Georgia State University
ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology Dissertations

Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology

9-12-2006

"I Am An Island To Myself": How One Veteran English Teacher's Beliefs, Experiences, and Philosophy Translate into Classroom Practice

Tara Jenkins Bruhn

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/msit_diss

Recommended Citation
Bruhn, Tara Jenkins, ""I Am An Island To Myself": How One Veteran English Teacher's Beliefs, Experiences, and Philosophy Translate into Classroom Practice." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2006.
http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/msit_diss/7

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Middle-Secondary Education and Instructional Technology Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, "I AM AN ISLAND TO MYSELF": HOW ONE VETERAN ENGLISH TEACHER'S BELIEFS, EXPERIENCES, AND PHILOSOPHY TRANSLATE INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE, by TARA JENKINS BRUHN, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

____

Peggy Albers, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

____

Mary P. Deming, Ph.D.
Committee Member

____

Dana L. Fox, Ph.D.
Committee Member

____

Pearl A. McHaney, Ph.D.
Committee Member

____

Date

____

Karen Schultz, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Middle-Secondary and Instructional Technology

____

Ronald P. Colarusso, Ed.D.
Dean

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education's director of graduate studies and research, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

_______________Tara Jenkins Bruhn___________________
Signature of Author

NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

Tara Jenkins Bruhn
192 Revolutionary Drive
Hampton, GA 30228

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Peggy Albers
Department of Middle-Secondary Education
and Instructional Technology
College of Education
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303-3083

VITA

Tara Jenkins Bruhn

ADDRESS 192 Revolutionary Drive
Hampton, GA 30228

EDUCATION

Ph.D.	2005	Georgia State University Teaching and Learning
M. Ed.	1998	Georgia State University English Education
B.A.	1984	Georgia State University English

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2004-Present	English Teacher Starr's Mill High School, Fayetteville, GA
1997-2004	English Teacher Downeyhill High School, Meadowbrook, GA
1995-1997	English Teacher Alexander High School, Douglasville, GA

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS:

1998-Present	Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society
1998-Present	Georgia Council of Teachers of English
1994-Present	National Council of Teachers of English
1994-Present	Professional Association of Georgia Educators

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS:

Bruhn, T. (2004). *Teacher Beliefs, Experience, and Philosophy*. Presentation to doctoral educational seminar, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.

Bruhn, T. (2002). *Twain and Steinbeck: Two Cases for Teaching the Traditional Literary Canon into the New Millennium.* Presentations in The Georgia Counsel of Teachers of English Annual Conference, Rome, GA.

Bruhn, T. (2000) *Transcending the Stereotypes: Positive Female Protagonists in Young Adult Literature.* Presentation in The Georgia Read-Write Now Conference, Atlanta, GA

ABSTRACT

“I AM AN ISLAND TO MYSELF”: HOW ONE VETERAN ENGLISH TEACHER’S BELIEFS, EXPERIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY TRANSLATE INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

by
Tara Jenkins Bruhn

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the beliefs, philosophy, and experience of a veteran English teacher and how each of these constructs informed her classroom practice. This research, conducted in a metropolitan high school in the South, provides insight into the way a veteran teacher believes, practices in her classroom, and relates to her greater teaching milieu. The study is theoretically framed in Greene’s (1971) notion of “doing philosophy” in which a teacher makes meaning from her reflected, lived-through experience, and Applebee’s (1996) notion of curriculum as conversation for the teaching of language arts discourse.

Research indicates that teacher’s beliefs are personal (Munby, 1984; Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987), and transactional with practice (Richardson, 1991). Other research shows that beliefs may be tacitly or overtly held without manifestation (Fenstermacher, 1978; Green, 1971) but that they are the best gauges for the choices people make throughout their lives (Bandura, 1986; Nisbet & Ross, 1980). This study seeks to understand what a veteran teacher believes that may explain her practice.

Data were collected over 15 weeks of an 18 week semester via observations, formal and informal interviews, and a researcher's log. Using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the researcher determined recurring themes and structures in the data to explain beliefs into practice.

The findings of this study showed that a veteran English teacher's beliefs were overtly held and practiced as a result of personal background, cumulative teaching experience, and certain conditions within the immediate and greater instructional setting. The study further indicated the teacher created personal meaning for herself and students, respectively, through practicing a form of professional autonomy from the greater teaching milieu and by creating a specialized learning community in her classroom.

The results of this study suggest veteran teachers form self-inclusive practice based on beliefs and experiences, especially when conditions exist environmentally requiring the teacher be a self-sufficient practitioner.

"I AM AN ISLAND TO MYSELF:" HOW ONE VETERAN ENGLISH TEACHER'S BELIEFS, EXPERIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY TRANSLATE INTO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

by
Tara Jenkins Bruhn

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Teaching and Learning
in
the Department of Middle-Secondary Education
and Instructional Technology
in
the College of Education
Georgia State University

Atlanta, Georgia
2005

Copyright by
Tara Jenkins Bruhn
2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This five-year graduate journey and culminating work would not have been possible without the assistance, direction, and influence of many people in my professional educational career and personal life. To these many people I owe a debt of gratitude.

Foremost I thank my respondent, Rachel Gibson, who opened her life and teaching practice to me as a researcher and colleague, and whose phenomenal story of drive, determination, and survival I have earnestly sought to represent as the dynamic and meaningful one that it is. Thank you for your confidence that I ardently earned and protected to the end. I also thank my former school mate and Assistant Principal, Zachary G. Spencer, without whose tremendous support, understanding, and scheduling expertise I could not have navigated teaching and researching this study and subsequently progressing in my career. Thank you to the many fellow colleagues, friends, and students between two high schools who demonstratively supported my efforts while I was teaching, researching, and writing.

I thank my stellar committee members, Dr. Peggy Albers, Dr. Mary P. Deming, Dr. Dana L. Fox, and Dr. Pearl A. McHaney for their time, professional expertise, flexibility, and wisdom. Each of these accomplished scholars has exhibited the qualities of a master professor and mentor throughout the coursework and dissertation process, and I have been privileged to work with them all. I wish to thank Dr. Peggy Albers, especially, for her patience, debriefing ability, and theoretical knowledge, all assisting me in navigating the complexities of women studying women.

I thank many doctoral fellows over the last five years who served as sounding boards for my ideas, reviewers, partners in classes and seminars, cheerleaders, and experts who paved the way for me by their fine examples to complete my work. I will repay by assisting others as is the way of teachers and learners.

I thank my high school English teachers for the examples they set that assisted me in completing this task that I never dreamed as a high school student would even come to pass. I thank Linda Spriggs, my junior English teacher, colleague, mentor, friend, and prayer warrior for walking this journey with me all the way. Her prayers, calls, encouragement, and assistance through the trials and joys of the last five years of my life have been priceless. I thank Nell Clark, my senior English teacher, whose high standards for academic excellence and classroom decorum have impacted me and shaped me into the senior English teacher I am today. I thank Gail Self, my Journalism teacher and later colleague, whose support for me and my teaching philosophy in challenged times assisted me in completing this undertaking.

Numerous personal friends have supported my efforts morally and financially, and I regret not being able to mention them all. However, I wish to thank my special friends, Lieutenant Colonel Ed Hughes, John Post, Dan Berry, Milton Vinson, and my

beloved late friends, Neal Thomas, Jimmy Griffin, and Julius Efram, from the Millionaires Club of Mary Mac's Tea Room. These rare gentlemen, all hailing from another generation apart from mine, welcomed me to their lunch table, tolerated my academic discussions, offered advice, and gave generously when I was either hungry or needed yet another book or both through my Master's and Doctoral programs on the salary of a teacher.

I offer special thanks to Dr. Jean M. Thomas, Dean Emeritus for Student Development at Georgia State University, for her continued support and superb academic example of a strong, intelligent woman who can and will despite overwhelming odds.

Most importantly, I wish to thank the late acting President and Executive Vice President and Provost of Georgia State University, Dr. William M. Suttles, for his immeasurable support and love through 22 years of friendship. Dr. Suttles held unshakable convictions concerning higher education and the advancement of women, even when the latter was not popular, and he insisted I begin and complete this doctoral program. His resounding "Go on now and get that degree," and the gift of his own doctoral robe that hangs in my office have many times been the momentum behind completing this arduous work. What a privilege it was to have had Dr. Suttles's encouragement as president and friend and to be able to honor his memory now as a fellow doctoral academician.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

1 RATIONALE……………………………………………………………......1

Why I Am Interested………………………………………………1
Why Study Experienced Teachers……………………………...3
Rationale for the Study……………………………………………4
Guiding Questions………………………………………………...6
Significance of the Study…………………………………………7
Theoretical Perspective……………………………………………8

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE……………………………...11

Beliefs Defined……………………………………………………..12
Beliefs informing Practice………………………………………15
Summation……………………………………………………………27

3 METHODOLOGY……………………………………………………29

Theoretical Considerations of Qualitative
Research……………………………………………………29
The Role of Researcher…………………………………………..31
Positioning Myself as Researcher……………………………..32
My Assumptions as Researcher……………………………….35
Establishing Entry into the Field………………………………36
Research Design…………………………………………………….37
Single Method Case Study……………………………………..37
Purposeful Selection……………………………………………..39
The Respondent Rachel Gibson……………………………….40
Time Frame for Study…………………………………………….43
Rachel Gibson's Classroom: The Research
Setting…………………………………………………………44
School Research Site: Downeyhill
Comprehensive High School…………………………45
Community of Research: Meadowbrook………………...46
Respondent Observation………………………………………47
Data Collection…………………………………………………..49
Interviews with the Respondent……………………………….50

Classroom Observation……………………………………………..53
Artifact and Document Collection………………………………54
Interpretation of the Data………………………………………...54
Writing the Study………………………………………………...57
Authenticity of the Study………………………………………...60

4 BIOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY OF
THE RESPONDENT……………………………………………62

The Formative Years: Toward a Definition
Of Self……………………………………………………63
Discovery of the Second Self……………………………………68
Pre-Service Construction………………………………………...72
"Doing" a Philosophy of Difference……………………………74
Definition of the Philosophic Self………………………………81
Challenges to Self Definition……………………………………89
The Self as Practitioner: A View of
Students…………………………………………………..95
The Self as Practitioner: A View of
Curriculum……………………………………………...110

5 THE PRACTICE OF THE RESPONDENT…………………………...117

A Day in the Teaching Life of
Rachel Gibson…………………………………………..118
Routine Interruptions and Loss of
Instructional Time………………………………………123
Themes in Teaching Practice…………………………………...126
Autonomy, Self-Reliance, and Resistance……………..127
Autonomy within School Practices
and Procedures
Forced Autonomy………………………………………………129
Welcomed Autonomy…………………………………………..135
Self-Imposed Autonomy………………………………………..138
Resistance………………………………………………………140
Self-Reliance……………………………………………………142
The Community of Learners……………………………………144
Pacesetter Units: Voice and Stranger in
A Village………………………………………………..146
The Community of Learners: The
Curricular Framework…………………………………148
Introductory Engagements……………………………………...151
Language Studies in the Community
of Learners……………………………………………..154

Text Studies……………………………………………………….163
Paired Readings…………………………………………………...170
Mini-Lessons………………………………………………………171
Organizing Sharing and Learning…………………………………173
Reflection…………………………………………………………179

6 DISCUSSION…………………………………………………………..187

Doing Philosophy: Reflection from
The Past…………………………………………………188
Personal Meaning from Past
Autonomy………………………………………………188
Doing Philosophy: An Emotional
Journey…………………………………………………191
Doing Philosophy: A Journey
of Expectation…………………………………………..193
Doing Philosophy: Metacognitive
Practice…………………………………………………196
Doing Philosophy: Tensions in
Professional Development……………………………...198
Implications for Further Research……………………………...199
Implications for Practice………………………………………..200
The Study of Veteran Teachers…………………………………204
Epilogue……………………………………………………...205

References……………………………………………………………...........207

Appendix………………………………………………………………………..220

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Between believing a thing and thinking you know is only a small step and quickly taken."

Mark Twain

Why I Am Interested in Beliefs Informing Practice

For nearly eleven years I have taught literature and composition to high school students, but my first experiences with teaching were far from textbook perfect. Initially, my teaching was inelegant given my lack of secondary instructional experience, uncertainty in filling the void of a favorite teacher three weeks into a new semester, and the conflicting thoughts I had between what I thought was "right" to do in a classroom versus that which I was hearing from other teachers that was "right" to effect based on good teaching methods and the school culture at the time. Teacher training was not much different. When my methods professor handed me a young adult novel and told me devise a plan to teach for the next class session, I was strongly influenced to find the book on how to teach English if I were to be even a marginal success. I would come to realize no such book existed although a number of volumes had been written on some noteworthy procedures backed by a few studies and theories. My methods textbook was only a guide, and my brief review of the literature on teaching methods was grossly incomplete. In the classroom I would find myself remembering how I was taught

literature and what I believed teaching should be to sustain me throughout my student-teaching practicum and first few years of instructing.

Even the student teaching internship, designed to give me a taste of actual teaching practice, failed fully to assist me in developing even a beginning pedagogy for praxis. During my practicum, I would observe my mentor teacher perform instructional strategies that appeared to have little or no basis in theory I had studied in graduate coursework but only in her personal beliefs. I noticed this teacher's beliefs about teaching and students changed with the grade and ability levels of classes, available materials, and curricular requirements. New Critical techniques, although not called by that name, were still employed in the classroom, and the Reader Response approach that I would later learn in graduate school was non-existent. Graduate school would inform me that my methods and beliefs were passé, but I also knew my beliefs would be difficult to change since they were so ingrained in me. I knew I came to the classroom with certain knowledge and experiences that shaped me and my philosophy of education, and these could not be discarded. My interest in the relationships among teacher training and teaching beliefs and practice was then cultivated. After teaching for a few years, I never forgot my first impressions of developing my own pedagogy, and it was not until I observed one particular instructor with a four-year degree in English and thirteen years of experience enjoy success in the classroom. She worked seemingly without any tension between beliefs and actual practice within a demanding and demographically changing school environment. Seeing the teacher's professional success without apparent tensions and trying to comprehend that my own methods and developing philosophy need continual transformation have led me to study the relationship between personal and

pedagogical beliefs and how they inform instructional practice for the literature classroom.

Why Study Experienced Teachers?

Teachers may enter the field with a certain confidence and skill afforded by teacher training, self-motivation, love of their content area, and enjoyment of students, but they may in actuality only be armed with limited experience, good intentions, and a flurry of conflicting methods and beliefs with which to sustain a classroom. Years of experience and initial and continued training will partly inform what a teacher may effect in terms of instructional success and/or what he or she perceives as success based on a number of factors to include curricular mandates, school environment, community demands, student products, and educative philosophy. The bulk of research in the area of teacher beliefs and their relationship to practice has centered on new practitioners having just completed teacher training. Researchers are largely interested in preservice and first year teachers' perspectives on teaching, knowledge acquisition, reasoning, decision making, and application of teacher training, to name only a few areas of study (Carter, 1990; Richardson, 1996; Eraut, 1994; Cochran & Jones, 1998). A modicum of studies have centered on the comparisons between novice and expert teachers' beliefs in the areas of knowledge use and acquisition and the development of content and craft knowledge (Leinhardt, 1990; Shulman, 1986; Berliner, 1988; Kagan & Tippins, 1992). What exactly teacher thinking in the pedagogical realm looks like, and how teacher thinking develops over time and informs practice is still largely unknown, especially for experienced teachers working within certain conditions of their individual teaching

milieus (Levin, 2003; Sturtevant, 1996). Moreover, how experienced teachers make meaning of their individual existence taking into account their backgrounds and collective experiences that may inform their belief systems and then manifest themselves in praxis is a large consideration not yet fully studied. This study will seek to determine the relationship between an experienced literature teacher's beliefs and classroom practices and what she effects in the classroom taking into consideration such external factors as classroom dynamics, curricular mandates, personal background, collegial relations, school environment, and the impact and relevance of the greater school community.

Rationale for the Study

The nature of teaching as a non-linear, complex, and dynamic act influenced by personal belief, past experience, multiple ways of knowing, and external, mutable factors provides the foundation for the rationale of this study. Novice and experienced literature teachers entering into or sustaining classrooms today face multiple demands and increasing responsibility. Teachers not only have to study, plan, and deliver, but also evaluate, document, and account for themselves and numerous students. How a teacher goes about the business of teaching is partially a private matter to the extent it originates in beliefs, those personal and inextricable aspects that temper the mind in ways different from academic pedagogies, empirical philosophies, and training (Munby, 1984; Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987). Personally held beliefs about the nature of teaching, the subject matter, curriculum, students and their aptitudes, abilities, and motivations, and pedagogical philosophies manifest themselves in public ways through teacher behavior

and eventual educational outcomes (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Buchmann, 1984; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Fenstermacher, 1978). Moreover, teaching practices and their influences vary by instructor, as all that informs the human element inherent in teaching and interacting with students are unique to an individual and cannot be separated.

Research interest in the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices has grown in the last two decades partly as a result of the expanded movement into the "cognitive revolution" (Richardson, 1994, p. 90) and such research has been the focus of social science (Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988). Moreover, a few case studies have explored secondary teachers' literacy practices and beliefs and determined that core curriculum teachers' philosophies are directly connected to their practices (Dillon, et al., 1994). Thus, researchers believe attention to teachers' ways of thinking has become essential to understanding the nature of teaching and its relationship to practice (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Agee, 2000, Fox, 1994, Zancanella, 1991). In the last ten years, Pintrich's (1990) work strongly suggested that beliefs will, in the end, bear out to be the most valuable psychological concept to preservice and continuing teacher education.

Some studies focus on the beliefs and knowledge a teacher brings to the classroom such as teachers' "implicit theories," both formal and informal premises teachers hold and apply given their prior educational experiences (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Other studies focus on "the personal in teaching," whereby a teacher's biography, personal preferences, and knowledge inform what they do in the classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986). Beside these studies are those focusing on what teachers believe about teaching particular content, teaching based upon their experiences in the classroom, their

personal reading orientations, and teaching students of certain ability levels (Duffy & Anderson, 1982; Grossman, 1990; Thompson, 1985; Zancanella, 1991; Agee, 2000). Richardson (1994) notes that empirical studies of the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice are necessary, especially as this research may contribute to an understanding of teacher education training and staff development. In essence all of this research examines and reports on some aspect or extension of personally and/or professionally held convictions that at least partially inform classroom practice. The role of personal and professional beliefs and their relationship to teaching practice is just as essential as training and theory, and they cannot be ignored as part of the pedagogical equation. Thus, examination of a veteran English teacher's belief system, whether tacitly or overtly held, and how that system informs her practice and its outcomes in relation to her teaching environment will have implications for adding to the body of knowledge for research and praxis.

