even greater source of concern when Natalie thought of teaching, however, was that she was unable to picture herself as a teacher, even though she had grown up with teachers as parents.

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Natalie had regarded herself as a “good student” in school, although she acknowledged that it was not until she went to college that she “started to be very good at learning.” However, she freely admitted to having difficulties in school: “I had a hard time with the social scene.” This was because she felt “more awkward than most” students and because she was “shy...and wanted really badly to be popular.” There, also, she claimed that she was overly influenced by “what other people thought of [her].” This last matter was particularly important in the Markham Hall school environment; she desperately wanted approval of both the adults and teenagers in the building. In addition, she said, “I tend to...pick out certain people as my mirror and wait for them to tell me that my image is beautiful” and, when praise was not forthcoming, “It makes me very nervous and unhappy.”

Natalie’s Experience:

“Teacher Is Buddy—Students Like Good Teachers”

Over the course of the first year, from the time she enrolled in the Beginning Teacher Seminar to the last day of school, Natalie expressed several metaphors for teaching. These included “my teaching is poetry being written” and “teacher is baby sitter,” but, most pervasive in her conversations and writings was “teacher is buddy.” The conceptions underlying this last metaphor appeared to be the primary basis for many of her practical arguments² and appeared to drive much of her preparatory thinking and actual classroom practice. “Teacher is buddy” was both an initial metaphor and one that she restated throughout the year.

Initial—and Pervading—Teaching Metaphor

Natalie entered teaching quite unsure of herself and of who she was as teacher. She held no concrete internal images of herself as a teacher. The few images she did possess were vague and uncertain ones, mostly associated with the possession of certain desired personality traits that she did not see in herself. Recalling her own experience as a student, for example, Natalie remarked: “The most effective [teachers] were the ones that were able to be most personable.... A teacher is a friend who knows what is relevant to students.” And:

I was a shy kid. The most effective [teachers] for me were the ones that reached out to me and...made contact with me. I enjoyed their classes more...and it helped a lot; my attitude [toward school] changed [as did / and according to] how well I did in class.

Drawing primarily on her experience as a student, she thought of the ideal teacher—that she hoped to be—as friendly, personable, warm, enthusiastic, and especially humorous: “The mental picture that comes to mind is [that] I walk into my class and there would be a lot of humor. I’d be laughing a lot. The kids would be laughing a lot.” As a consequence of these attributes, she believed, good teachers were liked and respected by their students. They were “buddies.”

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These kinds of pictures of teaching that Natalie reeled off in conversation on numerous occasions did not provide her a basis for particular concrete actions. For example, on several occasions, Natalie reiterated elements of the metaphor “teacher is buddy.” These included: “Good teaching is like good friendship. Teaching is built upon friendship and respect. When students feel like ‘teacher is buddy’ they learn.” To be liked by the students was proof of being a good teacher. In contrast, according to Natalie, poor teachers were those who held “negative attitudes [toward students that influenced] their whole approach to teaching” and, as such, were “not liked by students.” Speaking in an informal interview before the beginning of the school year, Natalie remarked:

I remember one really bad teacher. I really feel sorry for her now. Why did she have such a hard time? I just got the impression that she was overpowered by the students.... What she said just didn’t go.... I don’t think there were any rules in her class—spoken or unspoken. I’m not sure what made her ineffective.

The Teaching Context at Markham Hall

At the beginning of the school year, Natalie was assigned five classes of first- and second-year Spanish. Together, these assigned classes represented four different preparations, and, because the school timetable included large blocks of instructional time periods, she met alternatively with two classes on one day (White Day) and three classes on the other (Green Day). On White Days she did not begin teaching until after lunch time, which left her with large amounts of discretionary time. During the mornings, she usually prepared lessons, read, duplicated instructional materials, graded, or worked alone in her classroom; occasionally, more often at the beginning of the year, she spent time observing other teachers’ classrooms.

Because she completed student teaching in a senior public high school, Natalie was well aware of the advantages that Markham Hall offered. There were three main differences compared to the local public schools to which she had also applied for a teaching position that year. First, the classes were small, none of the courses that she taught had more than 18 students. Second, the students were generally very bright and mirrored, for the most part, financially comfortable suburban lifestyles and the concern of middle class parents for the educational well-being of their offspring. Third, the school environment was personable, a reflection on the institution’s small size (about 250 students) and small classes, and was renowned for its supportive community spirit, evident in the behavior of faculty and students alike. Indeed, the school administrators prided themselves on the closeness of the school community and for providing very supportive teaching and learning environments.

Together, these elements impressed Natalie, and she thought they would help mitigate the “feelings of despair” that she had experienced during student teaching amid the tumult of a relatively large senior high school with very large classes. Going into the academic year, Natalie reported feeling “intimidated by the big job

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ahead [of her].” She was also apprehensive about the dynamics of working at “sort of an exclusive school,” her interpretation of the status of the school. As the year progressed, this thinking was reinforced.

Teaching at Markham Hall

The first days of teaching. During Natalie’s first days in the classroom, she dove headfirst into presenting the subject matter and course objectives, and conducting lessons according to the principles of the “immersion method of language acquisition,” an approach advocated by her foreign language teaching methods professor. The basic premise and underlying philosophy of this approach suggests that students be constantly exposed to conversation, listening to, and participating in the foreign language. Natalie aimed to make the classes fun, and approached the students, hoping to become “buddies” with them, a decision she later regretted: “[I] was lenient and [had the attitude] of ‘let’s be buddies and have fun.’ I wouldn’t do that again to start out the year.”

For the most part, the classes on the first day of school at Markham Hall went well, except for one eighth grade class. From the onset, that class was troublesome: “They were rowdy from the very first day.... It seemed [as though] they were controlling the class more than me.” Natalie began to regret her decision to try to be buddies with the students. “It backfired because they got the impression that they could play around.” Time did not change the situation. This was her “worst class,” and remained so, even at the end of the school year, although occasionally there were hopeful moments. One such moment occurred toward the end of the first month: “Yesterday was the first day that I actually enjoyed [the] class. I usually feel so grumpy that...I dread it...and don’t want to be there.”

By the second week of school a pattern of sometimes confrontational and disruptive interactions between Natalie and the students was established in the eighth grade class. Students were rowdy and Natalie responded in confrontive ways and, as she admitted, she began to “blame the students.” For example, students would question her actions, directly challenge her, or shout in class. She responded in impatient tones, often commanding students to do specific tasks. It was “**their** fault” that she had difficulties. Her struggle with this particular group of students colored her views of teaching and influenced her perceptions of the other students and classes whose progress and conduct was relatively satisfying. More importantly, as Natalie increasingly felt threatened, the behaviors of the students eventually crushed any hope she had of filling out the vague images she possessed of herself as teacher into a satisfactory teaching role. When I asked her during her fifth week of teaching to describe herself as teacher, Natalie paused and remarked: “That’s difficult because I don’t see myself really as a teacher.” And pausing again: “I guess some days I do, and some days I don’t.”

