Preserve Middle Level Teachers' Orientations toward Teaching:
Case Studies in Professional Development

By Robin Loflin Smith & David Strahan

How teachers learn to teach has long been the subject of discussion and disagreement. Over the years, some teacher educators have insisted that teachers can learn to teach only through practice and have advocated "apprenticeship" as the primary means of development. Others have argued that professional course work plays a critical role in the development of expertise. As researchers have devoted increasing attention to the dynamics of teacher development, they have explored these issues with greater sophistication.

In their review of the literature, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) demonstrated that while research on teacher development is growing, the relative influences of professional course work and personal experiences on learning to teach remain the subject of great debate. They noted that some researchers have suggested that life experiences, in general, are more influential on the socialization of teachers than is professional education. Others have documented

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more persistent effects of professional experiences, especially regarding the development of "instrumental perspectives, where what works in the short run to get the class through the required lesson in a quiet and orderly manner becomes the major criterion for evaluating a teaching activity" (p. 30). As a starting point for framing an analyses of these issues, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) defined "perspectives" as the ways in which the teachers thought about their work (*e.g.*, purposes, goals, conceptions of children, curriculum) and the ways in which they gave meaning to these beliefs by their behavior in classrooms (p. 28). As such, perspectives provide a focal point for considering the many different dimensions of teachers' thoughts about their teaching. Perspectives are more than generalized "beliefs" or global "attitudes." They include actions as well as "dispositions" toward action, and reflect "assumptions" about specific situations (p. 28). In a case study of instructional decision-making in the middle grades, Strahan (1990) found that many of the assumptions that guide teachers' actions are more implicit than explicit. His study supported and extended Tabachnick's and Zeichner's (1984) conclusion that teacher socialization is a "negotiated and interactive process where what students bring to the experience gives direction to, but does not totally determine the outcome of the socialization process" (p. 43).

This investigation explored some of the ways that such negotiations occur through professional experiences. This study examined ways that preservice teachers negotiated their orientations toward teaching during three years of professional courses and internships.

Background

Studies of teacher development have indicated that connections among programmatic experiences, individual perspectives, and cooperating teachers are complex and interactive. Preservice teachers bring personal agendas and preconceived notions about teaching to their experiences (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984). These initial orientations are often drawn from their own experiences as students (Lortie, 1975) and from images of "good teaching" (Calderhead, 1988).

How preservice teachers integrate personal perspectives with formal course work remains less clear. In their case studies, Bennett and Powell (1990) found that some preservice teachers appear unwilling or unable to adopt the theoretical framework of their teacher education program. They described these individuals as "resisters," because they were resistant to important program principles and requirements and less cooperative as cohort members. Kagan (1992) identified several other limitations to programmatic influences. She reviewed 40 case studies of preservice and beginning teachers and generated a developmental model that emphasizes three primary tasks of learning to teach: acquiring knowledge of pupils; using that knowledge to extend images of self as teacher; and developing procedures for connecting classroom management and instruction (p. 129). In her

response to Kagan's review, Grossman (1992) argued that other studies have shown stronger programmatic influences. She cited several investigations that have documented ways that professional courses helped preservice teachers think about teaching with greater sophistication (p. 174).

In his case studies, Strahan (1993) found that middle level student teachers negotiated orientations toward teaching in an interactive fashion. The four student teachers in his investigation attributed much of their success to acquiring more personalized knowledge of middle level students and to learning to teach their subject matter more responsively. Strahan chronicled a pattern of development from "college student" toward "teacher" during student teaching. Three specific developmental patterns characterized much of this transition: (a) confirmation of themselves as teachers; (b) affirmation of teacher status in relationships with students; and (c) the validation of success in teaching through students' progress.

These studies of ways preservice teachers learn to teach suggest that personal perspectives develop in a negotiated fashion. It seems likely that personal orientations toward teaching evolve from preservice teachers' life experiences. Professional courses and related field experiences may encourage them to examine their orientations. As they encounter different perspectives in classrooms and coursework, they form more specific constructs of good teaching. Differences between programmatic emphases and classroom practices create varying degrees of dissonance which drives this negotiation. How preservice teachers resolve the tensions they perceive may be essential to their development.

The extent to which teacher education programs can encourage reflective practice needs to be examined more systemically. Given the complexity of these issues, this study attempted to explore interactions among programmatic influences, field experiences, and individual perspectives in a longitudinal fashion. Two questions guided this investigation:

1. How do preservice teachers express orientations toward teaching, toward young adolescents, and toward language arts as they experience professional coursework and internships?