Guiding Questions

As a result of readings about teacher beliefs and instructional practices, my own observations of the same from my mentor teachers and colleagues, and my understanding of the school environment and the multifarious dynamics which inform it, I will address the following questions in my study.

1. How does a veteran teacher's personal background inform her beliefs and philosophy about teaching literature?

2. What are the social and academic dynamics in her classroom and school community that inform or affect her beliefs and practices?

3. How does a veteran teacher design, develop, and execute curriculum to make it relevant and meaningful to her students?

Significance of the Study

As I sought and acquired research pertaining to teacher beliefs and classroom practice, I discovered that much literature centers around preservice teacher beliefs, thinking, practices, and perceived efficacy (Carter, 1990; Fox, 1994; Christensen & Walker, 1992; Agee, 1997; McDiarmid, 1992; Kutz, 1992, Lundeburg, Levin, & Harrington, 1999). A slightly larger body of research has been devoted to the study of beginning teachers' emergent professional stances within their first few years of service (Britzman, 1991; Grossman, 1990; Ritchie & Wilson, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1986). However, very few studies concentrate on the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of experienced teachers. I believe that a study of an experienced teacher's personal and pedagogical beliefs and how these aspects are reflected in the literature classroom will expand the body of research on teacher beliefs and practice currently lacking in the area of secondary experienced-in-service teaching. Teacher beliefs do not remain static after preservice training and beginning experience but may in fact become reshaped as a teacher acts and interacts within her teaching milieu. Thus, researching the relationship between personal belief and practice in a thirteen-year teaching veteran within her school environment and given curricular demands could potentially have implications for future teacher training, acquisition of further knowledge, and the study of literature teaching methods not currently under consideration.

Theoretical Perspective

I believe teaching to be a complex, additive, longitudinal endeavor with the instructor as a continuous learner approaching and enduring the profession with existing and mutable knowledge, beliefs, and experiences that are also impacted by influences that shape the teacher within the contexts of the instructional environment (Britzman, 1986; Ritchie & Wilson, 1993). Teaching is "a social process of negotiation" among beliefs, training, general and subject specific knowledge, personal biography, personality, and school and community context that requires continual awareness and adjustment (Britzman, 1991, p. 187). Thus, I look to Greene's (1973) theory on "doing philosophy," (p. 7) the metacognition and reflection of the incidents, trends, endeavors, and beliefs in one's world that influence personal and professional response as one theoretical base for examining the questions driving this study. To "do philosophy" is to become self aware, to constitute meanings, and to think normatively about possibilities or ideals as phenomena present themselves to one's awareness (Greene, 1973). In the realm of educational philosophy, one examines and becomes critically conscious of those events involving the matters of teaching and learning and the external influences, challenges, and complexities that comprise the total teaching environment that may impact knowledge, choice, and action. Greene (1973) claims that if the teacher can "do philosophy," he or she "may liberate himself for reflective action as someone who knows who he is as a historical being, acting on his freedom, trying each day to be" (p. 7). Such liberation is crucial for the navigation of teaching dynamics and for the instructor to impact the students, aims, and policies in the educational realm. The configurations that the teacher has created and appropriated through his or her mediation and meta-

awareness indeed impact the perception of reality and "multiplicity of constructs he or she can use to order his experience" (Greene, 1973, p. 8). Such is congruent with the study of the relationships among beliefs, perceptions and efficacy of one experienced English teacher, and what her practice may reveal for teacher education purposes.

In as much as a teacher must be self aware, self-critical, and cognizant of existing and created environments, he or she must also be open to traditional and newer modes of discourse in the classroom. One essential part of mediating the multiplicity of constructs to order experience is for the teacher to practice knowledge-in-action (Applebee, 1996). Knowledge-in-action, a theoretical construct and practice, provides the framework for larger discussions connecting literature to students' lives and instructs them in the ways of talk in the discourse of English. It transforms former, New Critical traditions of learning out-of-context with its fragmented emphasis on objective information and "one right answer" into viable, authentic discussions and engagement with literature that allow for multiple interpretations. Knowledge-in-action shapes both the past and the present thereby leaving itself open to analysis and change. Story-telling, information sharing, and comprehension of the roles and relationships of the home, school, and existing community, all generated in dialogue contribute to a learner's experience with multiple discourses. Such dialogue stimulates and broadens the mind and serves as the tool to guide future behavior and permits entrance into culturally significant domains giving students access to important, larger conversations (Applebee, 1996). The teacher subject to "doing philosophy" is also subject to awareness of and engagement with the various domains of conversation that emanate from and transcend the classroom and its community. I believe a teacher's participation in philosophical and practical self-

awareness and in creating and promoting the critical conversations surrounding his or her chosen subject matter is linked inextricably to existing and changing beliefs, perceptions, and practice thereby undergirding the significance of the study.

Because of my eleven years' experience teaching and casually observing others' teaching, I am aware that educators' praxis is both a public and private matter, neither easily examined nor explained. Teachers do not instruct in a vacuum, nor do they have unfounded beliefs or meaningless practices; myriad internal and external factors influence the person and the environment in which he or she operates, and an attempt at listening to, observing, and analyzing the veteran practitioner for what we may learn will likely open new avenues for thinking about teachers as persons as well as resources for better understanding and refining teacher training.

In the ensuing chapters, I will elaborate on how one teacher's biography and philosophy influence her praxis, and how the teaching milieu and its social dynamics influence her beliefs into practice with the expectation of elucidating new information for practitioners and teacher educators. Subsequent to this introduction are chapters on literature review, methodology for carrying out the study, and two chapters of findings completed with a brief discussion on the study's results and possible implications for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"For whatever a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Proverbs 23:7

Educational research has contributed significantly to understanding the teaching of various aspects of English in secondary classrooms, which include reading, writing, language study, literature, and in some cases speech and drama instruction. A substantial body of research has focused on the practices teachers employ to carry out their various instructional missions in the classrooms. Clearly, teaching methods and their influences vary by instructor, as all that informs the human element inherent of teaching and interacting with students are unique to an individual and cannot be separated. Any number of factors including theory, preservice and in-service training, experience, biography, and others contribute toward shaping an instructor's classroom practices; however, perhaps the most influential factor informing a teacher's methods is beliefs, those personal and inextricable aspects that temper the mind in ways different from academic pedagogies, empirical philosophies, and training (Munby, 1984; Pajares, 1992; Nespor, 1987). The body of literature substantiating the relationship between teacher beliefs and their practices has grown in the last two decades partly as a result of the expanded movement into the "cognitive revolution" (Richardson, 1994, p. 90), a turning

away from behaviorism. But what exactly researchers and scholars define as a "belief" depends upon a number of interpretations and constructs across educational and social science disciplines (Alexander, Schallert, & Hare, 1991). Thus, a clear definition of "belief" within certain semantic boundaries is requisite for understanding how beliefs translate into chosen practice.

Exactly how much teachers' methodologies are informed by curricula aside from their personal beliefs remains an area largely untapped by research. Indeed, Richardson (1994) notes that empirical studies of the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice are necessary, especially as this research may contribute to an understanding of teacher education training and staff development. The realm of teacher beliefs and their relation to practice is a complex one replete with more research considerations. Guskey's (1986) research highlights the facts surrounding teachers changing their beliefs after changing their practices in the classroom. Some research maintains that the relationship between beliefs and practice is interactive, with any changes between the two taking place transactionally (Richardson, 1994). Existing studies on such subjects are largely qualitative case studies, teacher narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 1986; Munby, 1984), questionnaire and self-reporting reviews; however, they offer some valuable insight in understanding in the relationship between beliefs and practice.

Beliefs Defined

Undeniably, beliefs play a fundamental role toward how one views the world and the way that world should function. Through some scholars' interpretations of teaching constructs and teacher education, a belief is an individual's discernment of the world, how

it works or ought to work in their opinion, and such beliefs may be consciously or unconsciously held to influence one's actions and responses (Green, 1971; Fenstermacher, 1978). Individuals may hold beliefs tacitly or accept them without examination, something Fenstermacher (1978) believes is one of the goals of teacher education or staff development to change. Green (1971) supports that tacit beliefs should, through substantiation and reason, be made evidentiary, especially as those beliefs inform future practice. Some instructor's beliefs remain metaphysical instead of empirical, such as in religious and other intangible concepts to guide their practice. Those who ascribe to empirical beliefs, such as the positive impact of family reading on students' reading ability in the classroom, are as likely to use them to inform practice as those holding less-scientific constructs (Richardson, 1994).

What a belief actually is and how it might be measured and observed is rather elusive, as many scholars consider beliefs synonymous with "messy constructs" impermeable to empirical observation and "steeped in mystery" that defies definition for research purposes (Pajares, 1992). Research in the area of teacher beliefs is based on the supposition that they are the best gauges of the choices people make throughout their lives (Bandura, 1986; Nisbet & Ross, 1980). However, beliefs, because of their "black box" nature-something that cannot be studied as it is seated in un-observable realms of the psyche, do not offer themselves to scientific study. Beliefs are immutable and closely linked to such concepts as self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and self-concept, all of which within the cognitive realm contribute to behavior and practice. Rokeach (1968) proposed that beliefs are the "taken-for-granted" constructs about physical and social reality and the self; thus, questioning these empirically is a form of madness.

Given the obscure nature of beliefs and their definitions, scholars have dubbed more definitive terminology for beliefs such as knowledge since that term lends more scientific credence. To some researchers (Green, 1971; Leher, 1990) knowledge is not just a psychological concept but a construct that depends on a "truth condition" external of the person with a particular idea. Other researchers have found some 26 terms describing knowledge equating it with "belief" to include all a person knows or holds to be true, verifiable or not (Alexander, Shallert, & Hare, 1991). To these researchers, knowledge is a fluid, dynamic, personal entity that can be declarative, procedural, and conditional at equal times. Kagan (1990) uses the terms beliefs and knowledge interchangeably because "what a teacher knows of his or her craft appears to be defined in highly subjective terms" (p. 421). Dewey (1933) theorizes that teachers' purposes and outcomes of their work reflect what they believe and know. From a process of reflective teaching, instructors learn about themselves, their beliefs, and construct new knowledge about teaching. Similarly, Richert (1992) reminds that beliefs and knowledge are closely linked because of the nature of knowledge construction. She offers that since knowledge is constructed and reconstructed over time, purposes, objectives, and beliefs once "held to be 'true'" about teaching are either discarded altogether or reframed as fresh ideas and constructs avail themselves (p. 188).

Yet other scholars and researchers have found that beliefs are not synonymous with knowledge per se but with a concept of an instructor's personal practical knowledge and how the teacher understands the classroom dynamics (Clandinin and Connelly, 1986). Within this definition whole experience constitutes knowledge in lieu of cognition alone, and it allows for how the knower relates to his or her environment

(Johnson, 1987). Further exploration into definitions of belief and knowledge shows what Nespor (1987) classified as the difference between the two terms: knowledge is semantically stored, and beliefs, constructed from cultural sources or affective and cognitive experiences, are stored in the episodic memory, thus influencing practice unlike cognition alone. It may be difficult to ascertain where beliefs end and knowledge begins or vice-versa, but in some cases for epistemological and empirical reasons, the definition of the terms belief and knowledge may be intertwined. Because beliefs have been studied in diverse educational, psychological, and anthropological fields, one encompassing definition cannot become the description for all potential research cases. Nevertheless, Pajares (1992) observes that the artificial distinction between knowledge and belief is the former is based upon objective fact, and the latter is based upon subjective evaluation and judgment. Nespor (1987) concurs similarly in that belief systems do not require group consensus, internal consistency—that is, beliefs may sometimes contradict themselves—and flexibility that knowledge constructs may require as they are open to evaluation and critical examination. Given the perplexing attributes of using the terms knowledge and beliefs synonymously, the choice of how to define and use these two terms will likely be the domain of the researcher and the intent of the study.

Beliefs Informing Practices

The relationship between beliefs (or knowledge) and experienced teachers' practices is a largely unexplored area of research, but reviews of ten studies on related topics will offer some insight into the research completed and that needing to be effected. To widen the umbrella of considerations under the topic, preservice and first-year

teachers' beliefs will serve as segue. An extensive body of research exists to describe preservice teachers' attitudes and perceptions as well as their actual practice in the field. Britzman (1986) offers that potential teachers bring more than a belief system and a desire to teach to teacher education programs. He states,

> [Teachers] bring their implicit institutional biographies—the cumulative experience of school lives—which, in turn, inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum. All of this contributes to well-worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work. (p. 443)

Teachers' schooling experiences and their personal biographies add to the matrix of teacher as learner as do time and space, school environment, student needs and characteristics, and curricula by which teachers frequently must abide. The role biography plays in forming a teacher's perceptions and eventual practice is considered so significant that a study by Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) elicited preservice teachers' beliefs via journal writing and personal histories so that teachers may know more about themselves and what informs their eventual practice from decision making to interaction through collegiality. Moreover, Bullough, Knowles, and Crowe (1991) propose that teaching is an "idiosyncratic process" (p. 187) that mirrors variations in biography, personality, and ideas about teaching as much as teaching is influenced by the school and teaching community. In a similar vein, Amarel and Feiman-Nemser (1988) maintain through their studies of preservice teachers' expectations of learning essential for teaching that teacher educators should create programs helping preservice and new teachers understand the role their prior beliefs play into shaping their eventual practice. How teachers develop a practical knowledge base for beginning teaching was the research of Elbaz (1983) which showed that teachers can develop their own theoretical frameworks for organizing their beliefs into eventual practice. Elbaz (1983) states,

"The teacher's feelings, values, needs, and beliefs combine as she forms images of how teaching should be, and marshals experience, theoretical knowledge, and school folklore to give substance to these images" (p. 134). Nespor's (1987) study demonstrated that teacher beliefs play a significant role among the various complexities of teaching in that teacher beliefs delineate their work and to "understand [those perspectives on teaching] we must uncover those beliefs" (p. 323) deriving from career influences, experience, and about subject matter.

Beliefs about the latter, subject matter, have driven research that would elucidate what is taught in the classroom and how curriculum is organized, two more "powerful" (Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989, p. 32) considerations in understanding the roles personal constructs and decision-making play in teaching. Jane Agee (1997) studied two preservice teachers, their histories as readers, and their developing stances on the teaching of literature in a nine-month study as they student-taught in a secondary school. The two preservice teachers were enrolled in an undergraduate course that taught teaching theory and methodology vastly different from that they had experienced in their own secondary settings. The students' perceptions and prior experiences with literature did much to shape their developing attitudes toward teaching and the practices they would employ. Agee (1997) asks a critical research question: "How would students who loved to read fare as teachers of literature?" (p. 404). As important are the questions of the influence of prior knowledge and methodology training as well as the influences of how the teachers were taught in their own secondary schooling experiences. Agee's (1997) naturalistic study was conducted over nine months using interviews, observations, audio and video taping of whole class and small discussion groups, and examination of

journals, logs, lesson plans, and any other artifacts produced in the preservice teachers' classes. Such data gathering techniques permitted sound triangulation. In her analysis of the data by a constant-comparative method, Agee utilized an open code system for all responses. The data would reveal distinct differences between the two preservice teachers and their work. Their backgrounds and preferred teaching methods, which were more informed by their personal views, experiences, as well as the school environment and placement teacher, significantly influenced how they taught. One, a Caucasian female, preferred to teach as she had been taught in a transmission mode with a New Critical approach making only small allowances for student-centered activity and response. The other preservice teacher, an African American female who experienced a less-than fulfilling tenure working only with traditional texts, preferred to teach as a facilitator with student-centered activity and reader response. In spite of the teacher training in a university methods class and having a love of reading, prior and on-going experiences with literature greatly influenced how both preservice teachers conducted her class in the study. In addition, each teacher admitted acquiescing from time to time to the suggestions of their placement teachers in spite of their preferences and training.

Agee's (1997) study did not specifically address to what extent the university methods course played a role in influencing the two preservice teachers, but other research does examine the role of university teacher training programs and of the literature courses that many preservice English majors must take. Marshall and Smith, (1997) two researchers with both secondary and post-secondary teaching experience studied the teaching practices of one English department at a large public university serving over 80 undergraduates preparing to teach English at the secondary level. By

conducting interviews with 12 English teaching faculty, obtaining syllabi of their text usage, examining writing activities, and making evaluations, Marshall and Smith made a number of determinations about the influences of English teaching from the English department.

By analyzing the syllabi, Marshall and Smith (1997) discovered a range of goals statements from none to those that offered broad objectives for what students will do in lieu of what students will learn. Furthermore, the syllabi noted certain texts were required reading, thus students had no reading choices. Each syllabus contained traditionally defined literature, not varied media types or genres. Interviews and further observance of the syllabi revealed that professors chose texts that serve their instructional purposes, and no apparent explicit room was left for student input for informing textual aspects of the class. Some professors admitted to teaching strategies that removed them as the central figure and voice of the class, but few had adopted theoretical stances resistant to New Criticism. Marshall and Smith (1997) acknowledge that "there is a kind of folk tradition that suggests [teachers should teach as they were taught] (p. 263) since many believe tacitly or otherwise that one need only to be in a classroom of one who taught well in order to become a stellar teacher. But Marshall and Smith countered with more questions than answers as to how and what university professors do in teaching those who will teach others. Most notably missing from Marshall and Smith's (1997) study is any actual observation of classroom practice and its dynamics, which frequently vary from even the most adept professor's goals and expectations. The researchers make no mention of the length of the study or if the professors modify any aspects of their syllabi to reflect dynamics for future classes, or what if any bias they may have in

studying colleagues. What remains clear is that the past experiences continue to "haunt" the future in terms of passing on the tents of literary instruction.

Some teachers' on-the-job experiences coupled with no formal teacher training mark another way teachers enter the field and develop beliefs and pedagogical knowledge to carry out their craft. Grossman (1990) found that teachers without formal training relied heavily on their subject-matter knowledge and the ways they were taught for delivering instruction in their classrooms and shaping their beliefs about students and learning. While their hearts may have been committed to sound instruction, Grossman's (1990) study revealed that such teachers experienced difficulty in gaining knowledge of student understanding of the literature and some frustration with carrying out their personal visions of teaching within their respective environments based upon their own individual interpretations of the subject matter. Also contributing to the questions of how experience and beliefs intertwine is Grossman's (1990) finding that teachers' notions for the purposes of teaching specific content influence judgments about instructional activities, curricular objectives, and student evaluations, even when teachers share mutual understanding of the discipline of studying English.