Quest to connect with students and to be liked. The root of Natalie’s

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problems rested, in part, upon her desire to be a “buddy” with the students. Instead of the difficulties encountered, Natalie had fantasized quite a different scenario:

I like the idea of...setting the wheels in motion and having the students do most of the talking.... As it turns out, I do most of the talking. I don't have really strict rules except for the [difficult eighth grade] class.

In reality, her rules for the eighth grade class were not nearly as strict as those of some other teachers in the building, but, more importantly, she did not consistently enforce those classroom rules that she had. In fact, Natalie did not want to discipline the students. She mused: “Do I have to discipline? I **do** need to have firm rules and be consistent about the consequences that follow. Is that discipline?” She did not want to discipline the students because she believed that to do so would jeopardize her relationship with them. Leniency was viewed as a precondition for the students to like her and, above all else, she wanted to be liked: “I'm worried...that they're not enjoying my personality.” And:

I feel that I learned the most from the teachers that I liked the best.... I've always wanted everybody to like me. I have [an extremely] hard time if somebody is mad at me or feels bad about me, it really affects me.

Natalie's ideals were immediately frustrated by the actions of the eighth grade class who seemed to reject her: “I'm really bothered by the fact that they don't like me.” Being so vulnerable, it seemed, and feeling rejected, Natalie found herself having difficulty acting naturally and comfortably with the students which, in turn, increased her feelings of vulnerability, a point that was implied in a number of journal entries. For instance, at report card time she wrote: “Nervous kids scrambling for points. Nervous teacher trying to be fair..., trying to be liked, [and] being forced into learning about human relations.” And, “When students aren't attentive, or fascinated, I feel twinges of panic. ‘Oh, what am I doing wrong? Oh, this isn't the way it should be going.’” Moreover, Natalie felt distanced from the students, which troubled her. “I feel separated from the kids,” she remarked several times throughout the year. Natalie was not only learning about teaching practices, she was also learning about students and how to interact with them, both within the context of struggling to establish her own identity in the classroom as teacher and with the dilemma associated with wanting to be liked by the students.

Conflict with Barry. There was no more graphic illustration of some of the insecurities that Natalie felt, as she struggled to establish herself in the classroom, than that found in her response to the vindictive outburst of an eighth grade boy in the hallway:

When I was walking out of my classroom...a little eighth grader...yelled at my back, “I don't like you teacher.” I turned around and couldn't tell who it was. I didn't recognize any of the boys.... I had just turned around and he yelled “Nobody likes you.” That was really hard to take.

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At the time, she did not respond to the boy's attack: "I wish I had the strength to [talk back]. But I didn't. Damn it." The hurt lingered, and turned inward.

Eventually, Natalie came to suspect that Barry, her most troublesome student in the eighth grade class, was the culprit, but there was "nothing [she] could do about it" she concluded. Well into the first term, and prior to the incident in the hallway, other teachers who taught Barry talked in a faculty meeting about observing improvements in his classroom behavior. Natalie, however, had observed no improvement, although she had worked diligently to improve their relationship. Writing in her journal in late October, prior to a meeting with Barry: "I had a dream about [Barry], the student I had such turmoil over last week. [I] dreamed we had formed a new understanding of each other and were friends."

Despite the dream, Barry remained her nemesis, and she reasoned, as a result of what the teachers told her about him, "I'm going to have stricter guidelines for him with specific consequences" of his actions. On one hand, knowing that other experienced teachers had difficulties with Barry comforted her; on the other hand, the lack of improvement in his behavior in **her** class discouraged her. Following a faculty meeting, Natalie applied her "redefined rules" to Barry. The result: "One of the best classes I've had so far," an outcome that reinforced the value of rules, and sticking to them, and of asserting her authority in the classroom, which she found difficult to do. She had also forewarned Barry: "He was better today...[because] I let him know the conditions [and] he didn't cause me any trouble. He was argumentative at first, but, at least, he raised his hand." However, the more she applied the management techniques of others, the less she was like the friendly, warm, humorous, and likable teacher she had fantasized being, and she recognized this, writing extensively about it in her journal. "I'm not the teacher I want to be," she lamented. The problems with Barry continued, although they became somewhat less frequent.

Riding a roller coaster and depending on student responses. Natalie's dependency on students for her emotional well being and sense of self placed her on something like an emotional roller coaster. Small events had a profound effect on her. In early December she wrote:

I felt discouraged Monday and Tuesday;...the feelings were strong. The tension was so great that I was questioning my being in the teaching profession. But Wednesday [through] Friday everything turned around.

This change in her thinking occurred because of a single class activity. "I believe it started to turn around," she said, "with a game that I played with...[the] kids on Wednesday called 'Kiss the Frog.'" Each student was required to "pay compliments" to others in the class, including Natalie. Of this, she said, "I must admit that I enjoyed the receiving part the most." Before the game, she "was feeling quite depressed. I felt my students didn't like me much or my way of teaching [and] I worry about that." The accolades students gave during the game caused Natalie to

reverse her perceptions, at least for a time.

Moreover, a regular pattern of interactions emerged. Following a confrontation and a subsequent conference during which she ameliorated student ill will, Natalie felt renewed, and the roller coaster car she rode would begin a climb. For example, she periodically ejected students from class for misbehavior and then would meet with them to discuss what transpired, why it transpired, and what could be done to improve the situation. Of her interaction with one student, she said:

I talked to him afterward. He was upset in the beginning but after talking we left on good terms. I admitted [that I had been hard on him] and he gave suggestions as to how not to add to the disruptiveness in the class. What was it he said he would do? I can't remember.... I'll have to ask him at the beginning of class next time which will be a nice reminder for him also.

Inevitably, each climb on the roller coaster was followed by a crash, and Natalie began to have problems with migraine headaches and bouts of depression. Writing in her journal she stated:

I'm knocking myself out. I've got to have them doing more on their own. [I] talked too much today [and] have quite a headache.... [I] cried too much last night...[and] talked to [my boyfriend] about the discouragement I feel.... Why the compressed head? Rough fucking day, man!

These and other similar feelings were also related to her perceptions of herself as teacher. Often, she found it difficult to come to school, especially on Green Days, the day when she taught the eighth grade class.