2. How do their orientations evolve during their professional preparation?

Context of the Investigation

In the Spring of 1991, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) initiated a new program in Elementary and Middle Grades Teacher Education. This investigation reports case studies conducted with four of the middle grades majors who shared a concentration in language arts education. During the four semesters, these students completed a total of seven courses together. The UNCG program attempted to foster the type of reflective practice that Henderson (1992) advocated in his model of "inquiring, reflective teaching." Program principles encouraged "caring" perspectives toward students with an emphasis on the developmental

needs of young adolescents and on unique ways of knowing. Each of the six courses in the professional sequence required students to connect research on development with observations in middle-level classrooms. The program encouraged "student-centered approaches" to teaching in all of the curriculum courses by structuring comparisons of traditional and developmental methods of instruction. A constructivist perspective toward language arts was the basis for all lesson and unit planning assignments. Faculty encouraged preservice teachers to connect listening, speaking, reading, and writing in an integrated fashion that tapped pupils' interests and prior experiences. The program encouraged "artistic problem solving" in instruction and classroom management through the use of case studies. All of the core courses emphasized reflection by requiring students to keep journals, talk about their experiences, and write personal perspective papers.

Another critical dimension of the context of the study is the time preservice teachers spent working with cooperating teachers in one of the UNCG Professional Development Schools. During the first three semesters, each intern spent ten hours per week in a middle school classroom with a mentor teacher. They then completed 15 weeks of student teaching. In interviews, these mentor teachers expressed humanistic ideals. They described "good teachers" as "dedicated," "caring," and "having a love for students." The willingness to persevere, be flexible in plans and delivery, and try numerous approaches to find the appropriate one for individuals were recurring themes in each of the teacher interviews.

While cooperating teachers thus expressed "caring" and "student-centered perspectives on instruction," their orientations toward reading/language arts that conflicted with the "constructivist" emphasis of the university faculty. Interviews and observations indicated that traditional instructional practices in reading/language arts prevailed, even when participants' stated holistic, integrated views of communication skills. For the most part, teachers viewed reading/language arts as sets of discrete skills that must be taught in a sequential, hierarchical fashion. Teachers viewed instruction in reading/language arts in a utilitarian fashion, emphasizing the mastery of skills so that test scores would rise. They used textbooks extensively and relied on basal reading series, occasionally breaking this pattern to present mini-units based on novels or plays. They often planned textbook-centered lessons that were designed to teach discrete skills in language and spelling. Reading instruction often followed the traditional pattern of basal reader lessons, including vocabulary, reading, comprehension questions, and tests.

In summary, the traditional skills-based orientation to instruction expressed by the cooperating teachers was very different from the integrated approach advocated by the university faculty. Preservice teachers thus experienced two different perspectives toward teaching reading/language arts in the middle grades.

Method

These case studies were conducted in three phases. The first phase (Smith, 1992) explored preservice teachers' orientations as they completed their first year of professional studies. The second phase (Smith & Strahan, 1993) followed participants as they completed their coursework. The third phase focused on student teaching. During all three phases, one investigator served as a participant observer in teaching professional courses and supervising internships. The other investigator conducted all interviews and analyzed archival records. The constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978) provided a process for identifying patterns among responses and observations. Investigators shared preliminary reports with participants for verification.

Participants

The first phase of this study focused on all six of the middle grades majors who had selected Language Arts as a teaching concentration. One of these preservice teachers had to postpone her student teaching. Another was unable to participate in all of the interviews during student teaching. The four remaining middle grade majors who had selected Language Arts became the participants in this study. These participants, three females and one male, were Julia, Bernice, Helen, and Andy. All but Helen were unmarried, traditionally college-age students. Helen was 39 years old and the mother of three children. Each of the subjects came from a Southern, Caucasian, middle-class family.

Data Sources

Investigators generated case studies from interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and materials produced in eight courses and five internships that spanned five semesters. Sources of data included: (a) structured and unstructured interviews with preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers; (b) essays generated as course assignments; (c) portfolios of teaching materials; (d) group discussions; (e) formal lesson observations; and (f) investigators' field notes.