Hines (1995) agrees that past instruction influences current and future instruction for preservice and in-service teachers, but she adds that the battle over the critical lens from which instructors should teach still figures large in the secondary and post-secondary classroom. Hines notes that few studies exist thoroughly examining the role theory plays in instructional contexts, but an MLA survey of upper-level secondary literature instructors revealed that New Criticism influenced some 60-75 percent of the respondents in their teaching (p. 242). With this in mind, Hines (1995) studied two in-

service English teachers, one a secondary teacher of a culminating English course, and the other a post-secondary teacher at a technical school. Both were observed and interviewed for an unspecified term as part of a larger qualitative study designed to offer sketches of students and teachers engaged in literary inquiry with a contemporary theoretical perspective. Interestingly, students in the high school course frequently attended the technical school and were required to take the course taught by the post-secondary instructor.

Despite several students having studied a text in high school that they would encounter in the technical school, vast differences existed between the classroom discussions as both teachers practiced pedagogies consistent with their theoretical orientation: one New Criticism and the other materialist-feminist. Hines (1995) reported that students in the technical school class admitted to seeing the same text in much different light from how it was taught to them in the secondary classroom. Hines (1995) deemed both teachers as "effective" in the classroom based on their teaching philosophies, but the study also showed that the high school instructor-centered approach with its emphasis on facts, literary terms, character analysis, and notable motifs, contrasted greatly against the technical school teacher's more broad emphasis on social, cultural, and gender issues. Hines (1995) specifically notes that if the one theoretical approach might scaffold the other, the types of gaps between high school and post secondary literary instruction might begin to close, but such depends on myriad intangible factors. At best, Hines (1995) argues, such a case study reveals a "possible segue between present and future versions of English as we recast inquiry...that foster[s] ethical commitments as they promote civic responsibility..." (p. 255). When informed by

modern critical theory, perhaps such responsibility elicited by instructors from students may begin to change the paradigms associated with methodology.

Hynds and Appleman (1997) are equally aware that New Criticism and various forms of reader response are the "front runners" (p.276) for critical response in secondary classrooms. However, they caution that unreflective integration of both text-and reader-response strategies may culminate in a "hodgepodge" of teaching strategies opposed to each other. Thus, the instructor who has certain textual goals to accomplish, as many public secondary teachers do, and who wishes to incorporate certain reader response strategies, has to negotiate between the two with a certain responsibility. Hynds and Appleman's (1997) surveys presented in session at the NCTE Second International Conference, while not a formal study, examine teacher's self-reporting negotiation between the two critical perspectives. Results indicated that teachers experienced considerable difficulty in attending to individual student's responses while simultaneously creating a democratic classroom for all voices. Teachers experienced considerable challenge having students read about social issues while not being able to act upon them, and teachers were somewhat frustrated with having to "cover" necessary material to suit school and curriculum requirements while merely nodding to students' individual responses that rarely if ever informed any question on a standardized test. Like Hines (1995) before her, Hynd’s (1997) study reminds educators of the missing link between theory and practice for all.

As aware as teachers are about what they cannot accomplish, others are not fully cognizant of what they do in the classroom and how their beliefs and backgrounds influence them. Sturtevant (1996) performed a case study of the lifetime influences on

literacy related instructional beliefs of two high school history teachers who had taught over 20 years in a highly-diverse urban school. Teacher beliefs are thought to enlighten teaching practices, yet they are difficult to study since the construct of beliefs is difficult to define; thus, a qualitative research design carried out with audiotaped interviews, observations, class assignments, lesson plans from 20 consecutive days, a general immersion in the school environment along with interviews with students and supervisors was utilized.

Sturtevant's (1996) analysis revealed tensions between what the teachers say they do and what they actually accomplish due to a number of personal and professional factors. Teachers believed they supported literacy learning, but instead only utilized reading and writing to enforce factual transmission of data and evaluation of students' retention. The study revealed like many others that teachers taught as they had been taught as students harkening back to grade school. The teachers experienced conflict among finishing the required curriculum, holding to their stated beliefs, and meeting student needs. Both teachers felt it was important to stress facts, but to couple it with only some interpretive discussion. While the comparative study revealed a number of other factors regarding literacy and lifetime influences, implications for further study into how attitudes and schema affect teacher decision-making and methodology are necessary and should perhaps be longitudinal over a teacher's career or larger portion of that career for more in-depth study.

There may never be a way to control for teacher effects when conducting qualitative research into how beliefs inform practice, but personal beliefs may not be a hindrance to quality teaching of literature. Zancanella (1991) investigated the

relationships between five high school teachers' personal beliefs and their approaches to teaching literature in a qualitative case study. Data sources included in-depth teacher interviews, non-participant observation, written reactions, artifact collection, and student interviews all coded and analyzed by constant comparison. Zancanella (1991) conducted eight interviews with five volunteer junior high teachers from a variety of ages, years of experience teaching, school districts and genders. He profiled the teachers' participation as readers, their personal histories, their approaches to teaching fiction and poetry, their profiles as literature teachers, and their responses to questions about text materials. After organizing data according to sections based on responses and observations, Zancanella (1991) found that teachers' instruction was not a simple reflection of their beliefs. Teachers sensed real pressure to teach for standardized test score improvement in spite of their stance to teach more holistically. Newer teachers felt outside pressure to conform to curriculum standards more than the experienced teachers. Among all observations, Zancanella (1991) found that the teachers transmitted information and focused on New Critical approaches in spite of their questioning of students and surface acceptance of students' reader responses. In addition, teachers believed in correcting students' interpretations of literature if those strayed too far from what teachers deemed valid interpretations. Teachers also felt conflict between the teaching of reading and the teaching of literature as they deemed them separate activities with different goals. One other conflict the teachers experienced was the teaching of literature as an imaginative experience and as a body of information. Here the teaching of a literary experience and the elements that comprise literature are at odds for some instructors. Overall, Zancanella's (1991) study points out that the teachers lack an understanding of the

knowledge that resides within them and a theoretical understanding of the literature in order to systematize and articulate it to their own "school version" of study.

Other qualitative studies exist that offer a close inspection of what teachers say they do during discussions of literature after defining their own concepts of what constitutes a “good discussion” with their classes. Alverman, O'Brien, and Dillon (1990) interviewed and videotaped twenty-four middle school teachers' discussion of assigned readings. Five teachers were interviewed as they viewed their tapes to see that their purposes predisposed the type of discussions they carried out. In interviews the teachers verbalized definitions of effective discussion, but in practice those definitions rarely bore a resemblance to the definitions. Like in the Zancanella (1991) study, teachers felt external pressure to cover content in addition to maintaining control of the classroom dynamics. Teachers fully believed they were working as facilitators in the classroom; however, videotapes revealed more lecture/recitation methods used to ensure comprehension and mastery of the material discussed. During discussion teachers seldom succeeded in sustaining discourse beyond clarification or non-descript transitional responses such as uh huh, or all right. Yet others used "guessing game" techniques in continuing discussion by eliciting student responses and coercing them to guess the "one other idea" in the teacher's mind. Alverman, O'Brien and Dillon (1990) explain that teachers did not purposefully mask the truth about their classroom practices when their behavior suggested otherwise. But, they explain that a number of classroom dynamics informed the results of their study beside the teachers' perceived notions of their classroom discussions.

Studies outlining the effects of certain types of literary discussion and their efficacy in the classroom exist to give insight into practice and methodology. Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) examined the types of instruction that promote student engagement with literature and how that results in achievement. By defining two general types of engagement and sub-categories of the two, Nystrand and Gamoran (1991) conducted a quantitative study showing that substantive engagement, the type in which students are interacting with the teacher and other students rather than carrying out procedural tasks, positively affects achievement. Substantive engagement includes but is not limited to journal writing with teacher comments, small group discussions, writing position papers, engaging in peer conferencing, and authentic question-and-answer sessions that validate students as thinkers and doers rather than as passive receptacles for information.

Another study which takes a more comprehensive look at literature instruction and its efficacy by experienced teachers is one conducted by Agee (2000) that also glimpses into teachers' perspectives on student literary experiences. Agee studied what five teachers using different models of instruction defined effective literature instruction, what types of evidence they looked for to measure effectiveness, and how their perceptions of effectiveness differed if at all in classes of dissimilar ability levels. Like many qualitative studies, Agee (2000) utilized interviews, observations, videotapings, audiotapings, and field notes to gather data, and she chose schools that were accessible to her and that varied in size and racial and ethnic makeup: three in New York and two in Georgia. The teachers were all European-American and had taught from 5 to 41 years. Using an open-coding, Agee analyzed responses and observations collected across a semester-long time period. Each of the five profiles rendered differing stances on

teaching literature and measuring its efficacy. But the two characteristics that permeated all five were the teachers' beliefs about the primary focus of literature instruction and the degree of flexibility each could achieve in teaching students of different ability levels. Despite some of the teachers having advanced degrees in English education, not all utilized his or her knowledge base on how to alter instruction to meet student needs. Some acknowledged the need to change or adapt by watching the videotaped sessions, but most blamed external events preventing them from making change. Additionally, the teachers constructed modes of instruction that echoed their well-rooted beliefs about what constituted appropriate high school reading material, usually canonical texts. Interestingly, the measure to which teachers were discerning enough about their effectiveness was apparent in the types of evidence they looked for in particular students and their responses. Some responses were more "valid" than others as teachers made their judgments of what to consider or disdain. Agee (2000) attributed much of the teachers' inflexibility to their years in-service without formal exposure to newer teaching theories and practices.

Summation

So much of what teachers believe, perceive and ultimately do with or without influences becomes more a philosophical issue than an empirical one capable of being thoroughly studied by any combinations of methods. Then again, such questions may only be answered by opening the lid to the black box of the mind, something neither a qualitative nor positivist researcher has yet uncovered. The single paradigm for examining biography, beliefs, philosophy, and ultimately experience as they emerge and

shape a veteran teacher's pedagogy will be delineated in the subsequent chapter, Methodology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

"As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used."

Robert Stake

Theoretical Considerations of Qualitative Research

A single method case study of an experienced language arts teacher's pedagogy, beliefs, and experiences and how they manifest themselves into her practice requires focus on as many day-to-day occurrences, perceptions, interviews, and participant observations of the respondent as are possible. Because I sought to understand and describe the beliefs, experiences and pedagogy of an experienced teacher, I was aware that close observation over a prolonged period of time and a range of data collection techniques would render me the best portrait of such a teacher practicing within her milieu. Qualitative research methodology serves as the avenue through which I carried out the eighteen-week observational journey into the created world of one experienced practitioner.

My own philosophical beliefs align more closely with qualitative rather than positivist research, which relies upon hypotheses, predictions, statistical analysis, and quasi-experimental methods. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have established that the qualitative paradigm "establishes meaning inferentially...is concerned with understanding

and is probabilistic and speculative" (p. 30). This paradigm is suitable since I seek to elicit and understand the beliefs and subsequent practices of a veteran language arts teacher within the context of her classroom and school environment.

One of the aims of qualitative research is to elucidate phenomena in their natural settings with the intent of understanding those phenomena and the meaning people make of them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I approached this study not only to understand how a veteran teacher's beliefs translate into practice, but also to gain understanding of the veteran teacher's thoughts and feelings about her teaching milieu and how she interprets it and operates in it. Within the school setting the respondent and I developed a unique relationship in addition; thus, qualitative methodology allowed me to study her in a setting of which I am a member.

Qualitative methodology allows me as a researcher to retain a broader range of tools and applications to examine and record the respondent's beliefs, perceptions, pedagogy, and practices. Qualitative research necessitates the utilization and collection of an assortment of research materials and techniques to include case study, life story, personal experience, interviews, observations, and interactive texts to richly describe and interpret a respondent's experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As I observed my respondent in her classroom and in the greater setting of the school, I was capable of learning and comprehending her as a teacher, colleague, and friend via her words, products, and interaction with her students and fellow teachers. Qualitative research also allows for the interactive process between respondent and researcher to be shaped by such factors as the researcher's personal history, gender, social class, and ethnicity as well as that of the respondent (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In this study, the researcher and

respondent worked together in a manner consistent with the findings of Denzin and Lincoln (2000).

The Role of Researcher

Due to the qualitative design of the study, my role as researcher is unique as I conducted the study in a familiar environment and with a teaching colleague whose trust I endeavored arduously to gain. Because of the nature of qualitative research, I located myself in the research process as an "observer in the world" concurrently guiding and constraining work within the actual study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3), and I am aware that my perspectives, values, and judgments may have influenced the study's reporting (Creswell, 1994). Thus, the reporting of this research necessarily lies within some of my own beliefs, perspectives, and ideas on the teaching of English. My role of researcher is somewhat complex but also advantageous.

I thoughtfully considered my role as a researcher when I actually began to study my respondent in her classroom. I realized the serious task I had to observe, record, and then accurately represent my respondent's practices and words, and I also wanted to accomplish the research task as unobtrusively as possible so as not to alter the natural research setting, a task almost impossible to accomplish. Initially, my respondent was somewhat wary of having me observe her, so I worked arduously to earn her trust and explain my purpose in conducting the study. In a short amount of time, however, she barely noticed my entrance into or exit from her classroom, and she freely volunteered interview information and paper artifacts. From there I thought seriously about my role in representing her and translating her lived experience although I knew from

methodological study that I could only do so against my own background and experiences both personally as a friend and fellow woman and professionally as a colleague who had the privilege of tacit observation and interaction within the research environment. A plus to my observation of my respondent was the fact we are both women, experienced and second-career teachers, and sharers of similar teaching values in a number of areas. We equally had some points of teaching methodology departure, and with my role as observer requiring me to represent her, her words, and actions as true to her as possible, I realized I needed to invite her analysis whenever possible.

Positioning Myself as a Researcher

Valerie Janesick (2000) describes the qualitative research design as "choreography," and she uses this metaphor in describing the art of communication and experience that proceeds from the methods of qualitative research:

> Choreography is about the art of making dances. Because dance and choreography are about lived experience, choreography seems to me the perfect metaphor for discussing qualitative research design. Because the qualitative researcher is the research instrument, the metaphor is even more apropos...as the body is the instrument of dance (p.380).

This study is framed physically and contextually around my unique function as a researcher and teacher of literature, and like a dancer to a dance, I was required to choreograph the situating and structuring of this study. I am an experienced secondary literature teacher myself and one who bases much of her professional practice on a philosophically sound belief system that remarks about me personally. Such are two reasons I have a strong attraction to understanding and describing how fellow literature

teachers and teacher educators might better comprehend the roles beliefs play in individual teaching practices. Historically, the role teachers have played in the past in shaping pedagogical theory has been restricted (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993); however, I hope to add to the theories of the efficacy of beliefs' influences upon literature instruction by bringing my awareness as an experienced literature teacher and one grounded in a strong belief system together to structure this case study. By doing so, I anticipate contributing new knowledge and insight into this area of pedagogy.

As a seven year teaching veteran in the school where I have conducted my research, I have deep personal involvement and unique interest in the outcome of this study. I have distinct knowledge of the school, its context, community, and working systems, the student body, staff, and fellow teachers. In addition, I am a graduate of the high school in which this study takes place and have deep personal pride in the ability to work at the study location and give back to the system that has in part educated me. My immediate affinity with the school, its context, and community affords me a unique perspective on the topic of inquiry and has advantages that a teacher as researcher can elucidate (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Carter & Doyle, 1995). During my tenure at the school site, I have witnessed a number of fellow literature teachers instruct by both stated and tacit belief systems and engage and endure in practices that do and do not accord with current research theory. Many embrace change, but many others do not, and this is part of the reason my interest was peaked to conduct a study on identifying beliefs and how they manifest themselves in literature teaching practice, or not.

Another perspective I bring to this study is that of a literature teacher with an advanced degree in education that has introduced to me to some of the most current

literature teaching theories and practices. Because of that my teaching practices in the last several years have been influenced by what I have learned, and some of my beliefs about teaching have modified, while others have not. I sought to explore the beliefs and practices of a fellow colleague who has experienced her definition of success in her literature classroom without graduate teaching education. While my purpose is not to explore the influences of graduate education in the literature classroom, the presence or absence of advanced education is one of the indirect factors that motivated me to conduct this study on beliefs and practices.

I have both personal and academic reasons for interest in the study of beliefs and practices. My initial teacher education preparation was a post-baccalaureate program between two regional state colleges consisting of some educational coursework and a brief student teaching internship in the early 1990s. Even though one course required me to expound upon my philosophical and pedagogical beliefs, I was still largely unclear what I believed about teaching other than recalling what I had experienced in schooling as a student, including my undergraduate years. After a less-than successful student teaching internship at a high school within the county where I was educated, I still was unclear on what I believed about teaching. This was because I felt I had a distorted view from working with a mentor teacher who was coerced into overseeing my internship experiences. It would not be until I entered my own classroom that my beliefs began to manifest themselves in my practice, and I would discover that many of my beliefs were inferred from experiences I had as a student. Graduate study awakened in me a more contemporary thinking about teaching that I could put into practice; however, I still held onto some of the constructs prior to my graduate education that informed my personal

teaching practice. Change was difficult as I retained some of my skepticism with newer theories. In addition, school mandates and other educational rituals prevented me from fully engaging with the newer constructs, so I had a convenient excuse not to make more contemporary practices. As I matured as a teacher and observed the attitudes and practices of my literature teaching colleagues, I wondered if they, too, struggled with belief and practice similarly as I did or even if they gave it the same thought. It was not until my third year in a doctoral course designed for students to analyze existing research that I realized I might study the relationships between beliefs and practice.

Within my doctoral program I have developed the research and analytical skills necessary to conduct this study. I have studied and practiced ethnographic observation, interviewing, coding, analyzing, and the writing of description while conducting a study with other doctoral students for the Early Childhood Education Department at Georgia State University. I spent the last year of my doctoral classes investigating teacher beliefs, literature teaching methods, literature teaching theory and criticism, and relationships between belief and practice.

My Assumptions as Researcher

As the researcher I bring a number of assumptions to this study. Foremost, I believe that teachers' classroom practices are informed by any number of beliefs about themselves, their students and their characteristics, the subject matter, school-to-community relations, classroom settings, and other factors that determine potential teaching outcomes. I also hold that teachers' beliefs manifest themselves in both noticeable and tacit ways. Conversely, teachers may hold beliefs that do not become

apparent in the classroom, but only by way of vocalization in the interviewing process, one of negotiation between researcher and the researched (Reinharz, 1992). Like Reinharz (1992), a feminist researcher, suggests, this negotiation results in a type of closeness to the research site which affords me strength in the intimate connection that I have to this site and to the respondent. Developing and maintaining a relationship with case study respondents is essential when women study women. Distance and objectivity are not options when working qualitatively in a setting; thus, what some researchers consider bias, I consider opportunities for deeper understanding of the setting and my respondent's work in her classroom.