Facing such days and these feelings, Natalie began to doubt her decision to become a teacher. After a particularly grueling day in mid-October, for instance, she remarked: "On days like today I wonder if I should be in a career that requires so much social interaction." These feelings were not isolated instances. She recognized that they illuminated her inadequacies in handling human relationships in the classroom. They continued throughout the year, and often set her in a pessimistic frame of mind for thinking about teaching and students.

Seeking and not seeking support of peers and others. During the times when she felt emotionally down, Natalie generally relied on her own resources to pull herself up and out. She knew that in order for her to continue teaching she had to feel better about it:

I don't know how to improve how I feel about teaching...but I do know that I've got to enjoy it to go on with it. I need to go ahead with activities that I enjoy.... One of the most worthwhile lifetime tasks—self actualization—[is] finding your simplest self, [your] most straightforward self.

But Natalie did attempt a form of mental discipline to help herself feel good about herself. In a journal entry late in the first term she wrote: "I've been talking to myself

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positively about the [eighth grade] class—although at times I feel like I’m lying and have to convince myself [that I’m not].” What helped most, however, was the regular interaction with her peers in the Beginning Teacher Seminar and writing about her difficulties in her journal. Natalie frequently made statements such as, “I’m feeling better after [getting]...my concerns down on paper,” or “I’m glad I took time to write. I feel better now.”

On a few occasions, Natalie made requests for assistance from other teachers in the building, but their presence in her classroom netted mixed results. About midway through the first term, for instance, she asked the history teacher to observe her teaching the eighth grade class. During the class period, Natalie “made a substantial judgment error” in “giving a student unequal treatment” and “wished [the other teacher] was not there to witness it.” She was very embarrassed, although afterward she reasoned: “[The observing teacher’s] criticism was constructive and, after giving [the situation] more thought..., I [was] glad that [the observing teacher] had been there...to [help me] work through the mistake....” This journal entry illustrates the way Natalie felt about soliciting the assistance of other teachers. Afterward she appreciated their input, but, at the time, their observation left her feeling **very** uncomfortable and their suggestions hurt her feelings.

On one occasion, Juanita, the senior school Spanish teacher, taught the feared eighth grade class with Natalie looking on. According to Natalie, Juanita “found them quite enjoyable.” Juanita joked with them, and was playful, and this left Natalie with further doubts about herself.

My first reaction was disappointment in myself because...my history with them...has been so unpleasant. The second, more controlled reaction was that I could flow with them more, not take things so seriously, and joke with them about themselves instead of feeling mad and angry with them.

This second reaction led to a temporary change in Natalie’s presence in the classroom, and the first report of enjoying the eighth grade class: “[It was my] one best day so far,” she wrote. She recognized that the situations she helped create were also related to her moods: “One of the students made the observation that I was very serious about Spanish and didn’t smile much.” In the particular class that she reported “went well,” Natalie relaxed, and smiled, which was a welcomed change for the students. More good days followed.

Other Markham Hall faculty and visitors, such as preservice teachers from the university, often commented to me about the “warmth and support” within the school community. This was particularly evident, they said, in the relationships between teachers and students in the extra curricular activities of the school, activities in which Natalie never became involved. The small full-time faculty of about 32 teachers regularly met together, both informally and formally, in the faculty lounge. It was not merely a lunch room, although lunch could be had there for those who did not eat in the cafeteria, but it was a place of interaction and

discussion, physically arranged, according to the principal, to “encourage intellectual conversations.” Regularly I observed teachers quietly working or actively and excitedly engaging others in the room. During the early portion of the school year, Natalie often used the faculty room to prepare classes and to eat her lunch. Gradually, as her problems increased, that changed. She isolated herself and did not frequent the room as much. She often spent lunch times alone in her classroom.

The four foreign language faculty members, including Natalie, shared a large and airy common office; in the room each teacher had a desk, chairs, and bookshelves, and the walls were decorated with posters and art work. Initially, Natalie also used this space for much of her preparation, but that practice changed. She grew to feel uncomfortable working in this foreign language department office, partially because of student interruptions, lack of privacy, and because she began to “feel uncomfortable with the other teachers: “They made [me] nervous,” she stated. In summing up her relationships with the faculty at the end of the school year, she admitted, “I felt isolated.” In reality, she isolated herself.

Toward the end of the academic year, nevertheless, Natalie felt a little better about her relationships and standing within the school. She recognized faculty in the hall, people she could call “friends,” and felt thankful that she had not been in a school with a very large faculty. Yet, despite the friendliness in the halls, the faculty were not people that she believed she could freely go to for help, especially once her difficulties became public knowledge.

Natalie did not make optimum use of the support offered by faculty and the resources of the small school, and, perhaps understandably, gained most solace from her boyfriend. He was an artist and, apart from his experience as a student, had limited understanding of schools. He was very willing to listen, but, as the year progressed, he tired, she said, of listening to her complaints and problems. Even when she did spend time with him, she was preoccupied with school. “I’m not there,” she often said, referring to time spent with her boyfriend, “he’ll be talking to me...and I don’t hear.... It happens a lot.” Her parents were a lesser and infrequent source of support; she even had her mother come and observe her teach. Her father, in particular, “gave [her] a lot of advice about what to do,” especially in the early months of teaching, but, by and large, these levels of support provided little concrete assistance for the daily operation of her classroom.

Relationship with the principal. Over the course of the first few months, Natalie began to feel very insecure in the presence of the principal, a factor that probably negatively influenced her willingness to talk with peers: “I don’t think she likes me...[or]...thinks that I am a good teacher,” she lamented. “I worry...what [the principal] thinks of me.”

In part, the origin of Natalie’s insecurity about the principal’s view of her was found in the principal’s observation of her during the early weeks of teaching: “She observed me...and I think she would say that I needed some more organization but

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that I had some creative activities as well.” The principal, in fact, **never** said anything of substance about the visit to Natalie’s classroom. She did not heap Natalie with praise, as Natalie hoped she would do, and this caused some uncertainty in Natalie’s perception of their relationship and of her own abilities. In addition, and increasingly so throughout the year, the office of the principal received many of the unruly boys from Natalie’s classroom, especially Barry, who she regularly ejected from class. Through Barry’s frequent visits to the principal’s office, Natalie’s struggles behind the closed doors of her classroom became public knowledge.

Christmas Break: A New Beginning

At mid year, Natalie continued to fight for her very existence in the classroom. Doubts about continuing in the profession lingered and paralleled her decreasing commitment to Markham Hall. The toil of continually battling with the eighth grade students, especially Barry, took its toll: “The problems [associated with the eighth grade class] have become all consuming.” During this time, another class also became very enervating, and, for a short period, she had similar responses to them: “We went through a period just before Christmas that was horrible.”