Design and Data Analysis

Studies that utilize the naturalistic inquiry approach seek to describe the ways that people make sense out of their lives (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1982). Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested that this approach focuses on the understanding of particular events, called "cases." These cases are described through case study methodology. As with most case studies, the design of this study was partially emergent, and data collection was guided by themes within the data. The constant comparative method (Glasser, 1978) was used in data analysis. To establish trustworthiness, the investigators used the following techniques: (a) prolonged

engagement; (b) persistent observation; (c) triangulation; (d) member checks; and (e) the investigators' notes.

Results

Case One—Bernice

From the time she began her formal teacher education courses, Bernice valued students as individuals. Soft-spoken, kind, and patient, Bernice approached teaching with humanistic orientations toward her tasks. In her earliest interviews, she discussed her belief that middle grades students need to feel affirmed and invited to learn, and she expressed her intention to provide a warm and supportive atmosphere in her classroom. Even when she experienced difficulties in classroom management, particularly as a first-year intern, Bernice indicated a genuine concern for the well-being of her students, and she experimented with management strategies that maintained the dignity of her students and allowed them to "save face" with their peers.

As she developed more skill in planning lessons, Bernice offered her students many opportunities for class discussions, and she tried to offer her students choices and control over their learning. Maintaining personal rapport with her students was extremely important to Bernice, and she spent a great deal of time engaging in personal conversations with them and attending their extracurricular events. She described the "highlight" of her student teaching as being the friendships she made with her students. Bernice attempted to develop close relationships with students she perceived as neglected or overlooked by their peers and their parents. Bernice was concerned that the young adolescents she taught were inclined to "put down" one another, and she made numerous attempts to stop this and instead foster mutual respect in her classroom. She found the most difficult aspect of teaching to be balancing her attachments with students with her desire to be fair with them.

Bernice experienced growth in her teaching during the two years she was enrolled in the program; she also faced some daunting conflicts as well. More than any of the other subjects in this study, Bernice experienced serious dissonance in working with her cooperating teacher. Bernice began to work with her cooperating teacher, Mrs. K., as a junior intern, and the personal relationship between the two became a positive force very quickly. Mrs. K., a veteran teacher, also valued her good rapport with students, and she was inclined to go beyond normal expectations to facilitate her students' success. On this point, Mrs. K. and Bernice agreed and got along well.

The conflict arose as Bernice experienced an evolution in her orientations toward teaching language arts/reading, a change that was prompted largely by her methods courses at the university. Mrs. K. and Bernice were assigned to teach four classes of language arts, which had traditionally been defined in this school as grammar and spelling. The classes, which were tracked by ability, ranged from 15

to 28 students, and Mrs. K. generally followed a textbook approach in teaching discrete skills. Students spent most of their instructional time identifying parts of speech and parts of sentences or completing spelling exercises. Although this school organized teachers into teams, most topics were taught separately, and reading was taught in a separate class from language arts.

As early as her first semester in the classroom, Bernice began to question this approach to teaching language arts. She was distressed by the boredom she felt students experienced in these classes, and she wondered if the integrated, holistic approach favored by her professors would be more successful. She made some initial attempts to try different strategies, particularly in the integration of writing into her grammar lessons, even as a first-year intern. Because she was inexperienced, and because she had not yet established classroom management skills, these early attempts were often less than successful; yet, Bernice continued to reflect upon the wisdom of an isolated skills approach.

By the time she became a student teacher, Bernice was ready to attempt a different approach to teaching than her cooperating teacher had modeled. Bernice appreciated the caring, supportive relationships with students she saw her cooperating teacher value, but Bernice indicated that caring for students was not sufficient for "good teaching." As a truly successful teacher, she thought she must help students see connections and purpose in their learning; she came to believe that an integrated approach might be more successful for teaching language arts. She was concerned that her students did not write well, and, when interviewed, she had already thought about how she would deal with this in her own classroom.

> I would like to do a lot of role play in my classroom, more communication. They think that language arts is spelling, and that's it! The kids have a separate reading class, and I just really don't like that at all because there's no connection. It was funny because I gave them a test on "there, they're, and their," and they aced it. Aced it! But they can't write a paragraph or anything! They can take the test on it and make 100, so I think I would pull in more reading just to make it something more enjoyable and try to connect. I know this is all UNCG terms, everything, any kind of idea. I know it's from that Language Arts methods class, and at the time I didn't think I learned anything, but I really see it now. I would take that grammar and put it into actual reading. That's hard to do now (in student teaching) because she wants the reading completely separate. I mean she's even told me to skip the parts of the book that have reading. And since I've been there, I've done it that way, but it's always different when it's your own room.