Establishing Entry into the Field

Entering the field of the study was non-problematic for me since I was already a practicing member of the teaching milieu. My respondent's classroom setting was situated directly across the hall from mine, and I tacitly had observed her for several years prior to conducting actual research. Both she and her students were already familiar with me and, by the middle of the study, I would be welcomed into the research classroom as a participating member. Gaining administrative permission to conduct the study was somewhat effortless as the Assistant Principal for Instruction from whom I would be granted authorization was a fellow high school classmate supportive of my efforts towards earning an advanced degree. The only accommodation the Assistant Principal for Instruction made was to rearrange the respondent's teaching schedule in one area for me to be able to observe her on my own 90-minute planning period.

Research Design

Single-Method Case Study

I chose to conduct a case study with its "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21) as the design for research. Case studies permit examination of the obvious and hidden processes of teaching, personal reflection and meta analysis, the recognition of assumptions, and the authentication of phenomena in its milieu, which enhances the effectiveness of the case by adding context to theory (Colbert, Desberg, & Trimble, 1996). The case centered on a particular situation, occurrence, or phenomenon; it was highly descriptive as it allowed for the portrayal of the object of examination, and the case was heuristic in that it elucidated the reader's comprehension of the object of study (Merriam, 1988). Athanases and Heath (1995) remark that such qualitative study provides for educational professionals the reading of a "rich documentation of learning as it unfolds and varies over time, leading potentially into insights into cultural patterns ...and support for generalization of theory" (p. 253). A case study was appropriate to the examination of teachers' beliefs and practices since the location of study was the researcher's interest in individuals and events; thus, Stake's definition of a case as a choice of what is to be studied is germane (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, Yin's (1994) characterization of case studies as "empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13) is highly descriptive of the study of beliefs manifesting into practices, an already nebulous construct.

Phenomena occurring in the classroom and by an individual cannot easily be quantified, nor can any assumptions or hypotheses be made concerning attitudes, practices, or potential outcomes due to the nature of qualitative frameworks. Qualitative philosophy maintains that individuals socially construct multiple realities which can be altered through time and circumstances. Merriam (1988) states that

> The key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. (p. 6)

Qualitative research asks and seeks to answer the questions of "how" and "why" within evolving or emergent situations whose findings are frequently holistic, expansive, and richly descriptive of the social phenomena occurring. In this study I was interested in determining the type of meaning an experienced secondary literature teacher, Rachel Gibson, has constructed based on her personal and professional beliefs and how those manifest themselves as lived experiences within her world of meaning (Merriam, 1988). I sought to discover a definition and understanding of Rachel's beliefs and practices based upon her perspectives as influenced by her personal history, experiences, school setting, and environment, and I sought to determine a theory or multiple theories that might explain the phenomena, observations, and themes (Goetz & LeCompte, 1994). This research is of importance to all teachers and teacher-educators because they can significantly benefit from examining how certain beliefs influence choices and behaviors in the literature classroom. Further, my hope is that the research I conducted will offer

the respondent an opportunity for critical personal and pedagogical introspection and reflective action for the future as she continues to teach.

Purposeful Selection

In the qualitative research paradigm the examination of phenomena as they exist within their contexts and discovering what actually occurs within a bounded system is the central focus. Therefore, purposeful sampling, also known as non-probabilistic sampling, is both preferable and a key element to the study since the researcher requires knowledge or insight from the most appropriate source (Merriam, 1988). Furthermore, the specifically chosen participant functions as the origin of inquiry since the group to be studied must be appointed as part of the research questions. Purposeful selection necessitates that the researcher establish prior to the study a criteria the respondent or study units must possess (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). From among numerous types of participants, I chose to study the respondent, Rachel Gibson, based on my collegiate and personal relationship with her and upon my knowledge of the teaching environment and extended community within which she operates. I also selected Rachel Gibson because she, like myself, teaches English and Pacesetter, a multi-textual world-literature based curriculum designed by The College Board to be used a capstone course for high school students. With my own background in English and literature, I was able more fully to understand the context of the study, the texts taught and discussed, and could understand how an English teacher approaches this subject area. I am also fully aware that my purposeful selection was one of convenience in that Rachel taught across the hall from me. However, even with the research choices I made in this study, the study itself is

richer and more fully developed because of my insider knowledge about the community, school, faculty, students, and Rachel's pedagogical practices.

The Respondent: Rachel Gibson

The respondent is one of my immediate teaching colleagues who has over ten years classroom experience teaching literature and a four-year Bachelor's degree in English from a local state college now a local state university. Rachel Gibson stands 5'11" tall with a slender figure and reddish-brown hair. She displays a nurturing, warm, and genuine personality, and she has a good sense of humor about life and work. She has raised two sons, one a naval officer and the other a full-time college student. Rachel is currently single, and she spends her free time reading, attending church, and socializing with peers and with a small group of male and female friends and family.

I first met Rachel Gibson in 1997 when I entered Downeyhill High School, the pseudonym for the actual study site. Having no classroom of my own for the first three years of my teaching tenure, I had to "float" into vacant rooms to teach when the occupant teacher had a planning period. One of the rooms I used was Rachel’s, who would frequently remain in her room despite my presence and that of up to 30 students. On occasion she would vocally react to my lessons and make comment about successes and pitfalls of my teaching. We would occasionally see each other at lunch and continue our professional discussions about my lessons and teaching, and over time, these conversations evolved into those carried on by friends, personal and professional. On a few occasions, we would treat ourselves to after-school dinner when time and our schedules permitted. While our relationship is not an extremely close one, it is

nevertheless a positive professional one that continues as we share ideas and lessons and frequently converse about students we mutually teach or have taught. We have an understanding of and appreciation for each other's teaching styles and work ethics, and we support each other professionally by "covering" for each other's classes and students when the need arises.

Teaching is Rachel's second career choice after having worked in private industry prior to education. Rachel teaches three 90-minute classes per day and has taught all levels of high school students, freshmen to seniors. She prefers to teach eleventh grade World Literature and Pacesetter Honors English, the latter a capstone curriculum from the College Board the local county has adopted and altered for its own purposes. Rachel has experienced an impressive amount of recognition from both professional and student sources. Rachel was named Teacher of the Year at Downeyhill after having taught only three years in her high school career. She has been selected as an all-time favorite teacher by honors students who ask her to speak on their behalves and/or write post secondary recommendations. Rachel works in after-school tutorial program in English, Student Teacher Academic Referral (STAR), up to an additional three hours per day past regular school hours. The STAR program is instituted for students needing extra assistance with language and literature concepts. In the after school program she can be seen reading and explicating poetry, eliciting student responses, editing essays, encouraging the use of technology, and motivating individual student creative response in the form of portfolios and projects, among other endeavors. Students report enjoying her classes, and they frequently highlight her to their friends to seek enrollment in her classes. Previous students ask for her personal and professional counsel and several

"hang around" her classroom almost daily before, during her planning time, and after school for socialization or to offer help with her classroom maintenance.

In the recent past, some fellow English teaching colleagues, all of whom were similar in chronological age but more experienced in years served, held ostensible personal and professional jealousies against Rachel apparently for her stylish appearance, popularity to students, her interest and involvement in student lives, her unusual projects, and general success in the classroom. For example, I recall vividly an episode of unprofessional conduct against Rachel shortly after I entered the school in 1997. I was told by a senior colleague and one of my former teachers that "we almost had to let her go" when the colleague and her coterie of associates perceived what they believed were problems with Rachel's teaching style and her personal difficulties surviving a difficult divorce. The more senior colleague never explained what the alleged problems were, but my curiosity was peaked not only with the comment, but also that a fellow teacher believed she had any voice in removing a teaching peer from her duties. In another episode I recall a different senior colleague commenting on the manner in which Rachel walks saying that "she enters the room as if she is Loretta Young," a reference to a 1950s film star. Based on the demeanor of the speaker and the reactions of the attendees in the room it was evident that the comment was not intended as complimentary. In a third and final episode, I heard two colleagues openly discussing Rachel's tardiness to school, and one peer actually admitted driving by her house on the way in to work to see if her car were in the driveway just before eight o'clock, the normal school day reporting time. The actions, reactions, and comments of Rachel's English teaching peers heightened my curiosity and profound interest to observe Rachel to discover her teaching beliefs, actual

practice, and her relationship to her greater teaching milieu. In addition, my own relationship with Rachel as a colleague, her students' high esteem for Rachel's way of teaching further contribute to my interest in studying Rachel in this case study.

Time Frame for the Study

Janesick (2000) acknowledges that the qualitative research process requires that the researcher remain immersed in the setting over a period of time. As a teacher in the setting of the research study, and as a fellow colleague of the participant-informant for the last seven years, I know the context in which this study takes place, and have intimate knowledge of Rachel's practice because I had observed her and her teaching both informally and formally prior to the study. When I approached Rachel about studying her practice and her classroom, she immediately gave me "access to the field" (Flick, 1998, p. 53) because I had already done this before. Now I intended to study her practice more systematically and collect data to assist me in understanding the relationship between her beliefs and practice.

I collected observational and interview data over 15 weeks. The leveling of classes and allowance for new student enrollments, and the administering of the state high school graduation tests (which endured ten days), affected Rachel's class. I did have access to Rachel after the stated observational period, as further interview contact was necessary past the instructional time. During the 15 weeks in which I studied Rachel's class and conducted both formal and informal interviews offered me a large amount of data which led to my findings.

Rachel Gibson's Classroom: The Research Setting

To research the respondent's beliefs and practices requires examination and description of the actual school, educational setting, faculty, community, and its members in addition to the respondent herself. Knowledge of the milieu in which Rachel operates is essential to highlighting and understanding her beliefs and practices as a veteran teacher. The class is designed for 30 students; however, the class I observed began with 22 students. Five students at the beginning of the semester chose to leave the class and enter a regular class where they perceived less-strenuous and less-involved assignments. After one week, Rachel had only 17 students until a student transferred in the last six weeks of school making the total number 18. The class I observed had 14 females and 4 males, and was comprised of mixed ethnicities: 9 African Americans, 8 Caucasians, and 1 Canadian-Asian.

The classroom environment is colorful and student-centered in its design. In the classroom is a student-painted mural from the 2002-2003 school year on the top half of the far wall. The mural contains scenes from the various novels the classes read and significant quotations from each. The other walls contained framed posters of Mel Gibson, a favorite celebrity of Rachel's and various other posters from musicals and shows among a number of others containing humorous or motivational messages. The back wall of the class contained two photograph collages of pictures of students, teaching colleagues, and Rachel with students and other friends. The room contained a bookshelf with four rows of various classic, popular, and non-fiction reading materials. In the far corner a television and VCR stands for classroom use in front of a large metal cabinet housing creative project materials. The front of the room has a six-foot table containing

various papers and folders. At the center front of the room is the Rachel's slanted drafting table she uses occasionally as a podium. On the front edge of the drafting table is a bumper sticker that reads: "As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in school." The room contains student desks arranged in three sections, two facing each other with three rows of desks facing the front of the room. Plants, candles, family pictures, and lamps are evident around the room giving the appearance of living quarters intermingled among standard classroom fare.

School Research Site: Downeyhill Comprehensive High School

Downeyhill High was built in 1976 to handle the increase in student population and alleviate the double sessions and overcrowding at the first high school built in the county. At one time Downeyhill was the largest high school of its type under one roof in the entire state with open classrooms separated by large sliding curtains and only a few walls. The school's enrollment for the 2003-2004 school year numbered 1375 students of which 52.29 % are Caucasian, 39.04 % are African American non-Hispanic, 5.32 % are Hispanic, 2.40 % are Asian, .07 % are American Indian, and .87% are Multi-Ethnic. The school processed 374 withdrawals and 72 admissions during the full school term accounting for a 32.4 % transient rate.

All faculty at Downeyhill are certified, but when configured in terms of ethnicity, it does not reflect that of the student population. There are 35 male teachers and 64 female teachers. In addition, there are eight paraprofessionals. Eighty-seven members of the faculty are Caucasian, and 11 members of the faculty are African American. One teacher is Latina. Thirty-two percent of the certificated faculty has Bachelor's degrees,

41 % have Master's, 15 % have Specialist's, and 2 % have Doctorates. The other 9 % of the teachers work as paraprofessionals or in Trade and Industry and do not hold college degrees.

Downeyhill is a comprehensive high school that offers college preparatory and technical preparatory diplomas, or both when students meet the requirements. Students may also earn seals on their diploma indicating concentrations in Fine Arts or Computer Technology. In the last several years, the vocational offerings at the school have been reduced with the removal of such vocational classes as Graphic Arts and Building and Construction. As a result, more students in technical preparatory diploma tracks are taking elective courses such as foreign language, and, with this increase of enrollment, some instructors must teach out of their field. Although Downeyhill produces various academic, art, music, and sports programs throughout the year, parental involvement and attendance is low to average at best. Very few parents visit the school on parent night functions such as Open House, with fewer than 100 parental visits for a school of its size.

Community of Research Site: Meadowbrook

Meadowbrook, the community where Downeyhill is located, is situated approximately 25 miles west of a major metropolitan city in the Southeastern United States along a major interstate. The community has been established for many years, and has seen exponential growth over the last ten years with light industrial, single-family residential homes, apartment complexes, and more recently a major retail mall just outside the school's district. Within a five mile radius of the school are light industrial businesses, retail establishments, motels, convenience centers, fast food restaurants, and a

few strip malls. Small sections of the community contain well-established neighborhoods of upper-middle aged to elderly residents, mostly Caucasian, whose family members have moved out and established their own homesteads. Other well-established neighborhoods built in the last 30 years have become mostly rental properties populated by diverse ethnic families. Within two miles of the school lies an expansive single family housing subdivision that is largely populated by multi-ethnic families. The community also contains low-to-middle income families residing in mobile home parks situated among some middle-to-high income single-family structures in subdivisions. Several apartment complexes have been erected in the last few years that accommodate persons and families needing immediate or transitional housing. In addition, the apartments were erected to maximize living space in as small an area as possible due to a lack of expansive property in the area on which to build more subdivisions.

Respondent Observation

Being a member of the community and school setting where I conducted the study had its advantages for prolonged engagement but also scrutiny from my fellow teaching colleagues. I made a point not to discuss my research overtly with anyone at my school not directly involved in the study; however, my research became known, and I bore the brunt of some teasing from a few colleagues over observing a fellow teacher, most of whom have seeming fears and distrust of higher education. Nevertheless, I acted as a participant observer as defined by Adler and Adler (1994). While in Rachel's classroom, I sat mostly in the back of the room in a student desk and audiotaped nearly all observed

classes. Further, I kept a researcher's notebook in which I recorded observations in addition to the recordings.

In the early observations I acted more as an "observer as participant," a term used by Merriam (1988) to describe the researcher when his or her activities are known to the group, but participation within the group is secondary. By taking on this role, I was able to observe and interact with my key respondent and her students on a tangential level "to establish an insider's identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380). I maintained this type of observation throughout data collection, but towards the middle to end of the semester, students drew me more deeply into the community in a way I did not expect. Rather than remain an observer in this class, students interacted directly with me as a member, a participant, in their community. They often asked me when I was returning to observe, or if I would more fully participate in the class by observing specific activities in which they were involved. Towards the end of the term, more specifically during the last two weeks of my observation schedule, some students asked me to comment upon class discussion, offered me food and snacks, and asked me to give feedback on their ideas and projects. It was clear from the perspective of Rachel's students that I had established myself as an accepted member of the group, even though I was not observing their responses, actions and work, but the pedagogy of their teacher. I believe I became what Gans (1982) refers to as a "researcher-participant," (p. 54) one who does participate but on a level devoid of personal commitment so that he or she might maintain a primary researcher's status.

Towards the very end of my observations, Rachel directly involved me in class proceedings, asking me to share my opinions about the literature and/or ideas the class

was discussing as well as on the quality of the class discussions. Both of these direct invitations to participate made it difficult to separate myself from the setting at times. At first I was concerned as I desired to maintain some distance from my respondent and her students, but than I recalled Angrosino and Mays de Perez's (2000) thoughts on the role of the qualitative researcher:

> No longer can it be taken for granted that ethnographers operate at a distance from their subjects. Indeed, the very term subject, with its implicit colonialist connotations, is no longer appropriate. Rather, there is said to be a dialogue between researchers and those whose cultures/societies are to be described. (p. 675)

At several points in the end of the observational period, Rachel, who values perspectives (as will be explained in Chapters 4 and 5) invited me to share my expertise as a literature teacher with her students, a second teacher voice so to speak, which she knew would benefit her students.

Data Collection

The very essence of qualitative research is expressed in words, those of the researcher seeking to represent the respondent and those of the respondent herself. Thus, data collection in a qualitative study is a process of gathering, recording, and reporting words as they construct the portraiture of lived experience and phenomena. In the study I collected several types of data: (1) interviews (2) observations of Rachel Gibson, actual lessons and class discussions, and teacher-student interaction (3) school documents pertaining to the mission statement of the school, its policies, and goals, and (4) any other artifacts germane to the study as the study progressed. Data collection began on the third week of the semester to allow for class leveling and establishment, two common

procedures at the start of each new school semester. Classroom-associated data collection continued throughout the semester up until the week of final examinations, and the last formal interview was conducted during post-planning, the week after classes, with Rachel.

In the course of the 15 week study period, I formally observed Rachel for 35 class sessions ranging from 30 to 90 minutes each. After I had well-established rapport, I informally observed Rachel in her class 15 times to make note of the activities when I was unable to observe formally to record and make extensive field notes. I utilized my observational time to collect and constantly compare data so as to direct further data collection and seek out recurrent themes as they emerged. From that I was able to construct new interview questions to probe more deeply into the belief systems of the respondent and understand how those beliefs might translate into her teaching practices.