Natalie was dissatisfied with the job of teaching and the role of being a teacher. Both prevented her from enjoying more freedom in her life; teaching obstructed her engagement in the recreational pursuits that she enjoyed, particularly snow skiing and simply being out-of-doors. As the winter drew on, and the snow got deeper in the mountains, she increasingly resented the long hours spent on teaching. Lesson preparation was never completed and there was always grading to be done; circumstances that her boy friend never quite understood. Besides, the approaching holiday season brought excitable students and more pressing demands on her time: “There were...lots...of problems right before Christmas.... It was so messy and chaotic, I didn’t want to deal with it.”

After the midyear break, in which she enjoyed skiing and doing things that were not related to teaching, Natalie’s feelings about teaching seemed to turn around. The changed state of affairs was partially rooted in the benefits that the “peaceful holiday” provided. “[During] the break was the only time that I’ve been calm in the morning for a long time,” she claimed. She was “utterly relieved” not to awake “worrying about [what] might go wrong.” The holiday season, “with lots of socializing,” provided Natalie with a respite that seemed to help her through the remainder of the year. She gained perspective on her work. She returned to teaching initially seeming less vulnerable to student criticism, and less interested in being a “buddy,” although she hoped to be responsive to the students and “provide a relevant curriculum for them.” Nevertheless, Natalie resolved to be more like other teachers in the school. She planned to “discipline the students,” and de-emphasize her role as “buddy.”

Despite her resolve, however, Natalie continued to struggle throughout the

year, seeking to find and to establish herself as teacher with the students. For example, she reported:

I find myself alternating between two different attitudes [about] running my classes. Half of the time I [think]...the most important thing is having a good time in class and learn as we go—get through whatever we can with enjoyment. My other attitude is more of a disciplinarian—where I demand a quiet room, strict adherence to rules and we get...through more [topical] material.

Natalie was very apprehensive about the first day back following the vacation, being “nearly as nervous as the first day [that she] started school.” But, feeling refreshed, she was “better able to deal with...confrontations.” She found she had more energy to put into teaching, after having been worn down then revived, and she determined that she would assert herself more in the classroom.

A period of curricular experimentation and experimentation with a variety of classroom management strategies followed. One of the most dramatic changes that accompanied this invigoration, for example, was Natalie’s new-found determination to make more substantial long-range plans. She decided to set aside practices associated with the immersion approach to language teaching that seemed to encourage off-task behavior that was so threatening in a teacher-centered classroom. Using herself as a referent and taking the State Curriculum Guides for the Spanish Curriculum as an overlay, then thinking carefully about how **she** learned, she designed lessons within a framework of the approved textbook format and content. In explaining her organization, she said: “It follows the way that I learned and the way that most languages are taught.” She emphasized a lot more grammar which, as already mentioned, did not pique her interest in teaching and “threw in some other stuff like readings and lectures.” She also consciously decided that, when she “came back from the break, [she would] go faster in grammar.” This translated into “doing a lot more book work and workbook exercises...than I have done before.” In a sense, Natalie tried to resolve her problems in the classroom by substituting the authority of the textbook for her own lack of authority. Trying to be a buddy had discouraged students from respecting Natalie and she tried to attain authority through changed methods.

The most obvious result of her changed practices was less disruptions in the classroom with less conversational Spanish, but Natalie felt a little guilty: “I feel I’m cheating them when I think about all the English I speak.”

The focus on workbook exercises and book work represented “the pattern of January.” By February more changes came. Natalie discovered the availability of alternative curricular aids and texts and this changed her instructional planning again: “We switched...and we’re spending a lot more time reading [a Spanish] newspaper.”

Natalie’s “goals changed from month to month” as she grappled with the process of teaching and with her views of herself as teacher. Moreover, it signaled

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a slight turn to her desire for a warm, personable, and humorous classroom. Another change came about because she tried to be responsive to students and felt somewhat less vulnerable in the classroom. Weeks of following Natalie's new program of relying on the textbooks produced some negative effects: "Scott entered the class, plopped down in his seat...and said, 'Why is this class so boring?'" Normally she might have discounted his remark: "Some days that may have pissed me off and I probably would have ignored it...but...I decided to address it [by] telling him he may have a valid point." Instead of being crushed by the student's remarks, Natalie identified and listed some "changes that [she] wanted to work on and keep fresh in mind" as she prepared for daily instruction. The changes included working on "the discipline system," methods for controlling discussion ("open discussion until it gets out of control"), less book exercises and more activities for grammar, and more discussions ("conferencias").

By March, yet another round of changes followed as a result of a traumatic set of events that took place in the eighth grade class during the last week in February. The events were climatic and profound in their effect. The Wednesday before her birthday proved to be notorious:

Got a nasty note on my door today. What a way to be greeted.... "Fuck this class and Miss N. is a...bitch."... I decided to ignore it.... It...hurts.... I have no way of knowing who did it.

The next day, being her birthday, she "decided to have a good day at the expense of everything else." Up until the last period, the eighth grade class, "the day went well." As she heard the eighth graders at their lockers in the hall outside the room her stomach "tightened" in "knots" and she had "an awful feeling." For this day she had yet another "new discipline method" to unfold on the class; this one "used assertive discipline techniques" discovered from a colleague. This new plan was another attempt "to improve their learning" and, as she explained, "[it] came out of a frustration at not seeing much progress from [students]." Despite this and other "new plans" the eighth graders' behavior had, compared to her other classes that day, improved only slightly. This particular class period proved to be little different from the myriad of others which witnessed the students' disruptive and confrontive actions. It was as though they had returned to their December levels of behavior, and Natalie's feelings of vulnerability returned with a vengeance. In desperation and frustration she burst into tears in front of the students. The outpouring proved beneficial, although she was at first most embarrassed. She expressed many of her "feelings about them and about teaching," although she never revealed to me the full script of the interaction. The students, like her, were surprised. Later, they were very subdued. On subsequent days even Barry, who she suspected of writing the note on the door, was subdued and surprisingly pleasant: "I don't feel they dislike me as much as before. Barry...actually said, 'Hello', to me in the hall a couple of times. I was shocked.... This is a drastic change."

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While the eighth grade class remained her nemesis, there was a distinct change in her thinking about them. She felt that it had been “most useful” to “share her emotions” and let them know that she “was a real person.” Soon afterward, Barry was considered for expulsion from the school. The principal and others suspected that he wrote the note to Natalie which was left on the door and for that, and other long-standing behaviors, his continuation at the school was questioned by the school faculty. Central to some of the contentions about his obnoxious actions were also his behaviors in Natalie’s classroom. The faculty decision to seek Barry’s removal from the school was, in a sense, a validation of Natalie’s experience. She was **not** the **only** one who had difficulty with the boy although, to be sure, her experiences with him were the most traumatic. Eventually, his father withdrew him, a situation for which Natalie felt simultaneously “bad for the boy” and “relieved” and elated that she no longer had to contend with him. With Barry gone, the class improved noticeably. Also, her tension headaches, which had earlier returned, were fewer.