Bernice was bound by her cooperating teacher's expectations, and many of the lessons she taught during student teaching involved discrete grammar skills; however, she began to incorporate writing into her lessons, helping students to apply the skills they learned. Bernice seemed to struggle with balancing a varied group of expectations—those of her cooperating teacher, those of her professors, and those she had for herself. The dynamics were difficult and trying for her, but

they also seemed to prompt considerable growth in her development as a teacher.

> When I first started teaching, just because I was so unconfident about myself, I thought, I'll just have to teach sixth graders because they're younger. And now, I'd really like to teach eighth, just because I've, it just doesn't bother me at all about their age now. I guess I feel like you can make more of a difference with eighth graders because they are about to change to high school, and I guess they're a little more sentimental. It took me too long to feel really comfortable, which I do now, and I'm glad. I love what I'm doing.

Despite the turmoil she faced, Bernice never lost her concern for her students. Indeed, her humanistic orientations continued to flourish as she developed personal relationships with students. Bernice ended her formal teacher education program with confidence in her abilities to communicate successfully with young adolescents, with a determination to be a good role model for her students, and with continuing cognitive dissonance regarding her orientations toward the subject matter she wanted to teach.

> *Interviewer*: What advice would you offer preservice teachers beginning their programs next year?
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> *Bernice*: Be open to anything. Be flexible. Just be confident. Just go in with your ideas already set and then see where the kids take them, instead of going in and asking your teacher, "Well, I wonder what we should do?" I guess you really just have to set in your mind first of all really what you want to do and then, if that changes, that's find. There's just so much you can do in language arts and reading!

Case Two—Julia

Julia entered the teacher education program with very clear images of the kind of teacher she wanted to be. Comparing herself to the good and bad teachers she remembered, she had decided that being kind and supportive was important, and she wanted to create an inviting, loosely-structured atmosphere in her classroom. However, management was important to her as well. While still a junior intern, Julia experienced conflicts in balancing her desire to be kind with her need to be taken seriously by her students. For example, she described one early encounter with students who were fighting in the hallway. When the students ignored her command to stop the fight, she felt helpless and overwhelmed. As she developed stronger classroom management strategies, Julia was able to overcome her early conflicts and gain confidence as she approached student teaching.

Julia worked with two different cooperating teachers during her internships, and she developed good relationships with both of them. She responded well to the encouragement of her professors to reflect upon what she observed and experienced as an intern. As she reflected upon her work in classrooms, Julia discovered that she tended to personalize the problems her students had in learning, and she came to realize that this behavior was preventing her from being as effective as she wanted

to be. As she became more confident during student teaching, Julia was able to shift her focus from herself to her students.

> I think I got to a point where I didn't think everything was my fault, and that these kids were not all little clones of each other, and that they were all individuals with all kinds of different things in their heads. They were all bringing different things to the classroom. I used to think they were all clay and I could just mold them and anything I told them would have to fit. Sometimes it just doesn't fit. For a long time, if a kid didn't have an assignment, it was my fault. I went through a lot of guilty feelings. Now I know they are all little people, people just like me with all kinds of different things.

In response to what she learned in her university courses, Julia began to question the traditional textbook approaches to teaching isolated skills she saw taking place in language arts classes. She noted in one journal entry that this approach was difficult for her to teach because it was "so different from the way I was taught and so different from how my cooperating teachers teach"; however her observations and experiences during her internships lead Julia to believe that an integrated, holistic approach was appropriate, and her work reflected this evolution in her orientations.

Julia successfully integrated communication skills with content area materials in a number of ways. For instance, she planned a "Me Book" activity that integrated reading, writing, art, and classroom discussions in a creative way. Rather than focussing on the isolated grammar skills she was required to teach, Julia integrated the skills with writing assignments her students found appealing. As an independent study requirement, she prepared an extensive reading list of young adolescent novels to be used in various content area classes, and she used literature in teaching a Black History unit in her social studies classes. Julia was concerned that her students would find her assignments appealing and interesting, but she also had clear instructional goals to guide and support her choices of activities. Her student centered attitude was clear as she described why she chose the kinds of activities she had selected.

> It's the kids. A lot of things I have given them are fun things. We do a lot of sharing in front of the class. They don't criticize each other. I plan things to keep them involved. I want all the kids to get to do the kinds of things the AG (academically gifted) kids always get to do. Sometimes I come in here and teach, and it's not really on my mind. As an adult, I have to make myself do things. They have to make themselves do things, put themselves in the right frame of mind to study, and sometimes they don't, unless it's interesting to them.