Interviews with the Respondent

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) remind qualitative researchers that interviewing is conversational art, a *pas de deux* of asking and listening that is non- neutral, as the interviewer and interviewee construct the realism of the dialogue. They write, "the interview is a negotiated text, a site where power, gender, race and class intersect" and it is "grounded in specific interactional episodes" (p. 633). With the interview being one of the most important forms of data collection in qualitative research, its main principle is to obtain particular data, namely, that which exists in the experiences and mental constructs in an interviewee. Patton (1990) describes the reasons for interviewing:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe...We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We

> cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing is to allow is to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

For all of the reasons Patton outlines above, I could not have conducted this study on beliefs and practices without formal and informal interviews with my respondent. Interviewing allowed me to investigate my first questions that address Rachel's perceptions and how she constructs her own classroom reality after 13 years of secondary literature instruction. Three formal interviews I conducted yielded some of the most vital data. The first formal interview occurred after two weeks of observations for a time span of approximately 90 minutes after school one afternoon. I wanted to understand Rachel's beliefs about teaching after having seen instruction, student interaction, and some activities in her Pacesetter class. This interview yielded information on her personal background, upbringing, young adulthood and early career, as well as her beginnings in teaching as a second career. The second formal interview occurred four weeks later and yielded further information about her philosophy and thoughts on teaching. This interview occurred somewhat later than originally planned due to scheduling conflicts. A third formal interview occurred in a Meadowbrook restaurant for over two hours and yielded candid information about the school setting, administrative policy, and Rachel's challenging experiences with students. I also conducted a number of informal interviews soon after class sessions or at the end of the school day of an observation. I also gave written interview "homework" assignments containing statements regarding classroom management, educational praxis, and common perceptions others have about education in

order to gain insight into Rachel's thinking and potentially some of the rationales for Rachel's practices that might not make themselves so evident in the classroom. Another such homework assignment required Rachel to explain how she might handle a sudden change in her teaching schedule or curriculum and how she might respond to sudden change from her regular routines. These homework activities substituted for interviews we were unable to effect due to time constraints and more scheduling issues.

As a researcher I was also concerned for the ethics and equality surrounding the art of interviewing and turned to Fontana and Frey (2000) for information on minimizing status differences and showing my own "human side" in the interviewing process so as to gain a greater acceptance with my interviewee and allow for a broader range of open and natural responses from her. I strongly desired to treat my respondent as an individual with respect to her own values and singularity as opposed to treating her as if she were a material object to be manipulated and contained. Here the feminist perspective of Reinharz (1992) states that the largest element of consideration in collecting data woman to woman is the involvement of the researcher as more than a mechanical collector of information. Reinharz (1992) contends that my personal experience as researcher "defines our research questions, leads us to sources of useful data, gains the trust of others in doing the research, and enables us to partially test our feelings"(p. 259). Finally, the feminist perspective allows the respondent's voice to be heard by the insertion of their actual quotations from interviews and observations so that they may be better understood in their own terms.

A challenge to conducting the study was the formulation of interview questions, and I turned to a number of previous studies in the area of teacher beliefs and classroom

practices for guidance. Studies by Agee (2000), Zancanella (1991), and Sturtevant, (1996) helped to inform many of the initial questions I asked Rachel in order to elicit her beliefs about pedagogy, philosophy, and the teaching of literature. The remainder of questions was formed as unstructured interviews of emerging topics and themes from classroom observations. I personally transcribed all formal interview and classroom observation tapes and took copious notes in the researcher's log which supported much of the taped interview and observational data.

Classroom Observations

I wished to observe Rachel Gibson's class at least some everyday. However, the emergent nature of qualitative study, time constraints, teaching schedules, and at times the nature of her class activity, such as the administration of an examination, did not permit this. In looking at her syllabi and few lesson plans, in addition to talking with Rachel, I formulated my observations around major units of study and the activities associated with them. Frequently, the observations led me to create more interview questions, and many of those would serve as a way to confirm the accuracy of some earlier observational data and allow for explanation of some of the processes I observed. In total, I spent 46.25 hours observing Rachel and the dynamics of her practice. This allowed me to see major emergent themes in her teaching.

Artifact and Document Collection

I also collected documents and teaching artifacts germane to the study throughout the research period. Data included but were not limited to the student handbook, the teaching guides that accompanied the literature texts, teacher and student handbooks for

the Pacesetter curriculum, Rachel's lesson plans, instructional handouts, assignments, tests, quizzes, and classroom notes. The purpose of collecting such documents was to use them as other data sources to triangulate my findings and to uncover other valuable data not readily apparent from interviews or observations (Merriam, 1988). These data are considered to be primary sources, "those recorded closest in time and place to the phenomenon by a qualified person" (Merriam, 1988, p. 122). I did not have to consider whether the documents I collected were authentic since I was aware of their origins, something Guba and Lincoln (1991) specify. I did concentrate on the circumstances under which the documents and artifacts had been generated, and what, if any, methodological and technical resolutions were made in the documentation (Riley, 1963). This was a special concern with the teacher-generated documents as they might give additional insight or confirm or deny a belief into practice.

Interpreting Data

In the qualitative paradigm because research is recursive, data analysis is emergent and is best conducted simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1988). Beginning with the earliest observations and first formal interview, I began to scan the data for possible themes and recurring topics, comments, situations, or other phenomena, while also keeping an open mind for both similar and dissimilar patterns to what I observed. Therefore, I established an open coding system for interpreting data on singular and multi-levels that qualitative researchers insist is essential to qualitative inquiry (Glaser, 1978; Merriam, 1988; Strauss, 1987; Straus & Corbin, 1990). According to Charmaz (2000), coding allows for the development of theories that direct the data and

guide new data collection, and it permits the researcher continued awareness of and a form of intimacy with the data as he or she constructs meaning. Early into observations I identified a recurrent theme transpiring in Rachel's classroom and one outside the classroom occurring in the greater school setting. As time passed with more observations and coding, I determined facets of that theme that would serve as subthemes in the analysis. I developed initial codes for beliefs, philosophy, instructional practices, personal background, and curriculum and constantly compared themes within each category to determine findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By revisiting the data several times and examining my researcher's log and comparing it against my research questions, I sought to create a comprehensive portrait of my respondent's belief systems and practices as I was able. I also made notations of my own reflections and recollections from the literature on teacher beliefs and literary practices and examined these against the interview, observational, and artifact data. As I examined the data further, I found the coding process to be refined, and I was able to combine some codes and eschew others that were not substantiated by sufficient data. Thus, my analysis of the data consisted of reading, examining, interpreting, and synthesizing prevalent themes in order to understand the beliefs, pedagogy, and practice of a veteran English teacher; however, I also anticipated that my review and comparison of the data could elicit further questions. I ceased collecting and coding data once I was satisfied I had attained a point of saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), that is, when no new information or themes emerged from my constant comparative analysis.

Another layer of interpretation was established as I met with Rachel to discuss my observations and findings. At several points during this study I met with Rachel to

confirm my interpretation with her. This gives the data more than one "vantage point" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 257) and provides a richer analysis. I gave Rachel the opportunity to read transcripts of her formal and informal interviews, and I invited her to peruse my observational note-taking and arrangement of documentation pertinent to her classroom practices. Rachel did not question or refute any of the transcriptions or observational notes taken in the study, rather we held discussions about what I was noticing in her classroom in relation to my guiding questions. I had also initially attempted to match written lesson plans with activities observed in the classroom, but could not effect this triangulation due to deviations caused by frequent external classroom forces.

A third layer of analysis included peer debriefing as a method of ensuring that what I interpreted in the data was actually in the data. Due to the close-connectedness to the research site, collegiality with Rachel, and intense personal interest in conducting the study, I depended on two outside others, a doctoral candidate and former classmate, and a 30-year secondary teaching veteran with experience assisting her spouse to conduct a doctoral study, to serve as peer debriefers. Both supported me through many phases of the research process, assisted me in eliciting major themes for coding, made suggestions for data categories, offered assistance with other methodological concerns and gave either confirmation or constructive criticism for data reporting and analysis.

The findings of this study are unique to the bounded system from which they come, but as Elliott Eisner (1991) argues, the responsibility for generalizing lies with the reader. As such, implications for practice and research lie within the minds of English Education researchers and English language arts teachers who find themselves reading this study. The thick description that I offered in this dissertation enables readers with

similar situations to generalize these results to their own situations and may offer them insight into their own situations as well. I have sought to describe the research community, school site, respondent, and findings with abundant samples from interviews and observations and documents to report as thoroughly as possible in my findings.

Writing the Study

Writing is an arduous task. At times, as author Graham Greene was reputed to have done, I wrote only 250 words per day and stopped, as that was all the Muses would permit me. At other times, I wrote with the continuity of John Steinbeck, who is said to have completed his Nobel Prize winning *Grapes of Wrath* within 90 calendar days after having lived among America's marginalized and displaced sharecroppers for a year. I have lived among the created world of Rachel Gibson in my mind and through the data for a full year from the time of collection. Many times I have articulated to current colleagues, my committee chair, and almost anyone who would listen the findings of this research. That notwithstanding, I still labored to write in words the portrait of my respondent's lived-through experience to elucidate even one more aspect of educational praxis from which readers might glean some new insight perhaps even into themselves.

The writing of this document consumed an entire year of my personal and professional life largely due to intervening life events and my ardent desire to portray the findings in the most complete light as possible given the unique nature of qualitative research and my relationship with the respondent. Writing this document has given me insight into the patterns and ways teachers shape their existence, what they think about that existence, and what informs that existence. Therefore, I knew I needed to produce a

document that would be resonant with scholarly standards, representational of my respondent, contributory to the field of research, and understandable by both research scholar and practitioner.

To guide my writing I consulted the dissertations of two former doctoral candidates. Reading these helped me decidedly to construct my own format for reporting results, something Merriam (1998) acknowledges as one of the many challenges for writing qualitative research when one is immersed in the data. I continually consulted my guiding questions and used these as the framework for writing the chapters on the respondent's philosophy and practice. However, I found that the data itself dictated how I wrote Chapters Four and Five, as the respondent's background and experiences and emergent themes required a certain organization unique to this study.

I have used extensively the actual voice of my respondent by including many of her own interview answers to give a sense to the reader of who she is and what she believes and practices. I did not edit her words, but did punctuate many of her responses that, reported without, reflected a type of stream of consciousness response that might be confusing to the reader. To a minor degree, I did synthesize some quotations on a single subject when Rachel returned to prior discussion topics as the ideas came to her while elaborating on new ones.

In writing this study I also had to consider whether to include certain information my respondent shared with me regarding her personal life and professional attitudes that might be of a sensitive or private nature. While I had no difficulty filtering certain revelations regarding her personal life that she iterated or that I witnessed outside of school, I did have to deliberate carefully on some of her more caustic statements

regarding colleagues and students, alike. I decided in the end not to include certain remarks given the context from which they were said. I discerned that some remarks did not have significance among the other data in the study. Moreover, I felt that disclosure of this information might have negate trust in the unique relationship I had developed with Rachel, as Reinharz (1992) and Kirsch (1999) both offer that such dilemmas may occur with researcher participant relationships and must be handled with sensitivity and a sense of personal ethics.

My conclusive purpose in writing this case has been to depict how a veteran secondary English teacher's beliefs and perceptions inform classroom practice. Against the backdrop of preservice and first year teachers, few studies of veteran teachers' beliefs and practices have been carried out. It is my expectation that Rachel's story will spark compassion, engender intrigue, and enlighten minds of researchers and practitioners alike to examine the pedagogy veteran teaching reveals in this one case and in themselves.

Authenticity of the Study

This research study is reliable in its methodology, procedures, and analysis. All through the study I have acknowledged and utilized scholarly guidelines for performing qualitative research, and my findings are based in research theory and its related literature. My personal and professional relationship and frequent contact with the respondent, Rachel Gibson, has yielded sufficient prolonged engagement permitting me to capture a substantial portrait of a veteran English teacher's perceptions, beliefs, and practice over the term of the study. I collected data from myriad sources and utilized member checking and peer debriefing to authenticate and review the data. I maintained

detailed and well-organized researcher's notes of observations and accurately-transcribed interviews of the respondent's actual words about herself, her beliefs, and her practice. Every one of these artifacts and observations produced extensive insight into the life, times, beliefs, and practice of the respondent.

The findings of this study were unique to the bounded system from which they came. While quantitative studies thrive on replication, such is problematic with qualitative studies since human behavior cannot be static, even given the same study parameters. There is no singular "reality" to be tested empirically in the qualitative research paradigm. However, that does not exclude readers with similar situations from generalizing results to themselves when a researcher offers complete descriptions for the study to fit into new situations. The researcher may not have replication at his or her disposal for reliability, but the researcher must nevertheless ensure that the findings are consistent with the data being collected, and he or she must explain well how he or she arrived at the results with "thick description" for a reader to interpret transferability for himself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). I have sought to describe the research community, school site, Rachel Gibson, and findings with abundant samples from interviews and observations and documents to report as thoroughly as possible the findings a reader seeking transferability would find sufficient. The findings of this study are unique to the respondent working within her teaching venue at a certain time. Much of what she believes and ultimately practices is influenced by her past experiences and upbringing, the larger focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

BIOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE RESPODENT

"What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open."

Muriel Rukeyser

As much as literature teachers introduce stories to their students, they also introduce the stories of themselves, as teaching is situated biographically as well as pedagogically, culturally, and historically. Impressions, life history, habits, occurrences, and images all have power to bring together past and future into a personally meaningful nexus for the teacher to situate the world and construct a narrative continuum that will assist in revealing personal philosophy, motivations, and perhaps even codify some behaviors (Connelly & Clandinin, 1984). A teacher's perspectives and experiences develop into tapestries that inform, color, and shape not only the teacher as practitioner but also as the self that can in turn impress upon others. A teacher's experiences and impressions cannot easily be eradicated nor should be negated in terms of their significance because they "... underlie our present perspectives and affect the way we look at things and talk about things and structure our realities" (Greene, 1978). Teachers' ways of knowing, believing, and practicing must be understood as constructs complexly formed from their internalizing and organizing of collective social interactions and psychological

experiences with salient others in certain physical settings that blended to create their own identity as self (Mead, 1934). As such, Little and McLaughlin (1993) state that defining a teacher's professional identity and teaching community must stem from sketching the biographical and experiential roots that will serve to contextualize for the reader a portrait of the respondent as her background, philosophies, and experiences define her. This chapter of findings expounds upon the respondent's biography, secondary learning experiences, teaching internship, and early teaching experiences to provide a portrait of her personally and professionally and to paint the backdrop against which her practice will be illuminated.

The Formative Years: Toward a Definition of Self

Rachel Gibson never interviewed for the English teaching position she now occupies. After serving a student-teaching internship and graduating from college, she stepped into her current teaching assignment after serving as a long-term substitute at her present school for a female English teacher on family leave. According to Rachel, the supervising principal at the time asked her if she wanted a teaching position being vacated by a retiring teacher. In her own words Rachel responded, "Yes sir, I will do anything. I'd even wash the windows if this school had some" (Interview, 02/21/04). Such a beginning for a high school teacher is unusual, since teaching openings must be posted for a period of time with county boards of education for new applicants and potential transferees to apply. However, the principal's breech of protocol in offering the teaching position and Rachel's exuberant acceptance began her career as an English teacher at age 38 in a

metropolitan suburban high school. Most curiously, Rachel admits she could have never seen herself becoming such, given her underprivileged upbringing in a major metropolitan area and her uninspiring years as a student herself.

Rachel grew up in what today's psychologists and family counselors might regard a traditional but dysfunctional household. She is the eldest of three sisters, and one younger brother, and was raised by two high school-educated and unskilled working parents. Her father, a heavy drinker, worked in various positions from a shoe salesman to a Waffle House cook and spent frequent time in jail for a variety of repeated misdemeanors to include stealing and passing insufficient checks. Such times left her mother having to work more than one job as a waitress and factory worker to support the family. When money was either scarce or non-existent, Rachel says the family sometimes had to take their belongings and move in the middle of the night to evade unpaid landlords. Rachel explains a memory of her impoverished upbringing:

> When money was scarce or we just had to pay rent, we had to get our clothing from discount stores, and I was frequently ashamed and thought everyone knew my clothing came from Woolworth's. I barely remember having any crayons or board games. I did have a few dolls, but we had no books in my home as I recall. I did not read except in school. (Interview, 02/21/04)

At times the household was replete with various economic, marital, and other domestic tensions, and eventually her mother and father divorced. While not destitute, Rachel's family experienced considerable financial and familial instability during her formative years in the late 1950s to mid 1960s.

Rachel claims to have been an average but largely unmotivated learner. She does not recall her parents ever encouraging her in school. In fact, Rachel states, "I

didn't come from a family that valued education, and I just kinda did my own thing in high school" (Interview, 02/21/04). In spite of this, Rachel claims that one of her favorite activities as a child was to play "school," but the inspiration for such did not come from her recollection of influential teachers. She states,

> I can remember we lived across the street from a grammar school. I'd go over there to the dumpster and pull out papers and everything, get my younger sister and brother to play with me, and when they wouldn't, I'd get my dolls and old stuffed animals and force them to play...by the way, they were the best students I ever had! All through school I did not have one positive experience. I never had one teacher who took any time with me whatsoever. The teachers I remember...what I remember, rather, from my teachers was that they criticized me, they made smart aleck remarks to me that truly hurt my feelings. (Interview 02/21/04)

Rachel claims to have been at best a "C" student because she was "terrible" in high school and had no motivation to learn beyond average requirements. It appears no teachers remain in her memory who motivated or encouraged her either, as Rachel reports she cannot recall the names of any of her former teachers, even when prompted by siblings who had the same teachers years later and returned to school for reunions. An incident in elementary school reinforced the lack of teacher support and humiliation she experienced as a fourth grade student. Rachel states,

> Because my family was really poor and my Dad spent most of our childhood in jail, my Mother bought us shoes in the spring and summer...we wore flip flops because they were like 39 cents a pair back in the sixties. It was before flip flops became such a cool icon of this generation. But, I remember in the fourth grade I had on my flip flops, we were out at P.E. and we were running relay races, and I was up against this girl, we'll call her Boomsheeka. She had on her P.F. Flyers and here I am with my little skinny legs, and my flip flops. As we get ready to race, the teacher said, 'Oh, Boomsheeka, don't worry. You can beat Rachel. She's wearing flip flops.' And here I was, a young girl who was already insecure, and felt ashamed of my family situation, and when that teacher said that...and I took off running, I knew in my heart I wasn't going to win because here again, I felt like she had stressed to me I wasn't as good as everybody else. And so as I was running, sure enough, my flip flops broke,

> and here I am trying to run this race with a flip flop around one ankle and a flip flop on the other foot. And I didn't win, but all that did was tell me "you're not good enough because you don't have P.F. Flyers." (Interview, 02/21/04)

The humiliation Rachel experienced at recess as a pre-teen would stay with her into her adulthood years. She would use the incident to serve as a mnemonic for self-improvement and self-satisfaction for having overcome the rejection and marginalization she felt. She states,

> ...When I first started teaching I had a flyswatter that had a flip flop on the end of it that I used for a key chain for many, many years. And it was just symbolic. It was kind of a symbolism to that teacher who put me down so badly. You may have put me down, but now, you can kiss my ass. I worked really hard. It didn't matter what you said, but you did hurt my feelings. I went ahead and became something in spite of what you said. (Interview 02/21/04)

When I first met Rachel years ago, I recall seeing the flip flop fly swatter she used as a key chain for her school keys when I used her classroom during her planning period since I had no room of my own. The fly swatter key chain subsequently broke from use, but Rachel never replaced it. From my own observations Rachel herself wears the "flip flop" sandals to school on dress-down days with jeans and T-shirts. Asked about the significance of her choice of shoes she states, "I don't have to race anymore, and I can wear these shoes by choice" (Interview, 02/21/04). Rachel's sense of control speaks loudly now that she has asserted herself successfully with her own classroom where "no child will ever be humiliated." (Interview, 02/21/04)

Teachers may not have inspired Rachel, but the attorneys at the law office where she obtained her first real job out of high school did influence her. She readily admits that the only functional skill she took from high school was shorthand, which gained her a position in a law firm as a clerk at age 19. Rachel remembers being

awed by and having respect for the attorneys in the firm. Being around the educated, polite attorneys inspired Rachel to excel, but her being corrected for two usage errors, "hisself" and "irregardless" reminded her that she needed to learn more and take proper speech seriously. Rachels states:

> I thought 'irregardless' was such a big word until an attorney told me it was not a word. It only took me that one time [to be corrected] and from then on, I didn't make the same mistakes twice, and I had a drive. Whatever job I had, whether it was at the Dairy Queen making 95 cents an hour, or in a dental office, I was going to be the very best. (Interview, 02/21/04)

When asked the difference between being corrected at school and at the law firm, Rachel responded, "This was my job for which I got paid. I respected these lawyers who treated me well, not my teachers who never seemed to do anything for me" (Interview, 02/21/04).