In response to Natalie’s discussion with the eighth grade class, she again made some changes. She increased the number of “content-centered discussions” and group investigations, and ventured into a broad range of topics including politics, especially about issues surrounding the countries of Central and Latin America. She introduced role-playing drama activities and tried meditation exercises in an endeavor to make the classes “more interesting and relevant.” This new phase was less stressful to Natalie; fewer of her journal entries focused on negative experiences. As a general observation, she said that her lessons were now “less scattered and...more cohesive.”

Another factor that helped Natalie during this period was a consistency in the time spent working at school; she completed all school work in the building. For the first time during the year she managed to arrange and keep to a regular routine. Normally she arrived most mornings around eight o’clock. She found that by staying at school until about five o’clock in the afternoon she could complete her preparation. This contrasted greatly with her actions earlier in the year. Now, when she went home, “the nights were so much more pleasant and so much longer...[and] much more relaxed.”

Looking Toward the Future

Natalie entered Spring Break feeling that her classes were, for the most part, going reasonably well. There were, she reported, fewer disruptions, which was cause for great relief. But she was tired of teaching and the old feelings of resistance to working at the school resurfaced after the week-long vacation: “I didn’t want to go back.... I felt depressed and overwhelmed by the amount of work in store for me.” She was tired of disciplining students and of having to assert herself in the classroom, and of seeking their approval. Her relationships with the students were far from personally satisfying; too little about teaching was pleasurable. More than

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anything, she longed for the end of the year, which she joyously greeted: “Hijole!.... It was a tough year!”

Making Sense of the Year

One of the difficulties in understanding Natalie’s first year was the frequent shift in her thinking about herself as a teacher and about working in classrooms. Her initial metaphor for teaching never represented her experience at Markham Hall, and, as the year progressed, seemed further from her reach. To be “teacher as buddy,” a “friend who knows what is best for students,” did not result from the kinds of interactions that emerged from her teaching or from her dealings with students, who did not quickly warm to her as she had hoped. Further, she was not able to negotiate productive relationships with them, and her mood swings were evidence of the despair that she regularly felt when encountering sometimes very difficult, arrogant, privileged, and challenging students. While her upbeat moods coincided with the more satisfying of teaching days, the more frequent downward mood swings only precipitated more disruptions in the classroom.

Natalie entered the first year of teaching with, essentially, conservative viewpoints about teaching that were initially enlightened by her enthusiasm for the immersion approach to foreign language teaching. Her attempt to teach using principles that emphasized conversation was valiant, although there seemed to be an inherent mismatch between the method and Natalie’s personality; but she gradually employed the traditional grammar-based methods by which she herself learned the language as a student.

Natalie never clearly articulated a meaningful image for herself as teacher. She vacillated in her approaches to discipline and instruction. As her instruction became incrementally more reliant on textbooks and resembled traditional methods, her thinking in other areas also became more conservative. Further, while she tried to implement the suggestions of others, she did so with little confidence or success. As a result, she was very uncertain about some of her newfound practices, especially those associated with disciplining and managing students; and she did not feel altogether comfortable with students or with her role in the classroom.

After the mid-year break, Natalie slowly climbed out of the depths of discouragement, loneliness, and confusion about students, curriculum, and instruction that she had earlier felt. After listening to students’ complaints about her classes, repeatedly modifying the curriculum and her instruction, crying in front of the eighth grade class and, especially, following the eventual removal of Barry from the school, the process towards proficiency, acceptance, and comfort in the classroom accelerated, only later to fade. Despite the tendency toward being more conservative, during the first half of the second semester Natalie approached teaching with a new enthusiasm. For that brief period, Natalie was more settled in her role as teacher, having identified a few effective strategies, and despite not being totally at ease, her classes occasionally approached the ideals represented by her original

metaphor for teaching. Yet, despite the positive changes, for most of the year she had not met her own, perhaps unrealistic, expectations.

Following Spring Break, many of Natalie's doubts returned. When the school doors finally closed at the end of the academic year, Natalie's commitment to the school and to teaching was low. She was especially disappointed by her inability to establish engaging relationships with the students. Her teaching had been remarkably similar to the teacher she remembered as being "really bad." Not only did teaching tire her, but she lacked animation in the classroom. The year had not been easy. She had been severely tested and in her own eyes, had not passed the test. "Teaching", she concluded, "in traditional classrooms may not be for me."

A Postscript to The First Year

Near the end of the first term, Natalie declared another metaphor—one mentioned on several occasions as the year progressed—that aptly described aspects of an ongoing self-assessment of her teaching, and one that remained pertinent in her thinking at the end of the year: "[My] teaching is a rough draft of a poem to be rewritten and rewritten. [It] has some good ideas but needs a good deal of work to be truly a poem." Natalie was quick to recognize the first year of teaching was one in which the curricular, instructional, and management scripts were written and rewritten. It was a difficult and prolonged experience for her. And, as Norton (1989) suggests, summative metaphors such as this tell a story of survival and maybe, in Natalie's case, a way to cope with the realities of a disappointing and enervating experience. Certainly, Natalie completed the first year recognizing the toll that the effort had taken on her thinking and being. In retrospect, she wrote: "My body tells me as strongly as anything how rough teaching was for me." If not in tune to the potential problems as well as the usefulness of her central metaphor—teacher is buddy—Natalie was certainly aware of the psychological toll her teaching experiences wrought.

Natalie did not renew her contract at Markham Hall for the following year. Initially she expressed doubt as to whether the school would renew it, given her difficulties, but she may have thought that way because of her feelings of insecurity. She ended up leaving the state with her boyfriend and did not seriously seek a traditional secondary school classroom teaching position. She now works for a small corporation and in her spare time teaches gymnastics, one of her "loves." She also teaches English as a Second Language to adult Hispanic immigrants, something in which she has found success and great personal reward.

With distance between her and the first year of teaching at Markham Hall, Natalie made some observations about her performance. She saw herself as swelling the ranks of "those who go through...teacher training,... teach, and then drop [out]." In some ways the year's effort felt "like a failure" to her. But, she said, "other times I think it's actually a success to have freed myself from seeing

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[teaching] as an obligation.” The idea of teaching being an obligation of Natalie’s is important in light of her father’s vision for her. Her response: “Sometimes I feel that it’s his voice that’s holding me back from [doing] what I really want to do.” But, the most important realization may have been that associated with her parting statement: “If I’d had this over again I wouldn’t have aspired to being a buddy..., oh well!”