In an unusual turn of events, Julia actually took charge of instruction during her student teaching semester. Her cooperating teacher began to interact with her more as a peer rather than a novice, and Julia responded by taking the lead in planning and teaching. Julia was not afraid to tackle some rather large undertakings; she

organized a complex festival that correlated with her unit on Greece, with a mini-Olympics, a banquet, and skits representing what the students had learned. She consistently integrated writing and communication skills in most of the activities she planned. As the instructional leader, she incorporated many of the strategies and techniques she had learned from her cooperating teachers and her university classes, along with her own ideas to develop a teaching style with which she could be comfortable and successful.

Since positive relationships with students remained important to her, Julia often went to great lengths to deal with a student's individual needs. For example, she made and followed a complex plan for one student to monitor his work and behavior. She indicated that her task was to find the reason why a student was misbehaving or failing to complete his/her work and deal with it in whatever way was necessary.

The major conflict Julia seemed to experience with her formal training involved the use of indirect instruction. Perhaps because she viewed herself as a "take-charge" person in the classroom, she preferred the direct instruction model, and she had little use for indirect instruction. She commented to one of her professors that none of her teachers had ever used indirect instruction, she had never observed indirect instruction, and she did not see how she could use it with her own students. Despite her generally sophisticated approach to teaching, Julia was not ready to alter the image of herself as the source of knowledge in the classroom. She felt that her task was to be directive, in a positive fashion, and to efficiently balance the many demands of her classroom.

Julia ended student teaching with a great deal of confidence in her ability. She felt that she had been affirmed in her teaching by her students, her cooperating teacher, and her observers. She remained humanistic in her approach to teaching middle grades students, and she anticipated growing more skilled in teaching as she gained more experience. Julia wrote the following to summarize her beliefs about meeting students' needs:

> We need to try to build with our students a trusting relationship. They often need a role model other than a parent. To do this, I want my students to see that I am human. I want to share my own personal experiences with my students so that they may be more open with me. I think my job is to help them become aware that everyone is different and that everyone thinks differently. Overall, I want my students to feel secure. My students should feel successful and useful. I will listen to my students and be genuinely concerned.

Case Three—Andy

Andy enjoyed success in working with young adolescents throughout his teacher education program. He began the program with humanistic orientations toward teaching and students and unclear notions about what he should actually teach in language arts and reading. By the end of his program, he had discovered

that his own love of literature could be successfully shared with his students, and he adopted an "English professor" mode in teaching his middle grades students.

After suffering initial difficulties in classroom management, Andy developed strategies that enabled him to maintain a business-like atmosphere in his classroom. He became proactive in classroom management, making accommodations for students who might be particularly troublesome, and prompting his students to follow the rules of the classroom. Andy valued his relationships with his students, and he developed a good rapport with them. As one parent remarked, Andy became "connected" with his students personally, often calling them at home when they had been absent, attending their ball games and extracurricular events, and being careful to remember special things that were going on in their lives.

Andy's ideas about teaching language arts/reading changed significantly during his teacher education program. As he began his training, Andy expressed the belief that the "basics" were most important for young adolescents to learn. As he gained teaching experience, Andy began to draw on his own love of literature in planning lessons. He developed and used fairly sophisticated questioning strategies as he lead students to analyze literature selections. His focus was on teaching the elements of literature to his students, helping them to grasp the symbolism of poems or identify the foreshadowing in a short story.

Andy clearly believed that brighter students were more capable of perceiving the deeper meanings in the literature he taught. His classes were tracked according to ability, and he followed his cooperating teacher's habit of teaching different kinds of lessons to different classes according to their levels. Andy especially enjoyed working with the academically gifted group because they seemed to understand the literature at a higher level, and they were capable of reading more difficult and complex selections. He often stated his preference for teaching the students he considered to be brighter and more capable.

One strategy Andy and his cooperating teacher employed to accommodate these different levels of students was in using many versions of the same story. For instance, when they planned a unit around Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the "gifted" group read the original novel, the "high" group read a slightly easier version, the "average" group read a condensed selection, and the "low" group read a simple play based on the same story. Each group was assigned vocabulary work and comprehension questions, and all classes watched the play on video. The teaching goals involved knowledge of the author's life, the plot, and teacher-selected vocabulary words.