At 19 Rachel married her first husband, whom she met while skipping school to swim at an apartment complex pool adjacent to her house. She admits not loving the man whom she confesses marrying to escape from poverty. Years later Rachel apologized to him for this after their divorce. With her first husband's ambition to become a naval officer, Rachel's first married years were spent with his being away in officer training school and her learning how to become an officer's wife by "playing bridge and drinking Singapore Slings with other officers' wives at social gatherings" (Interview, 02/21/04). Already a mother and the youngest wife among the others, Rachel felt inferior without a college education unlike the other women. Rachel states, "This would figure very prominently in my life—going to college—and they all had social calling cards, and I didn't because, I guess, I had nothing special to tout" (Interview, 02/21/04). Not fully fitting in with the other officer's

wives and being alone with a new baby for months while her spouse was stationed in Greenland forced Rachel to become independent at a very young age. It was near this time that Rachel learned dental hygiene by on-the-job training and six months of technical school. This line of work carried her into her second marriage and birth of her second son.

Rachel met her second husband while attending a birthday party for one of her sisters at a club in a major metropolitan area. At the time he was a senior at a southern university of technology and four years younger than she. After his college graduation, her second husband took an engineering job in California, and Rachel followed. Rachel claims, "I sold everything I had to be with him, including my VW bug, and followed him there. We were wed in a civil ceremony" (Interview, 02/21/04). Five years after the birth of their son, Rachel and her second husband separated due to irreconcilable differences and were subsequently divorced.

Discovery of the Second Self

At 34, single again and now with two young children back in her home state, Rachel claims she "wanted to do something more with [her] life, and started going to school" (Interview, 02/21/04). She took her first college course, the required English 101, after work at a small state college in a town approximately 50 miles west of a major metropolitan area. The course provided the incentive for her to continue another term with two additional courses: one during her lunch hour and another after work. Rachel attended college while working a full-time job and caring for herself and two sons. During her last semester, she had to quit work and take a paper

route to supply her income. Rachel's last semester was spent taking four classes, three English Literature and one French, to fulfill her last graduation requirements. She is especially proud of managing the precarious balancing act of college and home. Rachel states,

> I'd get up every morning and go to school to study in the stacks until my first class. I would have two classes, then I'd go pick up my papers, roll them on the way back to school, take two more classes, and pick up my children and go from there on my route. I did this so I could get out within the four years I said I would take to finish. I not only developed some nice biceps then, but could also throw a paper up three flights of stairs. I managed to graduate in four years. I was on the Dean's List almost every term, and I was the first person in my family to have graduated college. I was 38. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel attributes her determination to complete college in her late thirties despite a lack of family persuasion and uneventful elementary and secondary schooling experiences to an internal drive and measure of personal faith. She states, "I guess all my life I always said I was going to do better than what I came from, and this is part of my religious belief that God had some mission for me to become a teacher" (Interview, 02/21/04). To Rachel, how one gets "there"—that is to a place of destiny in one's life—is up to the person, but that an omniscient God had a plan to shape who she has become that even included her disappointing youth which "made her stronger." She further credits her knowledge of self and faith for guiding her to become an English teacher and remaining as one until she decides to retire. Such a revelation is not uncommon as Su (1993) reports that 39 percent of second-career teachers entering the profession come from careers other than secretarial, service, business, and social work. Serow, (1993) categorizing twenty-three second-career teachers into four groups based on their decision to enter the profession, discovered

that altruism merged with personal needs for achievement, self-esteem, and self-efficacy as reasons to teach. Such is fitting with Rachel's personal drive for betterment and desire to feel and become independent after two divorces and upon returning to her home place. Moreover, Post and Killian's (1992-93) research results define adult college students by age and their sense of responsibility, two determining factors for many pursuing teacher education. Rachel's college attendance, while she singly mothered two small children and held a full-time job and later various part-time jobs, attests to her multitasking abilities indicative of many second career teachers. Her diverse experiences and work backgrounds provided the cornerstone for acquiring, understanding, and applying new concepts while she balanced multiple other responsibilities. Moreover, Rachel's decision to remain in teaching until she retires fits with Su's (1993) report that students who become teachers later in life remain in the profession longer than traditional-age students.

Rachel's first choice of college majors was Marketing because of the success of her work background in the dental industry. However, Rachel's admitted poor skills in higher mathematics held her back from pursuing the business degree. Not being required to take Algebra in high school forced Rachel to take remedial classes in foundational mathematics in college. She comments, "Even though I studied and I worked and treated [math class] like a job, it was real hard, and I had to take the exit exams twice before I passed. It was then I realized a wall was put up before me" (Interview, 02/21/04). Rachel's belief that God's "barrier" to her completing more difficult and required mathematics courses for the Marketing degree, her single-

motherhood, and working while attending college all moved her toward English as her choice of major. Rachel utilizes a literary metaphor from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" to describe her realization about her weak math skills: "I had to get rid of that math 'albatross' from around my neck and make a U turn to know in my heart what God wanted me to do. It's made all the difference in the world" (Interview, 02/21/04). Research on second-career teachers reports that teachers' pursuing a favorite subject over other unsuccessful ones in college becomes a major reason for teaching the favored subject as a career (Lortie, 1975; Su, 1993). Rachel's success in literature classes marked by her high grades and unconditional interest convinced her that teaching literature and textual exegesis would be something "she could do and do well" at that particular stage of her life as a single mother and second career professional.

A number of observations about Rachel correspond with research regarding teachers choosing their profession and reflecting the role of self-awareness in teacher development. Lortie (1975) outlined five themes under which teachers claim to enter the profession, the most prevalent being a desire to work with children or youth to the final theme of time compatibility of the profession that fits with female gender roles of wife and mother. Elsewhere in the theme list appears the teacher's desire to continue in a specific subject matter, having eliminated other ones secondary to the initial choice by some process or need. In addition Lortie (1975) determined that many teachers who choose their profession have the specific encouragement and support of family members and significant teachers in their prior schooling. Such may be the case with Rachel selecting English over Marketing as a choice subject in

college training; however, the latter is not the case, as she reports no family or significant teachers influenced her toward a teaching career.

Preservice Self-Construction

Rachel took the required student teaching internship at the end of her senior year in one of her current employing county's newest schools on the far western side of the county where she presently teaches. The demographics, size, and environment of that school were quite different from her current placement. The student body was largely white and rural, and the teachers were mostly white as well with only one black female and one black male on the staff at the time. Rachel claims her student teaching internship was a "mostly positive one" except for experiencing the apparent jealousy of one of her mentor teachers who was reluctant to give up total control of her classes. Rachel explains that one teacher was "very gracious in giving up her classroom and letting it become mine" (Interview, 02/21/04). The other teacher, about Rachel's own age, remained in her classroom nearly each day, observing Rachel and noticing the good rapport Rachel developed with the ninth grade classes. Rachel says, "I think she is a lot like me in that she thinks of her classroom and her students as being hers" (Interview, 02/21/04). Quickly Rachel's rapport with the students increased, and the mentor teacher displayed hostility from interrupting the proceedings in the class to disallowing Rachel to use art and craft materials supplied by the county school system for projects. The disgruntled mentor teacher also prohibited the students under Rachel's charge to display their projects in the shared classroom.

Rachel admits some aspects of this exclusion negatively affected her but that she "got the final word" when the students collectively threw a surprise party with balloons and small gifts in her honor at the end of student teaching. Rachel says the mentor teacher did not attend. Rachel comments "[Student teaching] was a positive experience overall to me in spite of that teacher because I knew I had reached the students" (Interview, 02/21/04). Rachel does not fault herself for the reactions of the uncooperative mentor teacher, but attributes the teacher's responses to her own insecurities and not because Rachel intimidated her. "I think she had some areas she needed to work on, and I guess she had lost her enthusiasm for teaching and wanted to try all these great ideas and do things differently but could not. So, I tried to look at the situation that way and not take it personally" (Interview, 02/21/04). From her mentor teacher, however, Rachel took on techniques for review games and thorough covering of curricular material that continued into her current classroom. Rachel adds:

> I doubt very seriously that you could tell today she was one of my mentor teachers. Of course, 13 years have elapsed, and I will give her this—I used more of her techniques when I first started teaching than I did of my own from teacher training. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel is confident that her years of experience in the classroom, coupled with her personal belief systems, have worked to distinguish her personal style of teaching.

Rachel does not recall specifics of her teacher training program outside of student teaching as "too many years have passed [for me] to remember anything noteworthy" (Interview, 02/21/04). Nevertheless, Rachel says that the last several years of staff development brought in waves of "cheerleading classes"—those

training classes intended to motivate students she admits were "innovative for their time for teaching cooperative learning" (Interview, 02/21/04). She was willing to take the classes because the county paid for them and, being single on a bachelor's degree salary, she took advantage of any class "they would pay for because [she] loves to learn and wants to be the best she can be" (Interview, 02/21/04). For a number of years Rachel placed her student desks in cooperative groups of four, but other teachers in the department balked at the idea "because it was threatening to them," and they would mock her use of innovation calling her "fluffy" (Interview, 02/21/04). In spite of the criticism, Rachel says she would "do her own thing" and was sometimes a "pain in the ass, causing her to be alienated" (Interview, 02/21/04).

"Doing" a Philosophy of Difference

Rachel claims she is not highly motivated to impress her colleagues, even though she admits it would be nice to have their professional admiration in lieu of their criticism. Doing right by students is Rachel's mantra and her practice, and she believes it intimidates others since they have been in education "so long and done their lesson plans the same way for some 20 years," that it must have tweaked some insecurities (Interview, 02/21/04). To Rachel, teachers and instructors differ by definition. She states,

> An instructor teaches material, especially if that material is presented in a more formal way; however, a teacher teaches the lesson and lessons about why. I see the role of teacher as being a mother, father, role model, confidant and sometimes friend, psychiatrist, psychologist, and mentor. I feel if I can help students obtain any better sense of themselves to fit into society, then I have done my job not only as a teacher of literature, but also as a teacher of life. I view my role as a teacher who has a lot of understanding, empathy, and compassion and care for the individual. I

> don't want to say friend, but that I'm like that mentor, I guess. I am someone students know they can come and talk to if they have a problem and that I genuinely care. That I'm not up here just to teach a vocabulary lesson, but I genuinely care about each one of my students as an individual. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel observes that other teachers, who were trained in a different era from her, have mindsets toward authoritarianism, distance, and formal structure in the classroom that clash with her philosophic approach. She states,

> I've noticed some of my English teaching colleagues don't seem to form relationships with their students by how I see them talk to and treat them just in the hallways-rounding them up like cattle waving them in the doorway while they [teachers] roll their eyes . On some occasions I've had to enter, say, my department head's class and noticed students working solo with a worksheet when they could at least be working together with a partner. I see no student work on the walls, I see no projects collected in a box to be graded, and I see some heads down and disengaged. We all have our bad days, but I see this over and again. I find this out, too, when [colleagues'] students enter my room the next year and say they like my approach better or that they seem to learn more. Students tell me what they do and say from these other classes don't seem important or they don't remember what they've done, except when they get called on the carpet for something wrong. Many say they don't recall doing anything creative, and they rarely tell me of any activities that don't involve paper and pencil. (Interview, 02/21/04)

To Rachel, this may partly explain the disapproval of her English teaching colleagues over the years, but for her, teaching her way is not an intentional act to alienate her fellows. She continues with "let's see how much I can tick off my colleagues has never been my desire, but I think they saw what they were doing was stale"(Interview, 02/21/04). A possible contribution to the criticism and perhaps jealousy of other English teachers was Rachel's earning of Teacher of the Year status in the third year into her career, an achievement none of her English department

critics had earned in all their collective years. Rachel states how she thinks jealousy played a role in her colleagues' exclusion of her. She states,

> After I received Teacher of the Year I would hear people outside the English department say my English colleagues scoffed at my winning by saying I got it for "playing" in the classroom and "catering" to students instead of teaching. I was hurt, but let that award stand for itself. It took a few years, but all those teachers either moved on to other schools in the county or retired. And none of them ever earned a Teacher of the Year Award for anything they ever did. But how funny that some of them came around to doing variations of the things my students accomplished in my classroom. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Even more noteworthy is Rachel's earning of the Teacher of the Year status despite her background of non-supporting parents. Research compiled on the profiles of Teacher of the Year finalists from 1994 to 2000 shows that highly supportive familial influences emerged strongly as an indicator for the teacher's professional success and earning of the award (Duemer, Benetiz, Hurst, et.al., 2002). Rachel won the Teacher of the Year award not only without parents who were teachers themselves passing on the occupational tradition, but also without their inspiring respect for learning in general. Rachel states that she never mentioned to her fellow colleagues that she noticed that they incorporated her ideas in their teaching, but she did eventually feel somewhat vindicated for getting the last word later for co-workers' lack of support and collegiality. She rationalizes the tensions among women working in education and how this in part might be culturally situated. Rachel states,

> I wouldn't have gotten any satisfaction saying 'Na na na boobie' to my colleagues who 'borrowed' some of my ideas. But I did get some satisfaction with saying to myself that' yea, O.K., she's doing something she said was fluffy, and now she's doing the same thing. Hmm. Guess it wasn't quite so fluffy after all'. So, I've noticed in education, especially

> with women, [that] women become threatened. When they see someone doing something different, it brings up insecurities they have. I think it's true of women all over the world-at least in the U.S. We've been so conditioned by the media, advertising, that, we can be each other's very best friends, but we can also be each other's worst enemies. (Interview 02/21/04)

Rachel may clearly associate her beliefs about women given the nature not only with her student teaching episode with the controlling mentor teacher but also with the female teachers who demeaned her work at her current school. Ironically, Rachel's uncooperative mentor teacher in student teaching began her teaching career years earlier under the tutelage of Rachel's greatest critic at Downeyhill who became the department head just three years' prior to the date of this study.

Rachel's beliefs and attitudes reflect visible and distinct tensions as they relate to collegial teaching philosophies and perceptions. Such tensions are not uncommon in any educational workplace whatever the level of instruction due to the multiplicities of personalities, teaching styles, teacher training effects, administrative policies, and overall social organization of the school environment, to name only a few reasons.

Three aspects of her reflection are essential in understanding her beliefs: criticism, isolation due to lack of collegiality, and sharing teaching ideas. Aware that her teaching style is different from those of her colleagues and that she does not receive recognition for it, she excuses her critics for their lack of awareness and apparent limitations for negating her personal style, one that is rooted in her background of having been the lost student no teacher ever noticed. She refers to this construct as the "irony" of it all: the people who have talked about her being

"fluff" or have discounted what she has done and said over the years "do not know her, have never entered her classroom, and are likely judging her based upon her appearance or what they chose to see" much like the teachers who discounted her as a young student from an impoverished upbringing (Interview, 02/21/04). When a male member of the science department approached Rachel at the end of a roundtable staff development meeting to say he believed her teaching methods were "invalid," Rachel invited him into her classroom to "attempt to prove his hypothesis with legitimate information so that he could practice the very science he touted in his classroom" (Interview, 02/21/04). Rachel laughs that "as a scientist and teacher, he should know that, but he never showed in my classroom" (Interview, 02/21/04). Rachel carries her philosophy on respect to a level of exclusivity that validates her teaching ethic. She reports,

> I do not respect a whole lot of people because they do not impress me. Many do the least amount of work they possibly can do, but they tend to be hypercritical of others. I fail to see how they can critique me so much when the issues in their very own classrooms that need attention. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel applies this belief across the spectrum to students but more ardently to other faculty and senior administration. Rachel believes that teaching is a profession requiring a total personal and professional commitment to oneself and students. Such is congruent with Little and McLaughlin's (1993) explanation for how teachers both view and shape their professional communities that in turn determines much about their commitment to collegiality. The construct of intensity, the difference between "strong and weak ties among teachers with respect to their professional practice and commitment," (Little & McLaughlin, 1993, p. 6) figures large for

Rachel since she has neither had nor felt any particular positive relationship with her critics, especially those within her own department. Her willingness to share with them reflects her manner of reaching out to those who refuse her, a common altruism among people in teaching and its related professions. However, it may also show she is unwilling to be the first to initiate contact since colleagues must "go to her" before they will be accepted into her room, another outgrowth of her reaction to colleagues' criticism and her self-imposed isolation to protect her feelings of personal and professional efficacy. Moreover, Rachel's apparent inability to be accepted in any perceptible micro collegiate groups that form and disperse over a teaching period, as opposed to her being a member of the macro teaching community of the whole school, precipitates her isolation and potential need for inclusion, another part of the culture of a teaching community (Little & McLaughlin, 1993). Such may explain her attitude of being the best teacher she can be in her own classroom. Additionally, Rachel's orientation, her values and depth of expertise in teaching, may impact her lack of collegiality as her views that translate into practice may differ on several levels from those of her teaching colleagues inside and outside her department. Such views may be tacitly or overtly held, expressed or muted, practiced or merely rhetorical, but situated in these perspectives are salient criteria by which teachers evaluate each other, their visible work, and their ideas of colleagueship as to what determines a 'good' teacher among the school community (Little & McLaughlin, 1993). What colleagues see of Rachel on the outside and what they hear reported from others are only two limited criteria by which colleagues judge her and may distance themselves from offering support or at the very least

acknowledgement for her instructional achievements. Despite the perceptions, Rachel sees herself as the autonomous teacher who relishes individuality to bring about the best for herself and her students. She states,

> Doing my own thing in my classroom has never been a problem for me, and sometimes it alienates me, but what I find so funny is that I do my own thing anyway...to me it's about motivation, and I believe that with all my heart. When I do something it is to help my students, not impress my colleagues. It is strictly based on helping my students learn and grow whatever the means, and I think that rubs some of my colleagues the wrong way, and they think I am some sort of renegade out to destroy their concept of status quo. (Interview, 02/21/04)

In terms of converging with her school's culture, Rachel's stance can be viewed from two philosophies of critical thought that deal with expression of individuality, placement, and acceptance within an instructional community. One philosophy argues that the teacher as a type of "independent artisan" sufficiently characterizes those in most school settings and, by definition, is a construct many teachers hold onto for delivering their craft (Huberman, 1993). The independent artisan effects positive outcomes of spontaneity, creativity, progress or even codified opposition, if deemed necessary, but the overall goal of the artisan is to contribute to the good of the teaching setting by way of personal autonomy, one's own distinctive style. On the other hand, a second perspective differentiates a teacher's individualism—that is one's conscientious effort to compromise established school community norms—that tears down school unity and encroaches on the individuality of the independent artisans (Hargreaves, 1993). By continuing to place her students and their needs first above relating with her teaching peers, Rachel works to the exclusion of her critical colleagues. Moreover, according to Huberman (1993),

"collegiality is not a fully legitimate end in itself unless it can be shown to effect, directly or indirectly, the nature or the degree of pupil development (p. 13). Rachel's self-sufficiency may assert that she does not need collegiate approval to be effective with her students; however, the lack of collegiality accomplishes nothing for her development even as an independent artisan "doing philosophy" in her literature classroom. Thus, Rachel's statement, "It would be nice to have their professional admiration in lieu of their criticism" reveals her desire to enjoy some positive reinforcement for how she views her success in the classroom. Moreover, Rachel may wish to experience a form of positive collegiality among her teaching peers, much like she does among her students in the classroom.