Context, Purpose, and Strategies for Gaining Insights into the Metaphors, Internal Narratives, and the Events of Natalie’s First Year

Natalie’s experience was generated through participation in a university course and was constrained by the dictates of that course and a loose set of research goals. These were powerful vehicles for developing the preceding narrative account. Perhaps most crucial in this process, however, was the relationship between Natalie and myself.

Beginning Teacher Seminar

Specifically, the data used in developing the narrative account and analysis of Natalie’s first year of teaching were obtained within the context of a university pilot seminar course for beginning teachers that began late summer, immediately prior to the beginning of the school year (see, Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991). I was one of three co-instructors for the course. The course was organized as a seminar and there were eight participants besides Natalie. Natalie, along with the other new teachers, was previously a teacher certification preservice teacher who completed coursework and student teaching within the program in which I and the other co-instructors worked. The major criteria for entry into the seminar was full-time employment as classroom teachers for the approaching academic year.

All of these teachers were competent individuals within the university classroom context, and Natalie fitted mid-stream within the group in terms of accomplishment and previously-evidenced potential. These new teachers volunteered to participate in the year long bi-monthly seminar which provided the contact, credit hours for university credit purposes.

Purpose of the Seminar

The express purpose of the seminar was to facilitate the new teachers’ understanding of both the contexts within which they found themselves teaching and their available curricular and instructional options. The specific purpose was to enhance their classroom practices and facilitate their understanding of the macro and micro socio-political elements of working in schools. Among other things, we wanted them to become aware of the socio-political implications of their actions. As instructors, our goal was to assist these new teachers in their explorations of the

meanings of their first year experiences and, with the supporting efforts of each individual, record or monitor their experiences. These extensive and combined records consisted of data recorded by both the new teachers and instructors which provided the basis for the analysis and the narrative as presented in this article and others (Bullough & Knowles, 1991, 1990; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1990, 1991). Underlying our intent to assist and enhance the development of the beginning teachers' practices was a research agenda; we wanted to explore their development over the course of the first year of working in schools (see, Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991).

Developing a Teaching Record

Each of the teachers constructed his or her narrative records through regular, relatively open-ended interviews directed by each of us as the instructors, writing in journals and curricular logs, collecting various instructional or curricular artifacts, and our observation of their classroom actions. The audio tape-recorded interviews were especially helpful in soliciting teachers' metaphors that best represented his or her thoughts about teaching practices.

Soon after the interviews with Natalie, transcriptions of the conversations were made available to her for her records, and she was asked to analyze and comment on them. Natalie and I analyzed her records. Data were also provided by the weekly curriculum logs that she and the other teachers wrote, the purpose of which was to outline their thinking about curricular and instructional decision-making.

Dialogue journals provided the bulk of the data in Natalie's case, as she was one of the more prolific writers. Her journal was quite extensive. Journal entries typically consisted of passages written about issues that concerned Natalie: responses to questions asked of her in the dialogue journal, reflections on particular school and classroom events, general observations about education and teaching, frustrations associated with their responsibilities, and clarification about the meanings of her metaphors and other statements made earlier in the interviews. After reading her journal or observing her classroom, I typically wrote questions or comments in her journal to which she in turn responded (see Knowles, 1991).

I observed Natalie's classroom teaching every month, or more or less frequently at some periods. I did this with the express purpose of exploring the congruence between the interview, journal, and curriculum log data and actual practices in the classroom. Follow-up interviews, made immediately after these observations, served to resolve any unanswered questions that I or Natalie had (see Knowles, 1991) or were used to clarify points of analyses. Incidental data was obtained because I was quite regularly in the school where Natalie worked. Other teachers and the principal became well-known to me and entered into conversations with me about various aspects of the school, the project, and the seminar course, and less frequently, about contexts more closely associated with Natalie and her responsibilities. Together, these different data sources provided Natalie and myself

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with expansive narrative texts that represented an extensive record of her first year of teaching. As seminar instructors, we agreed to provide each teacher with a reconstructed account of their first year. I reconstructed Natalie's experience using her data.

Our Relationship: Natalie and Gary

I was, in a sense, Natalie's mentor and a kind of confidant; a researcher, yet also a sounding board. My role was defined by the limitations on my time and by professorial responsibilities, the period for which it took both Natalie and myself to feel comfortable in our new roles, and Natalie's willingness to engage in conversations both in and outside of the seminar context.

Natalie said she looked forward to my classroom visits and conversations but never really felt totally at ease with me. Sometimes when we talked about her teaching I was not able to provide the kind of support that she needed—praise—and often it was because prior events of the day colored her mood, as she wrote in her journal near the end of October:

Not enjoying social interaction today. No school today—just meetings for faculty. Not feeling confident in what I'm doing. Talked briefly with Gary about the eighth grade class he sat in on Monday or Tuesday.... He had some constructive criticism for me which I wanted—but wasn't prepared for it today. Noticed myself being on the defensive when he would bring up suggestions for change. We'll talk later when I can take the criticism better.

Immediately following this entry, as if to make sure I would not react negatively to her comments, she added: "Gary...I hope you don't feel bad. Your comments during class on Tuesday really boosted me up and I do want the constructive criticism. Today was just a heavy-hearted day for me." Of this same event I commented in my journal: "I thought I was commenting on questions Natalie asked of me. I did not intend to make a critique of her teaching. I thought I simply responded directly to Natalie's questions, which included, 'How would you do...? What do you think of this...[particular activity] I'm planning?'"

I too, was not as comfortable with my roles as I would have desired. Part of my discomfort arose from the multiple roles that I played in my association with Natalie. I had some difficulty moving between the roles of instructor, facilitator, and researcher. Furthermore, Natalie also expressed discomfort in our relationship. While I perceived our relationship and Natalie's ongoing development as a teacher with respect, concern, and intense interest, Natalie had a different viewpoint:

The interviews with Gary have been difficult. I suppose I'm partly uncomfortable because there's a microphone between us. That's not the main problem though. The main problem is that I'm wanting his approval. I felt elated today when he told me that I'm introspective in my journals and that would eventually pay off in my teaching.... I like talking about [my] teaching experience and philosophies.... I look forward to [talking]. I expect him to tell me that I'm doing very well.... I don't

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feel like I get many compliments from him and realize that I had been hoping for them.