During student teaching, Andy followed a similar pattern as he taught literature. Helping students recognize and understand critical interpretations of literature became his primary teaching goal. Like Helen, Andy experienced some frustration with his methods courses at the university. He began to approach language arts/reading more holistically, incorporating writing and speaking into his lessons, but he struggled with the concept of indirect instruction and its validity as a teaching

method. While he attempted to use some indirect instruction, he seemed to view it as a mysterious guessing game for students to stumble upon deeper meanings and connections that had already been determined by others—usually literary critics. He rarely indicated a belief that literature should speak to the experience of the young adolescent who reads it, even though this orientation was at the core of the methods courses he took. Like Helen, Andy saw content knowledge as an external package to be absorbed. He did not expect his students to construct their own understandings, but to perceive and comprehend the knowledge of others.

In spite of his insistence that his university classes had little impact upon his teaching, Andy exhibited many of the behaviors that he had been taught in his classes while he taught as a student teacher. He was not hesitant to try different things, and he began to feel very secure in his teaching. When a strategy did not work to his satisfaction, he was inclined to reflect on the lesson and speculate about how to improve it. Andy had a very good working relationship with his cooperating teacher, and he borrowed many of her ideas and instructional strategies; however, he developed his own style of teaching and interacting with students. Andy was so successful in student teaching that he was offered an interim position to end the school year, and he returned to the school for his first year of solo teaching.

Case Four—Helen

Helen entered her junior year in teacher education with some firm ideas and preconceived notions about the role of the teacher, about the young adolescents she was preparing to teach, and about the teaching of reading/language arts at the middle level. She indicated her firm belief that teachers were the most important factor in promoting students' learning. She suggested that teachers who care about students, teach interesting lessons in a thorough way, and gain the respect of their students will be successful with all students. She viewed reading/language arts as a set of discrete skills that could be broken into manageable bits and taught in isolation.

Throughout her two years of teacher education at the university, she maintained these orientations, gathering anecdotal evidence to support their thinking, and resisting any suggestion contrary to her beliefs. What made Helen's case especially interesting was her ability to approach her experience in two-fold manner. Like the "resistors" described by Bennett and Powell (1990), Helen was able to say and write what she perceived her university professors wanted to hear; however, her actual teaching and interaction with students reflected little of the approach her professors would advocate.

Helen always approached teaching with a humanistic, caring attitude toward students. Based on her experiences with her own children, Helen considered young adolescents to be unpredictable, moody, fragile, and in need of reassurance. She believed that caring teachers could motivate any student to be successful, and she suggested that when students failed, it was because they were not receiving the love

and attention they needed from their teachers. She indicated that she would expect the same things from her students that she expected from her own children—mutual respect and obedience. In spite of the difficulties she experienced in classroom management, Helen remained positive in her interactions with her students, and she developed good rapport with nearly all of them. She seemed to genuinely like young adolescents, and the atmosphere in her classroom continued to become more positive and pleasant as she adopted some management strategies.

Helen saw the teacher as the source of knowledge in the classroom, and she indicated a strong desire to share her knowledge with her students in an entertaining and effective way. She taught science and language arts/reading during her internship experiences, and she planned some hands-on activities for her science lessons. Language arts/reading seemed to cause her the most difficulty, perhaps due to the conflicting orientations held by her and her professors. Helen's language arts and reading methods classes at the university focused on an integrated, global approach in communication skills, but Helen consistently clung to more traditional lessons that emphasized direct instruction, competition, and discrete skills in vocabulary, spelling, and grammar. Although she wrote lesson plans and analyses for her professors that seemed to indicate a more integrated approach, Helen's orientation toward reading/language arts did not change significantly during her teacher education experience. She seemed to experience little cognitive dissonance in this area; rather, she was certain that her approach was appropriate, and that her professors' approach was impractical and unworkable in a "real" school.

Unlike some of her fellow student teachers, Helen found a cooperating teacher early in her program who shared similar orientations toward teaching middle grades reading/language arts. Her cooperating teacher, Mrs. S., reinforced Helen's preconceived notions about teaching, particularly as they conflicted with those expressed by her professors. Helen, who adamantly insisted that the clinical portions of her course work were the only valuable aspects to her teacher education program, indicated that her highest goal as a novice teacher was to become "just like Mrs. S." She seemed to receive ready affirmation from her cooperating teacher, as she mimicked Mrs. S's instructional habits and teaching style. She never expressed any desire to approach teaching in a manner different from Mrs. S. Because the two of them shared similar views of "good teaching," Helen received reinforcement from Mrs. S. for planning the kinds of lessons Helen believed would be most successful. She focused on isolated grammatical skills, "round-robin" reading, spelling exercises, and vocabulary words. Her goal was to teach skills creatively and well, and it was frustrating to her that her methods classes at the university gave her minimal help in how to teach adjectives or spelling.