Definition of the Philosophic Self

Rachel's confident regard for herself against critical colleagues carries over into her philosophy on pedagogy. She views herself as a student-centered teacher whose responsibility is to create an educational environment in which students may be nurtured, spontaneous, and productive. Rachel says her basic personality is a nurturing one, and she thinks of herself as "more of a servant" to her students than an authority figure per se. For example, in opening a lesson about different voices in literature, I observed Rachel serve grits to her Pacesetter students to be used not only as a food, but also as a mnemonic for recalling elements of Southern voice. Rachel read an excerpt from *Bless Your Heart, Tramp*, a table book she uses to justify comically that "a Southerner may say almost anything as long as he or she prefaces it with 'bless your heart'" (Interview, 02/06/04) while students served themselves grits

from a large crock pot with their choices of butter, hot pepper sauce, salt, pepper, and sugar. She adds,

> I am a server. I like to serve people. I think it is polite and even academically sound. I ask so much of my students, and I enjoy giving something back. For any relationship there has to be give and take. I may be able to give them something they might not be able to get on their own, and I think they enjoy the warmth from that. (Interview, 02/06/04)

Rachel delights in the responsiveness of her students saying that is how she "feels good about herself--giving more to students than what they might expect." In addition to providing solid teaching, Rachel believes her role in the classroom is to exude understanding, empathy, compassion, and care for the individual as well as providing an educational environment where she can be nurturing, cordial, spontaneous, and eliciting of student work. Rachel states,

> I think the whole encouraging and nurturing part is my basic personality makeup anyway. So many students do not get the amount of attention they need at home for a lot of reasons, and many of us teachers are all they have to talk to and listen to them. Knowing that I am not going to embarrass them or threaten them in any way allows my students to learn, grow, and get a sense of who they are and can be. Many work harder and produce better quality work when nurtured and encouraged and in a safe environment. (Interview, 02/06/04)

Rachel's philosophy is congruent with that of Milton Mayeroff (1971) who notes that "To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him grow and actualize himself " (p.1). Rachel believes her creation of a safe environment stems from her mothering nature and successful rearing of two "wonderful" men, her sons, both "strong individuals complete in themselves." She acknowledges that some of her students come from "terrible" home environments and that the safe haven of her classroom may be "the only safe place they have" (Interview, 02/06/04). Having this

secure environment is important to her, as it is an outgrowth of her experiences as a young child. Rachel explains that she was one of those students who had a bad home life, and that her teachers made fun of her because of it. She states, "I never felt secure in school, and I want to bring my experience in the classroom to aid my students, even if it were [sic] a challenge to me" (Interview, 02/21/04). Rachel believes that her classroom reflects her personality, and the kind of attention one puts into the learning environment mirrors the teacher personally and professionally. The room contains scented candles, posters of teddy bears, kittens, and witticisms, decorative plaques, a student-painted wall mural, lamps, picture collages of former and current students, and pictures of her family members and friends to make the atmosphere as "homey" as someone's den. She offers, "I look at my classroom as my home away from home, since I spend so much time in it, I want it enjoyable for me and my students" (Interview, 02/21/04). The configuration of her room to reflect a type of home-like atmosphere peppered with her own accents and some students' work has been the object of some ridicule and criticism. Shortly after students painted the wall mural depicting scenes from literature the class had studied, word spread to the county Board of Education office that Rachel had altered her room, an act requiring official approval she did not obtain. I observed the chief county building maintenance supervisor visit Rachel in her room personally to express his extreme displeasure for the mural, since the entire school's walls had just been freshly painted over the summer for the first time in over 15 years. Additionally, I observed at least one assistant principal mention to Rachel that the use of floor lamps violated fire code and should be removed; however, she kept them and used them in

the room without further incident save the critical comments of a few teaching colleagues. The room also served as Rachel's place of educational security she never had as a student that she can now manage as an adult. For instance, in addition to those home-like accents, Rachel also displays pop cultural artifacts meaningful to her personally. Framed on all but one of her walls are several two by three-feet posters of her favorite actor, Mel Gibson, from a number of the movies in which he has starred. Another Mel Gibson picture sits in the window of her door partially blocking sight into the room and one which all must see upon entering. On one of Rachel's especially difficult days during my observations, she offered students a film viewing in lieu of their regular work to allow her to catch up on grading. Viewing the film was contingent on two criteria: students would have to view a Mel Gibson movie *Braveheart* from her personal collection and complete the day's assignment for homework. Rachel's Mel Gibson posters and films are personal artifacts through which she integrates herself as a member of the class community. Students get another sense of who she is as a person in addition to being their teacher, and her interests are marketed as just as important as those of the students whom she values. The use of the posters and film may also be considered ways Rachel exerts her voice and fosters a sense of kinship with her students that she missed from her teachers and peers in the classrooms from her personal schooling past. Additionally, the wall mural, which remains, and the use of lamps demonstrate Rachel's resolve to accomplish not only what she desires but what she deems important for the enjoyment of her students, even to the extent it transgresses school codes and elicits reprimands.

In addition to having a safe, home-like environment for her students, Rachel strongly feels that caring is an important component of being a good teacher. Caring is the exact opposite of the attitudes and behaviors she recalls displayed toward her in her own schooling experiences. To Rachel, caring is not just a visible behavior or measurable interaction with a student but an attitude that might be met with a reciprocal acknowledgement. She defines caring as a form of rapport building over time that underpins effective teaching. She states,

> The bottom of my foundation [as a teacher] is what I know, what I have to teach these students, but right on top of that is the rapport I build with them. If you have a good rapport with someone, and you care what that person thinks about you, then you're going to do better with him or her. I feel it is paramount to have good rapport with people you want something from, and I ask a lot from my students. (Interview, 02/21/04)

That students feel safe and cared for as unique people in her classroom allows Rachel to propel them towards one of her goals for them of lifelong literature learning. It is not enough for one to claim he or she cares, but one must outwardly demonstrate caring. Noddings (2001) defines a caring teacher as one who possesses more than certain stable and predictable traits that characterize an individual before he or she operates a classroom. A caring teacher is a receptive individual who displays the regular establishment of "relations of care in a wide variety of situations...and clearly demonstrates a continuous drive for competence...to respond adequately to the recipients of care" (p. 101). I observed an emotional female student meeting Rachel at the classroom door unwilling to enter due to a personal conflict with another student who upset her. Rachel excused the student from class and suggested she check out of school and go home to gather herself. In another episode Rachel

permitted a student coping with the anniversary of his father's death to sit out her class and choose an alternate assignment instead of studying a poem concerning the topic of death. Rachel's actions might be viewed as common-sense responses to students in various stages of need, but not all teachers as Rachel explained earlier would claim nor act upon such sensitivity. Making these instances unique are the students' responses to her flexibility: both returned to school or class refreshed and completed the original or, in the case of the latter student, the alternate assignment. Rachel attributes this to her reaching out first to the students through compassion that nurtures the rapport she built with both.

Caring is frequently misunderstood as a certain lack of professionalism, and critics suggest that the relationship between care giver and recipient should be somewhat distant, supervisory in nature, and communicated through an insider's language of clinical jargon. Rachel's departmental critics may have deemed that her caring nature towards her students overstepped boundaries of professional behavior therefore eliciting their criticism of her being "soft" or "fluffy" in her classroom. Rachel's approach to caring is not common in secondary classrooms. Unlike Sears, Kennedy, and Kaye (1992) who found that secondary teachers are often concerned more with intuition and judgment of content than with sensing and feeling with regard to student needs, Rachel believes that all are essential. In addition, Rachel sees herself as a caring individual who exudes qualities of intuition, personal commitment, and student focus—all characteristics that emanate from an altruistic belief system that serves as the basis for her behaviors, decision, and attitudes in the classroom (Noddings, 2001). Such is the case with a former student who frequents

Rachel's class bringing in a basket of donated snack foods to sell openly in the classroom to raise money for her senior trip after graduation. Rachel considers "Julie's" story "tragic." Rachel explains that Julie's mother resides in a mental hospital and her father with whom she lives treats her abusively. Rachel's classroom is one outlet for Julie to feel safe and raise money she needs to reward herself for the accomplishment of a high school degree. Rachel permits only those students who purchase snacks from Julie to eat in class. Rachel reports she doesn't even care if this appears unfair because "kids buy candy from the school snack machines all the time, and I'd rather help out a child than I would a machine." School Board policy on the selling of unapproved items or by unsanctioned persons is strictly prohibited on campus. Yet the school administration gives its own tacit approval for Rachel's activity by not demanding that she cease, if they in fact know of its occurrence, since it is in direct competition with its own vending machines placed around the school to raise money for various items and projects. In spite of allowing classroom sales outside school regulations, Rachel rationalizes that many teachers in the school run their own "convenience stores" selling goods to raise money for their individual programs, and that the school enforcement against such has been weak. "I probably could sell items to recoup some of the money I've put into my classroom, but this isn't about me" (Interview, 03/11/04). Rachel claims that in her early years of teaching she likely would not have felt the way she does toward Julie and students like her, but her personal and classroom experiences over thirteen years have formed her stance. She states,

> I am a person with a great deal of empathy towards the underdog because of my upbringing, so I am more than happy to help out a student in need.

> In fact, I gave her a personal donation just because I really respect her. And when someone earns my respect, there is nothing I won't do to help that person. (Interview, 02/21/04)

While Rachel admits some students may view her as "soft" or "easy," she nevertheless maintains that students owe her common respect inside the classroom. She states,

> I see myself as more than an instructor of a subject. I am a teacher of life. I want them to feel more self-confident and give them the basis to know they can accomplish anything they set out to get. I am maternal towards them, but I still demand their respect. I tell them I don't tolerate disrespect from my sons and I love them. So, I am not going to tolerate that from you as my student. Some teens still love the challenge of testing boundaries, but we all know as adults we cannot act like smart alecks and have the world at our feet. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel defines respect largely through a student's language, civil words, and amenable attitude towards her and the class she creates. Rachel states,

> Respect to me means that first of all through body language you present yourself in a non-threatening manner...through the words that come out of your mouth, that you treat me with, well, I expect my students to say 'Yes Ma'am' or at least 'Yes' and that those are respectful, polite words. That has to do with manners and decorum, something I feel is sorely missing from this generation. I expect a student to look me in the eye when he or she talks to me, never raise a voice, and if a student disagrees with me [to do so] keeping it on a civil level that you don't start ranting at me. I don't rant at them. I show respect to them in return. I don't antagonize a student intentionally. I respect their space and property. I expect the same from them. Don't come in here going through my desk and personal property. I try to create an environment in my classroom where they want to come, and I expect them to take care of it. I believe my students see my expectations as reasonable. Occasionally, I will have a student who wants to challenge me. Now, I'm just saying what I think they think, but they might say, 'she thinks everybody likes her, so I'm going to challenge that,' and that's difficult for me because I am used to the vast majority of my students wanting to come to the classroom feeling that they are special. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel's behavioral expectations of her students are backed by a combination of written rules in her course syllabus and introductory remarks she makes at the beginning of each new term with new groups of students. Infractions of these rules are, in her own words, "rare," and she claims being usually successful in handling them herself by talking with students about their behavior in lieu of writing discipline referrals. Such is not only congruent with the school's policy for teachers to handle as many minor infractions with students on the classroom level as they are able, but is also indicative of Rachel's desire to continually create community in her classroom, something Greene (1998) states teachers should do on a continuum to mirror and adjust for classroom dynamics. Rachel attempts to create a harmonious community in a number of ways: having open communication, working out solutions through mutual concern with her students, and carrying out an agreeable action for them both. She further creates community by being the "servant" to her students and establishing and maintaining the safe environment she believes is vital to learning. Rachel's deliberate creation of what she deems an inviting, sincere, student-oriented community, appears to be an extension of herself. Greene (1997) states that there exists a kind of undetectable community of which people want to feel a part, and one that is created by teachers with "high values and a certain way of teaching and doing literature" (p. 27). Greene's notion is in keeping with Rachel's belief that the majority of her students both like and respond well to her way of conducting class. Noteworthy is her thinking that student challenges to her classroom rules are those in which she is personally "not liked," a feeling of rejection Rachel perceived from her own marginalized high school experiences. When her

efforts are challenged, she experiences a form of personal rejection since she believes that students' respect hinges on her being liked and their feeling "special." Rachel's yearning for a positive, mutually satisfying relationship with all her students becomes thwarted when she is unable to win their affection or cooperation for reasons that may or may not involve her personally.

Challenges to Self Definition

The students across the years who have vexed Rachel have been few, but she acknowledges that she has not always responded in the most positive manner to some of those classroom challenges. A gifted Latina student challenged Rachel during class discussions nearly every day on subjects ranging from the assigned literature to Rachel's lectures and explanations. Rachel states,

> I would ask her to explain...to back up her facts and then present them to me, as I am more than willing to admit I might be wrong. That's never been a problem for me. But, she could not substantiate her answers. And this is where my religion may cause some problems because many students know that I am a Christian. She challenged me saying I only wanted answers that mirrored Judeo-Christian beliefs and not those of an agnostic like she. She claimed I would not let her speak in class because she was not a Christian. For me, that had nothing to do with anything. She wrote me a very nasty letter and tried to say I was proselytizing my religion, but I was assuredly not. She really seemed to have a personal vendetta. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Eventually tensions between Rachel and the student had to be mediated by an administrative assistant in the school. The student continued to challenge Rachel during class in what Rachel deems "mildly inappropriate ways" (Interview, 02/21/04) such as making comments under her breath, making unnecessary noises, and getting up from her seat during class discussion to scan the room seemingly to interrupt

others. Rachel dealt with these issues by attempting to ignore the student as her early training taught her, but at times she was forced to deal directly with her. Rachel states that the student's grades fell noticeably, and upon asking the student why she did not work harder, the student, Rachel says, claimed not to have cared. Rachel says her experience has taught her some valuable lessons about this student and ones like her. She states,

> An apathetic honors student is difficult for me to deal with. And I know it is a characteristic of some honors students to be apathetic. She was very bright, and it is sad to me that she had all that brain power and would sabotage it seeking whatever attention and not focus on her learning and opportunity in my class. I believe she saw me as some sort of competition and not an ally. (Interview, 02/21/04)

The case of a young Caucasian male originally placed in Rachel's honors class comes to her mind when she remarks on students' sabotage. Rachel explains the student moved out of honors into a college preparatory class for not completing his summer reading and assigned projects and so he could be in a class with his friends. Rachel says the young man began slowly challenging her authority and adulthood on small incidental topics, all of which she "just let go." On a creative writing assignment requiring writing from the voice of a person different from oneself, the student and a friend co-wrote a poem from the viewpoint of a battered woman who claimed she deserved to be beaten and live to serve men. Rachel states she talked to each student about the piece, telling them it was not appropriate in the high school setting for myriad reasons, and that she hoped it was satirical in nature. In spite of her approach, the student caused further disruption by challenging her teaching and choice of classical and modern World Literature by acclaimed authors that in his

estimation "sucked," but without any textual support or sound argumentation. A final episode in a journaling activity that attacked her sexually as a woman and professionally as a teacher resulted in a parent conference and the student's eventual removal from her College Preparatory class into that of another teacher. Rachel explains that she "didn't think the student would get the education he deserved from being in her caring and committed classroom environment due to his own sabotage," (Interview, 02/21/04) so she gladly affirmed the change. In thirteen years of her teaching experience, Rachel states that this student was the only one to be removed from any of her classes. That either of these students failed to appreciate Rachel's teaching methods or classroom atmosphere or challenged for reasons unrelated to her is impossible to discern. Each of the students challenged school behavioral standards and received disciplinary action; however, Rachel equates their sabotaging behaviors as similar to those of disengaged students with one minor difference. She states,

> These two students unnecessarily crossed a line with their deliberate disruption to my class and to me personally. In a way their behaviors are as destructive to themselves as is the behavior of a student who won't try. The difference is the former has motivation the latter lacks, but for the wrong reasons. I cringe to see capable students demean their chances just for spite. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel's greatest challenge and darkest moment in her thirteen-year teaching career that caused her to reposition herself and act more carefully enacting her philosophy of nurturing and community building manifested itself through a female student she befriended but never taught. The four-month long episode taught Rachel that caring for students and having a "welcome all" approach poses risks with those of underdeveloped minds and unstable emotions. Rachel explains that the "incident"

involved an abandoned student who lacked an identity and sought one in admiring Rachel. The student, obsessed with Rachel, told school authorities a lie in retaliation for what Rachel believes was the student's feelings of rejection. Rachel states,