That our relationship was cordial and respectful was beyond question. Both of us concede that we were able to craft an open relationship and, eventually, our difficulties were aired and discussed. In a sense, I attained the status of confidant, but only near the end of the year. Nevertheless, both of us struggled with our different roles, both not ever feeling that we were truly successful. For me, the difficulty lay in the dual roles of researcher and mentor, and I vacillated between the two perspectives. For Natalie, the difficulty lay in her expectations of me and she wavered between viewing me as instructor and an evaluator (the latter of which I was not). To her, my role was confusing, and I never translated my interest and concern into the ideal mentor responses that she so much desired. Too often, however, I was at a loss to facilitate alternative ways for Natalie to think about preparing to teach and her actual teaching practices. While we talked a great deal, I presented my perspectives hesitantly—they were often in conflict with Natalie's perspectives or needs. To some degree, I was aware at the time of Natalie's need for praise. On the other hand, the line between hollow and genuine commendation is very narrow and I found no resolution of the difference. As I talked about alternative ways for thinking about practice, Natalie, I felt, heard direct criticisms. We never did find the reciprocity and personal comfort that may have influenced Natalie in different kinds of ways. Because of these kinds of tensions, developing an account of Natalie's first year of teaching was a particularly difficult task.

Personal Histories and Beginning Teaching

Personal histories play significant roles in the approaches individuals take in trying out roles associated with the act of teaching and being a teacher. Their powerful influence centers on prospective teachers' memories of education-related events and contexts. These memories about teaching and teachers are also often enshrouded in circumstances associated with critical incidents (Measor, 1985) and reveal not only their selective nature but their fading and distortion with time (see, Brewer, 1986; Pillemer, Rinehart & White, 1986; Thompson, 1982). Moreover, such memories represent views of teachers' actions made without regard for the thinking behind the particular actions.

Nevertheless, personal histories as representations of experiences imbedded in schooling, schools, and classrooms provide powerful starting points when prospective teachers begin to think about prospects of joining the profession. Not only do personal histories influence the decision to teach, but they influence instructional decisions and practices as well.

Influence on Preparing to Teach

Personal histories of neophyte teachers, those in preparation and in their first

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years of full-time teaching, are credited with powerfully influencing their commitment to working as teachers in schools (see, Britzman, 1986, 1991; Crow, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1983, 1986; Martinez, 1987; Munro, 1987). Experiences of school and family leave many prospective teachers with memories and schemata about the nature of teaching and the role of teachers in the lives of pupils (see, Barone, 1987; Book & Freeman, 1986; Crow, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986; Knowles, 1992, 1993; Traver, 1987; Woods, 1986; Wright & Tuska, 1968). Preservice teachers who, as students, experienced success in school, and for whom school and classrooms were empowering, satisfying environments, are more likely to enter the teaching profession than those for whom school was traumatic or unsatisfying (see, e.g., Barone, 1987; McDonald, 1980).

Students of teaching tell of influences and memories about specific teachers and classrooms as being significant in their decisions to prepare to become professional teachers. Most often these memories are of particular teachers whose general classroom demeanors evoked climates conducive to learning, whose teaching methods and strategies engendered strong feelings of accomplishment in students, whose actions displayed high levels of care and concern for students' welfare, or whose attributes of caring and concern for students' welfare, or whose classroom presentations and enthusiasm for subject matter were contagious in their students' minds. Out of such memories came Natalie's metaphor, "teacher is buddy."

Influence on Perceptions of Practice and Actual Practice

Personal histories also wield influence in beginning teachers' perceptions of appropriate teaching practices. As observers of teachers' work, students have apprenticed for as many as 16 years in classrooms (see, Lortie, 1975). Ryan (1970) called this "teacher watching." Despite the fact that such observations of teachers' work are incomplete, in that students are usually never privy to teachers' thoughts about their acts of teaching, new teachers such as Natalie have experienced as students the results of teachers' actions and are conversant and opinionated about what constitutes "good" and "bad" teaching practices. Likewise, they are also conversant about the personal and professional qualities of "good" and "bad" teachers. The results of this lengthy period of observation, and individuals' subsequent reflections about observed events and circumstances (see, Knowles, 1991, 1993), are evident in the conversations they mentally conduct and rehearse about their future teaching practices (Holt-Reynolds, 1990b) and in written narratives about their experiences where they make their implicit beliefs about teaching explicit and external (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Knowles, 1993).³ Within these internal conversations or narratives about teaching are found preservice teachers' practical arguments about both general and specific, intended classroom practices which are, for the most part, shadows or images of teacher practices or learning events that they experienced as students themselves (Holt-Reynolds,

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1990a, 1990b; Knowles, 1990, 1993; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991).

By practical arguments⁴ I refer to personal theories that prospective teachers hold about the nature, substance, and acts of teaching that are almost exclusively based on personal experiences—observations of teachers' teaching, and about self and other students' learning, attending, and existing in schools and classrooms. That these practical arguments approach informal professional theories is clear but, because they are based on partial evidence—students as observers do not know about, for example, the planning that goes into teaching—practical arguments come up short. As such, near exclusive reliance on these arguments about teaching practice places beginning teachers in some jeopardy. In a sense, this line of argument eventually supports the notion that teachers teach much as they were taught, a rather frightening realization should it be excessively or exclusively evident in beginning teachers—and it certainly does seem evident in the practice of some individuals (Knowles, 1989, 1992).

This kind of utilization of past experiences in classrooms represents a looking back and taking stock of the enhanced meanings of particular well-remembered critical incidents and engendered feelings about teachers, classrooms, and schools. Indeed, the practical arguments that preservice teachers and beginning teachers hold embody elements of reflection upon practice (see, Schon, 1983, 1987) and represent the construction of their knowledge about teaching. Individuals develop these practical arguments which greatly inform the direction and tenor of future practices and the planning of those practices (see, Knowles, 1993).

Links between Teachers' Thoughts and Teachers' Practices

Two closely related views about the connection between teachers' thoughts and their practices provided impetus to the task of describing Natalie's first year of teaching. The first involves knowing that teachers' thoughts about specific activities or teachers' roles in schools foreshadow actual practice in their classrooms (Clark & Yinger, 1987; Yinger & Peterson, 1986), and the second, that teachers' thoughts are imbedded in practice, in that personal conceptions seek expression in practice (Cole, 1990a, 1990b). Both of these views informed the structure and direction of the research presented in this article. The first view especially underscores the notion that teachers' practical arguments (including and encompassing personal theories), and their plans and interactive thoughts, are the bases for actions in the classroom (Clark & Yinger, 1987). Calderhead's (1987) view is similar. The "interpretive frameworks student teachers use in their thinking about classroom practice," along with formal preparation experiences, "shape the development...of classroom practice" (p. 1). While Yinger and Peterson (1986) frame the usefulness of exploring teachers' thoughts within the context of understanding their planning, the changes in planning and the thoughts associated with the process—or lack of them—would, according to their model, reflect changes or constancy in the way individuals approach classroom practices.