Part of this frustration may have resulted from Helen's own insecurity with the skills she wanted to teach. Helen noted that, as an older student, it had been several years since she had been taught grammar and spelling, and she suspected that there must be more entertaining ways to learn these skills than she had experienced as a

student. She expected her methods classes to give her these "new" strategies, and it was frustrating for her that her professors instead asked her to reconsider her concept of reading and language arts. Perhaps because she was so secure in her beliefs, Helen expressed little willingness to change, and the reinforcement she received from her cooperating teacher seemed to empower her to resist any changes in her orientations.

Helen remains an interesting case because of her continued resistance to the conceptual foundations of many of her methods courses at the university. Her style of teaching and her interaction with students changed very little during the two years of her teacher education program. Helen noted in one interview, "I've been around schools a long time, and I've never known them to change very much. I don't think it's going to start now." In her own way, she may have been resisting the kind of training that would prepare her for what Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) called "schools that do not exist." Helen's image of herself as a teacher was firmly implanted as she began her formal training, was reinforced during her experiences by her cooperating teacher, and was still intact after student teaching. For Helen, "good teaching" was a skill to be learned through observation and emulation, a brass

Table One
Participants' Major Orientations at Programmatic Intervals

Bernice
Initial orientations:
Teaching—Provide a warm, supporting atmosphere.
Students—Middle school students need to feel affirmed, invited to learn.
Language Arts/Reading—Content should be interesting.
Orientations at end of first semester:
Teaching—Provide caring support for students.
Students—Middle school students need to maintain dignity.
Language Arts/Reading—Content should be interactive.
Orientations at end of program:
Teaching—Establish personal rapport with students.
Students—Middle school students need to see personal connections and purpose in learning.
Language Arts/Reading—Content should be interesting, holistic, integrated.

Julia
Initial orientations:
Teaching—Have a loosely structured class.
Students—Middle school students need motivation.
Language Arts/Reading—Content should be relevant; reader-based.
Orientations at end of first semester:
Teaching—Be an authority figure; be flexible.
Students—Middle school students need motivation.
Language Arts/Reading—Content should be relevant; reader-based.
Orientations at end of program:
Teaching—Be positive, proactive, reflective; vary approach.
Students—Middle school students have individual needs; personal involvement with learning.
Language Arts/Reading—Content should be relevant; hands-on; integrated.

ring to be caught during the wild ride of student teaching. Helen caught the ring, and she achieved her goal; she became the teacher she wanted to be.

Analysis across Cases

Participants' orientations toward teaching, students, and content have been summarized in Table One. As indicated in the summary of orientations, two of the participants, Andy and Helen, experienced little significant change in their orientations toward teaching middle grades language arts and reading. They tended to adopt the teaching practices of their cooperating teachers and draw upon their preexisting "images" of what constituted good teaching. These images were based primarily on their experiences as students and, in Helen's case, as a parent. They resisted the adoption of any of the "guiding principles" of the teacher education program that did not coincide with their preconceived notions about teaching, and especially about teaching reading and language arts in the middle grades. Helen and Andy fit the profile of the "resistors" described by Bennett and Powell (1992), and they often commented that the only really useful part of their teacher education program was the clinical experience they received.

Table One (Continued)
Participants' Major Orientations at Programmatic Intervals

Andy
Initial orientations:
Teaching—Be caring and compassionate; make every student successful.
Students—Middle school students are not interested in school; are changing.
Language Arts/Reading—Teach the basics.
Orientations at end of first semester
Teaching—Combine discipline with caring; motivate students to learn.
Students—Middle school students are not interested in school; changing.
Language Arts/Reading—Balance skills and integration.
Orientations at end of program
Teaching—Motivate students; be proactive; adjust style according to students' abilities.
Students—Needs vary greatly; develop personal relationships.
Language Arts/Reading—Help students analyze literature.

Helen
Initial orientations:
Teaching—Care about students; be authoritative.
Students—All can be successful.
Language Arts/Reading—Use textbooks well to teach skills.
Orientations at end of first semester:
Teaching—Manage the classroom; care about students.
Students—All kids have potential; ms kids are moody.
Language Arts/Reading—Emphasize discrete skills.
Orientations at end of program:
Teaching—Manage the classroom; care about students.
Students—All kids have potential to learn; kids are moody and unpredictable.
Language Arts/Reading—Emphasize discrete skills.

The other cases reported here, Bernice and Julia, reflect some significant changes in the participants' orientations toward teaching middle grades reading and language arts. While they began their training with a skills based orientation, they ended the program indicating that a holistic, integrated approach was more appropriate. Even though all four of the preservice teachers in this study worked with cooperating teachers who taught from a skills based perspective, Julia and Bernice reacted differently than Andy and Helen. Whereas Helen and Andy resisted change and expressed the same views as their cooperating teachers, Bernice and Julia experienced dissonance and emerged from student teaching with different orientations than those of their cooperating teachers. In an unusual turn of events, Julia even assumed the role of instructional leader, perhaps influencing the teacher more than the teacher influenced Julia.

Conclusions

These four case studies have illustrated some of the ways that preservice teachers negotiate perspectives toward learning and teaching. Results have supported the findings of Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984), Strahan (1993), and others in describing learning to teach as a "negotiated" and "interactive" process in which personal and programmatic experiences are intertwined. In these particular cases, participants refined and extended their personal orientations toward teaching as they interacted with their cooperating teachers and professors. Like the preservice teachers in the studies Kagan (1992) reviewed, they made the transitions from student to teacher by learning more about individual pupils, by extending their images of themselves as teachers, and by developing procedures for connecting management and instruction (p. 129). As Kagan suggested, each of the four students experienced a degree of cognitive dissonance.

This dissonance was most pronounced in perspectives toward the teaching of language arts. All four cooperating teachers viewed instruction in reading/language arts in more utilitarian ways than did the university professors. Their emphasis on textbook-centered lessons and discrete skills contrasted with the program's emphasis on integration. Their preservice teachers negotiated this dissonance in very different ways. While Andy and Helen gravitated toward the views of their cooperating teachers, Bernice and Julia seemed to adopt more of the "guiding principles" of the program.

Why these preservice teachers negotiated their experiences in different ways remains a matter of speculation. One possibility is that Bernice and Julia developed a different perspective toward "student-centeredness." From the beginning of their internships, they seemed to focus on individual needs and to see classroom activities as expressions of those needs, describing writing as a means to express feelings and gain self confidence, for example. Andy and Helen, in contrast, seemed to focus on student-centeredness as a matter of making lessons interesting and establishing

rapport. Another factor may have been the personal dimension of the internship placements. Both Andy and Helen expressed admiration for their cooperating teachers, describing them as "great" teachers and saying they wanted to become "just like them." While Bernice and Julia got along well with their cooperating teachers, they rarely expressed such admiration. Another factor may have been their initial beliefs regarding "good teaching." In all of their classes, Andy and Helen often expressed a sentiment that "good teachers make a difference in students' lives, not all of this theory." In the classroom, their attempts to be student-centered were usually traditional and rarely threatened the status-quo. Bernice and Julia seemed less likely to question the value of theory and more inclined to accept the riskier role of teacher as change agent in curriculum and instruction.

Even though the reasons for these differences remain unclear, this analysis has demonstrated the complexities inherent in learning to teach. As other studies have indicated, the relative influences of coursework and internships are neither direct nor linear. It seems likely that each preservice teacher negotiates his or her own perspective and makes instructional decisions accordingly. Findings from this study have offered direction for designing more supportive field experiences for preservice teachers in this program. Based on these case studies, faculty have begun to work more closely with cooperating teachers to develop more constructivist perspectives toward teaching. They have conducted a series of discussions on middle grades curriculum and have offered workshops on reading and writing strategies. They are studying the dynamics on inclusion and individualized reading instruction. As participants continue to work together in the Professional Development Schools, it may be possible to highlight constructivist strategies for teaching young adolescents in a more explicit fashion.

Other teacher educators may benefit from similar efforts. Ongoing interactions among university-based teacher educators and cooperating teachers are essential to success. While assignments that prompt and guide reflection may help preservice teachers, partnerships with mentor teachers may bring reflective teaching to life. As this happens, other case studies may illuminate ways that preservice teachers negotiate experiences and establish identities.

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