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Further, and more specifically, the practices that beginning teachers adopt in their early years of working in classrooms are said to lay down the foundation of future practices—even career-long practices (Clark & Yinger, 1987; Ryan, 1986). Recognizing that the thoughts of teachers are precursors to the actual practice of teachers (Yinger & Clark, 1987), monitoring beginning teachers' metaphors—as expressions of thoughts about practical arguments—and their constancy and / or change over the often difficult period of the early months of teaching in the first year of professional responsibilities, provides a window on their emerging thoughts about their teaching and developing practices. By seeking understandings about the connection between teachers' thoughts and practices, the avenue of research represented in this article has explored the emerging conceptions of appropriate practices within the experience of one novice teacher (see, e.g., Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991).

How Useful are Metaphors as Windows?

Metaphors about teaching provide insights into the professional development of new teachers as they leave the world of students, as they formally learn to teach through explorations of theory, as they practice their repertoire of skills, and as they enter into the professional context of full-time classroom teaching. In my analysis of beginning teachers' experiences their sometimes extremely colorful metaphors create images encapsulating their views of teaching and roles of teachers and are representative of the content of internal narratives that they construct and the dialogues they mentally conduct. Like the repeated showing of a movie film, these images of teaching are mentally rerun and rerun.

Among other things, these narratives of experience and dialogue as encapsulated within metaphors typically deal with the nature and substance of teaching and its relevant practices, and represent the powerful practical arguments that shape the most prominent and foundational characteristics of beginning teachers' instructional practices (see, Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). Not only do these expressions of metaphors about teaching or teachers reveal new teachers' practical arguments, they reveal clearly distinguishable elements of personal histories as well. Moreover, like the metaphors they express, practical arguments are grounded in personal histories (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; see also Knowles, 1990, 1993).

The value of using metaphors for understanding teachers' development is that such statements conveniently allow access to individuals' thoughts. As vehicles of thinking, metaphors are coherent ways of succinctly representing and organizing thoughts about particular subject matter, activities, or theories. In other words:

Metaphors are considered to be linguistic expressions of tacit levels of thought, fictional constructs of the actual. Deriving from the Greek "to carry across", metaphors provide a way of carrying ideas and understandings from one context to another so that both the ideas and the new context become transformed in the

process. (Cole, 1990b, pp. 5-6)

Drawing on Ortony (1975), Paivio (1979) suggests that the general assumption behind the use of metaphor in thinking and expressing is that “metaphor fulfills the necessary communication function of conveying continuous experiential information, using a discrete symbol system” (p. 151). The bases for this thinking are three hypotheses about metaphors, and these provide a vehicle for thinking about Natalie’s experience:

One hypothesis is that metaphor provides a compact way of representing the subset of cognitive and perceptual features associated with it. A metaphor allows large “chunks” of the information to be converted from the vehicle to the topic. The second is...that a metaphor allows us to talk about experiences which cannot be literally described. The third is the hypothesis that, perhaps through imagery, metaphor provides a vivid and, therefore, memorable and emotion-arousing representation of a perceived experience. (Paivio, 1979, p. 152)

In Natalie’s experience as a first year teacher her prominent and pervasive metaphor for teaching had several levels of representation. First, the metaphor revealed an extensive schemata (see, Anderson, 1977) about the nature of the teacher-student relationship and the associated and expected outcomes. Second, her prominent metaphor covered an expansive array of ways of acting—the spectrum of her practical arguments. Third, the metaphor also spoke of the experiences of her past, those aspects of her school experiences and success which were most remembered and of most benefit to her. Her metaphor was grounded in her personal history, her prior experience of teachers and classrooms. The metaphor also evoked emotive responses including fond personal attachment to particular teacher actions.

Windows, Walls, and Window Frames

There are limitations in the use of metaphors as windows into beginning teachers’ thinking and professional development. Architecturally, windows are translucent, framed, and open to reveal interior, constructed spaces. They have two main functions; they let light inward and they allow vision outward. Walls surround them; and walls are nearly always opaque. As such, metaphors as windows have limited value for uncovering the nature of teachers’ thoughts and prior experiences, just as windows in buildings have limited value for viewers seeking to discover the interior arrangements of space and the activities of inhabitants. In both cases, illumination is partial. But as windows, metaphors provide useful viewpoints and, in the hands of adept viewers, reveal important dimensions about the structure, lines of thinking, and activities on either side of the window.

The potential uses of preservice or beginning teachers’ metaphors by teacher educators, broadly defined, are many. Statements expressly revealing metaphors

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may be most useful because they provide a way of entering the thinking of prospective teachers, making clear and explicit the intent of preservice teachers' practical arguments. Accessing and viewing preservice teachers' metaphors may also be useful vehicles for pedagogical purposes. Through the pedagogical use of metaphors, metaphorical analysis, or even the presentation of theoretical constructs in metaphorical terms, teacher educators may help preservice teachers come to pedagogical understandings. We need to explore the value of metaphors as frames for theoretical constructs, particularly in terms of elements of personal histories. As such, metaphors—both preservice teacher- and teacher educator-generated—may prove to be productive frames for heightening the effectiveness of formal teacher education (see Holt-Reynolds, 1991).

Notes

- ¹ I have found that older, more experienced students of teaching tend to develop more complex metaphors and explanations of those metaphors to describe their thoughts about practice.
- ² I am not using the term practical arguments in exactly the same way as Fenstermacher (1987; see also, Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1991). The difference in the meaning I attribute to the term has more to do with the process by which individuals come to hold practical arguments. While, like Fenstermacher, I imply that practical arguments have been reasoned, they are not reasoned with the help of necessarily coherent or complete information or knowledge. As long-time observers of classrooms and teachers, students developed practical arguments based on the actions associated with and / or the consequences of reflecting on observed teachers' classroom practices. But, these observations are based on incomplete information since they do not know the thoughts of the observed teachers. In a sense, they develop lay-forms—as opposed to professional forms—of the practical arguments that Fenstermacher asserts teachers hold. And these are the kinds of positions that preservice teachers bring with them to the teacher education classroom and that often cause considerable conflict in their thinking when they are not able to resolve the differences between theory and practice as they have observed as students and as they now observe as students of teaching.
- ³ In Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) we make the argument that by asking preservice teachers to make explicit those aspects of their education-related prior experiences that are implicit in their thinking about practice, teacher educators are better able to develop pedagogies. In the acknowledgment of the positions that preservice teachers hold, teacher educators are more able to enter into the internal conversations and narratives that are conducted in the minds of prospective teachers.
- ⁴ See Footnote 1.

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