> I told [the student] really nicely it was really inappropriate to come to my class during her classes. I emailed her teachers and asked them not to allow her come to my class, and I told the administration, but they never did a thing about it at that time. Around Christmas she and her boyfriend, a former student, came to my house to deliver a gift. I didn't want to open the door, but they knew I was there because they could see a fire burning in the fireplace. I thanked her for the gift but told her it was really not appropriate to come to my house. I let the administration know about it, and [this time] they spoke to her telling her she needed to leave me alone. I fully realized she had an unhealthy attraction to me, but I thought everything would be fine now. She apparently got very mad and soon after made up a story that I gave her cigarettes and liquor at my home that night she delivered the gift. Because she was 16 at the time, she was believed. I took my attendance folder up to the office that morning. I did not know in a conference room waiting for me were principals and sheriff's deputies to interrogate me and Ms. [Jackson], a secretary to witness the events. I was not believed, had no counsel, and was arrested on the spot with my hands cuffed in the front and taken in the backseat of a cruiser to the county jail. I spoke with several people down there, and it didn't take them long to realize there was no case at all, and it was dropped right there. I didn't return to school for four days. I was in shock and mortally embarrassed, yet I did nothing wrong. (Interview, 05/28/04)

Rachel's ordeal was not over for several more months, as a number of situations arising from the false incident required her to obtain an attorney from the professional organization to which she belonged. The personnel manager of the county board of education office sent contents of her personnel file and a report of the incident to the State Professional Standards and Commissions office without her knowledge or consent after the allegations had been dropped. The student in question was allowed to return to school with the understanding she was to stay 50 feet away from Rachel at all times, but no one in the school administration actively upheld the order. Rachel discovered that the student had a long history of

disciplinary problems that included setting fire on a school bus and physically attacking another teacher, infractions requiring her to attend the county's alternative school. In spite of the discipline history and lying about Rachel, the student remained in the school until her projected graduation date. The student had no personal transportation that would have allowed her to attend a sister school in the county. Rachel kept the attorney on retainer in the event of any further incidences for the remainder of the school year, and the episode left an indelible impression upon her. She adds,

> ...the whole scenario was the most humiliating experience I've ever been through in my life. No one from the administration went with me to the police station, nor did they stand up for me in any way. I had to go to the county office [to be questioned] as a follow up. In fact, the personnel manager treated me worse than the school did. The person who was in charge of personnel--and he left right after this incident--was hateful, and he tried to make it sound as if I was at fault. I'm not as outspoken as I used to be because I don't feel like people would have my back because no one did back then. To me, if the administration had stopped her at the beginning of this...it would have never gotten out of hand. (Interview, 05/28/04)

After Rachel returned to school, we discussed the incident briefly, but due to legal reasons she requested I not print some data regarding the outcome of her personal ordeal. Rachel did reveal that her personal faith was instrumental in helping her recover from the hurt and embarrassment. I can attest that her perspective on caring, nurturing, and providing for students remained theoretically intact; however, her demonstratively open practice with students dimmed to some extent. She acted in a more reserved manner due to the damaging effects of the false arrest. Rachel reported she knew that slightly different circumstances with the false accusations and subsequent arrest might have caused her to lose her hard-earned second career

despite her tenure and sound reputation. Part of her reserved behavior was due not only to fear but also to Rachel's knowledge the accuser still walked the halls of the school largely unchecked despite an order to stay away from Rachel's vicinity. Unlike the former two incidents with the Latina female and Caucasian male, Rachel did not receive evident administrative support that she expected for the false accusation case, and the lack of support caused her to believe her safety, assurance, and efficacy were compromised from that point forward in her teaching career.

The Self as Practitioner: A View of Students

In the last three years, prior to and during the study, the school population and demographics changed with the advent of more students of color and various ethnicities from across the state, nation, and other countries more than during any other time in the school's history. In addition, the school became more populated with economically disadvantaged students, given the increased number of students qualifying for and receiving reduced price and free lunches. Rachel notes the most diversity ever in all her honors classes, and that she views it as an opportunity for teacher and student growth. She states,

> In my honors class this semester it is different than it has ever been. I have almost half of the class as African American females, and I've never had that many before in an honors class. I have four white girls, four boys, all-no, I have one boy who is Asian from Canada, and three white boys, and it's interesting in that class since I don't have a seating chart how the students seat themselves. The African American girls sit on one side of the room, the four boys sit on the other side, and the white girls sit in the middle except for one African American girl who sits in the front of the middle section. She seems to isolate herself from the rest of the African American girls in the class. She doesn't partner up, and she is really quiet. With the Stranger in a Village theme from Pacesetter, it is easy to choose reading material that crosses cultures and ethnicities and

> introduce those voices into the class. Like always I am trying to maintain a harmonious classroom attuned to students' needs where they feel they have something and someone to relate to and where they may find their own voice. (Interview, 03/31/04)

The Pacesetter curriculum, presented in the honors course, features selections from multiple literacy forms and World Literature that reflects multi-ethnic voices and visions that expand the concept of a traditional literature canon and the ways of responding to it. Rachel believes that using this curriculum offers her students the greatest opportunities for understanding "otherness" in the world. By studying the component of "voice" from the Pacesetter curriculum, students will be attuned to new literary and cultural perspectives in light of developing some of their own. She states,

> I want them to learn about their voice, and that they actually have many voices inside of themselves that they can respond to-that they learn more about themselves through the literature we read. I think that when they feel more comfortable with themselves and realize that they, themselves, really matter and what they have to say is important, it will help them develop in other classrooms. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel's approach to eliciting and developing students' voices is in keeping with Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) theory on studying literature from a balanced approach of efferent, or analytical readings, with personal, aesthetic readings and responses, requiring the reader to "live through" an experience with the text. In addition, the practice of developing voice is consistent with Langer's view that "we learn best when we are trying to accomplish something that is personally and socially meaningful (1987, p. 14). For students to be able to interact with a text requires the freedom to speak out about themselves and with others, and Rachel's community

atmosphere in her classroom permits this phenomenon to occur. Rachel has experienced success with the honors students with this curriculum, and she attributes the students' success to their intrinsic motivation to learn and their familial support system. She states,

> Students in Pacesetter are usually high end when it comes to academics. They usually have good parental support and learning is a priority in their lives. Maintaining good grades is very important to them, and their interest in reading seems to be greater than that of my regular students. Their expectations for themselves are higher, they participate more in class discussion, and they achieve more. I find myself teaching a little differently in my honors courses than I do the regular classes because they seem to want to learn and do more than other students. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Rachel responds accordingly to the honors students not only by being attuned to their needs but also keeping up with their collective drive. Requisite to maintaining the community she develops in her classroom is her self-imposed requirement to respond to honors students in a way she believes they expect of her. Rachel states,

> When I know what their drive is, I make sure I'm on my toes, too, that I know I can discuss any book I read with them. I make sure I reread it with them. Because if they ask me a certain question and if I haven't read the book in a year or so, I may not remember it, especially at my age, 51. They keep me on my toes a whole lot more than a regular class does. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel feels duly challenged by the honors students, and that it is her duty to keep pace, set a proper leadership example, and continually build community by being the facilitator and active participant in her own classroom. Moreover, because she knows her students have high expectations of themselves, it is interesting to note she perceives they must also have high expectations of her. Thus, her keeping abreast of their reading is vital to her ability to facilitate the class as much as it is to continually

establish her credibility in the classroom. She further notes that the students in the honors class, by virtue of their response to her and the curriculum, fit her definition of "good" student. Rachel offers,

> A good student is someone who is open-minded, who is willing to explore different ideas, to listen to different ways of thinking, someone who is willing to participate in his learning, not expect to have it poured in his brain, but who genuinely wants to learn because in the long run it will make that person a better, more well-rounded member of society. I can give a student a sense of ownership in the class because he's shown me initiative--he's met me part of the way. Class can then be a partnership, not a dictatorship. (Interview, 03/30/04)

Part of Rachel's perception of a good student rests with her belief that the student must show a certain amount of initiative in class that will in turn free her to be the kind of teacher she not only desires to be but believes she is expected to be as her statements show. Disruption of this working partnership on the part of the student causes Rachel consternation and unrest in the safe, sociable environment she creates leaving her feeling threatened and often times unduly challenged. Recent social issues plaguing the school environment, such as violence, disruption, and truancy, have affected her comfort levels for more demonstrative teaching in some of her classes. Rachel states she tries to foster a growing sense of community in her regular courses, despite myriad ability levels and various ethnicities in those classes, but student responses to her environment and methods have not consistently permitted her to have the open communication and reciprocity of ideas she fosters. She states that more of her regular students engage in the disruptive behaviors and frequent absenteeism, causing their periodic removal from class and thwarting her from building as strong a community in the World Literature classes as in her honors

class. Rachel states she notices more social tensions, acts of violence, and other socio-economic concerns affecting the students in the regular World Literature classes and overall climate of the school. She states,

> It's not so much interracial tension as it is people of the same race wanting to get in each others' faces, stir up problems, and then egg on people in those conflicts. I also see a lack of decorum, gang-like activity, and hear far more profanity than I did in the past, and when I say anything [corrective] to these students, they don't seem phased by it. You and I have broken up fights or at least attempted to keep more students from piling around them so as not to get hurt. The social classes of our students have really declined in the last thirteen years I have been here. We have more students on free or reduced lunch, and I've had many students ask me for loose change for them to eat. We have more kids from multiple broken homes, group homes, and foster care. We had an open house the other night, and I had one parent to come, and this was the parent of one of my Pacesetter students who has a 97 average. I think that when you have a lower-socio-economic status among the community that the lack of parental concern goes with that. I believe in many cases that parents of lower socio-economic standing do not care about education as much as the parents who have some college or higher technical training. I'm sorry, but some of these people who work low-end jobs just don't seem to value education, and they have no idea what their students are doing in school. Neither one of my parents graduated from high school. As a result, education was not important to them during my growing up. My mother worked two jobs, and she did not have the time nor the interest in what I did when I was in school. She doesn't know I Christmas-treed my SAT because she didn't know what an SAT was. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel's beliefs about the socio-economic issues stem from her own experiences growing up poor in a major metropolitan suburb with little to no parental involvement in her own education as well as from the apathy she perceives from the parents of some of her students. In part, Rachel is transferring her lived experience onto her students and parents to explain her perception of the mindset of the disengaged. Her views are fairly consistent with research that teachers perceive the causes of apathy and disruption in the schools as attributable to lack of parental

supervision in the home and poor parental school involvement (Hoffman, 1996). For Rachel, the change toward valuing education came later in life by observing successful others and from sensitivity about her home life as a child. She states,

> There was always something instilled in me that I wanted more-I saw the value of education in the men I dated. I just got no support at home, but when I was older and saw how well some had done with education, I made sure I would get one for myself. And I've shared this with my students several times hoping it will speak to them in some way to motivate them to help themselves now. (Interview, 02/21/04)

As a child Rachel may not have been able to identify and vocalize her "want for more," but maturation allowed her to acknowledge and speak to the issue of self-improvement by obtaining a higher education. Her creation of a safe, home-like classroom community where students may explore themselves and their voices through a multicultural literature curriculum facilitated by an attentive, caring teacher as herself serves as her avenue for inviting all learners toward a positive educational experience she did not have or realize as a high school student. Rachel states that she is affected by the apathy and belligerence she has witnessed among some students in hallways and in some of her classes who display hostile attitudes, disrespect for authority, and a lack of what she deems "personal life ethics" to dignify themselves and treat others likewise. Crime has entered the school more visibly with at least one reported gun-related incident, one reported sexual assault on a student, battery of a teacher, and various petty thefts. In addition, the social issues affect Rachel since she was a victim of theft in her classroom, and she admits that such problems have caused her to be more self-protective. She states,

> There's a certain element of student who will get in your face that I don't deal real well with. They get in your face and say being in school is stupid-

> I don't want to do this work, it sucks-they don't get strong parental support at home and think they can talk to adults as if they are talking to their friends. They show no deference. Whatever happened to children respecting adults? I have many more years of life and experience than they do, but some seem to think they can talk to me any way they please, and I have a problem with that. As far as lowering my teaching standards, I haven't, but one thing [the social issues] have done for me is created an environment that has some fear in it that I've never felt before. It stems from teachers being assaulted in our school and across the country. There is a fear that I've never had before, that I find myself watching my back more, and I make sure my door is locked when I'm in my room alone. I don't park my car in the same spot every day because I am afraid--because I do maintain high standards for all my students--that there are some who may not appreciate the challenge and want to retaliate against me. But, I will not lower my [academic] standards. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel's refusal to lower academic standards is noteworthy not only as a reflection of her personal stance but as a pedagogical one as well. Research on school disruption, including such incidences as violence and crime, reports that the more rigorous, principled teachers are indeed at higher risk to be victimized in some manner in schools than their less demanding counterparts (Hoffman, 1996). Rachel believes the school administration shares responsibility to maintain a safe, positive learning environment in the school, but it is clear she is skeptical about their role to do so. She states,

> The situation here is getting worse every year. You see, the administration has been weak in dealing with it. I don't know if they have not been trained to deal with the influx of disruptive, truant, and lower socio-economic students and the issues that tend to surround them, but I feel they have their heads in the sand, and it's becoming more difficult to get help from them when we're dealing with these students. Some of the time they just send the students back to class because they have too many other issues to deal with. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Of the times she recalls the senior administration's dealing with school disruption, Rachel believes their response has been ineffective, vacant, and demeaning to teachers' authority. Rachel states,

> I remember the senior administrator coming on the loudspeaker several times during the semester and just fussin' for lack of a better term at the students for their behavior, and just this blanket 'I got nuthin' but luv for ya' you know, and just nothing changes. The students just laugh. Students are supposed to wear their pants up over their rear end for one thing, that they aren't supposed to walk down the hall with cell phones and speaking profanity and racial slurs--some towards their own race--and using CD players. And if we see students roaming the halls they are supposed to have a pass, but the thing is, if we stop a student and try to write a student up, we get into trouble. 'Well, what were you doing over in that area? Aren't you supposed to be in your class?' is what we are asked. That's what happened to [Ms. Stanley], and she was told this after she wrote up a student who was in an unauthorized place. She was told, 'If I saw every kid in this school who was in an unauthorized place, that's all I would ever do.' Well, you know, that's like saying, 'Well, if I graded every paper that came across my desk, that's all I would ever do.' Well, that's all I do is my job, and our senior administrator is hardly ever here. I never see him. I never see him. His presence is never known in this building. And then teachers gossip he's missed 27 days this semester or something around that number. We're required to be at our door in the hallways in between every class change, but we never see other administrators around. The administration does not set a good example for teachers to follow, and I feel that they should. (Interview, 05/27/04)

Rachel's perception of the administration's lack of attention to school problems and their passing of blame can be substantiated. I personally heard such messages as she reports and failed to see the senior administrator in the hallways, cafeteria, or other public areas of the school on any consistent basis. The school faculty went three months at one stretch without a faculty meeting, which, by county policy, should be conducted at least once per month for updates and information. Like Rachel, I also experienced students' being returned to my classroom shortly after having been required to leave for some disciplinary infraction. Administrative word was for me

to work through the problem with the student, call the parent, and then refer the student if the inappropriate behavior continued. Such procedures were not outlined in the school handbook on discipline but were made on site by administrators. The unpredictability of the administration has affected Rachel in two ways. She states,

> It probably makes me more lax in some areas than I would be if I had a stricter administration. For example, most of my World Literature students did not have their notebooks together for an open note test, so instead of testing them, I let them view a film version of a book they read. It was not part of the actual curriculum, but we've been in school so long and they've read to death-they are exhausted. I would be more consistent if I had a more consistent administration. But I cannot take stands on things like I used to because it is not worth it to me. The price it would cost me at the front office is too great, and I'm trying to remain low key. I just don't want to ruffle anyone's feathers, so I may complain to you or another colleague, but not to them after what happened to me with that girl. I'm not as outspoken as I used to be. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel's feelings of frustration with the administration stem from her false arrest episode, the feelings of unrest generated from other negative experiences with difficult students, and the treatment of her colleagues and their dealings with the same administration. Rachel's earlier statements about being "an island"—that is being more isolated from positive colleague and administrative support—are more realized by her own admissions. Rachel further states that classroom community is greatly compromised when she has to stop class to address a disruption or redirect a student multiple times for behavior reasons. Intellectually, Rachel is aware of the disruptive and truant students' situations that greatly contribute to their disengagement and lack of progress. She states,

> I've had students who had to stay home to care for sick younger siblings because the single parent had to go to work. Then they come back to school days later behind in their work, and they cannot catch up and some just act out inappropriately or shut down. Their lack of ability really shows. A lot of it is low-ended, and even though I can help with some of that, their work

> ethics are extremely low. Some don't seem to care to improve... some are lazy and will not complete some of the easiest or most enjoyable assignments. As a result of that in those classes I have several people failing. I do not have a bell curve in either of those classes. It's more like a slide. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel's frustration with the low-achieving or low-motivated students likely stems from a number of factors: her perceived inability to reach them where they are given the nature of their situations and the limitations of the schooling system; performance standards she must meet to show pre and post measures of student achievement she is unable to meet consistently due to truancy at the least; her having learned the value of education later in life--a difficult time when she was a working single mother of two children; and her personal misunderstanding of a student who is aware of his disadvantaged situation but seems not to want to effect change even when it is offered to him. She states, "If I had a teacher growing up such as what I've tried to become for my students, I would more than likely have grabbed onto any opportunity I could have to help myself then instead of having to do it later" (Interview, 03/11/04). In being the person she sees in herself and creating the type of classroom community she practices, it is evident that Rachel works to spare students the difficulty associated with apprehending the value of education later in life as opposed to doing so much earlier when time and opportunity might be easier to manage and obtain, even at the high school level. Moreover, Rachel's experiences during her own schooling with uninvolved parents and her self-admitted lack of motivation as a student may bear on her position concerning the lower-achieving or reluctant learners. Rachel strives to be the quintessential teacher to all her students. However, when they do not respond to her and the classroom dynamics in a fashion which she

expects, Rachel realizes she cannot be an influential role model, such as a parent or guardian, to impact and motivate them to participate. Rachel has no capital with the disengaged learners, and the curriculum she teaches bears no relevancy in their lives. Thus, the students do not "buy into" what Rachel offers. While it may appear that Rachel would have great empathy for the underachieving or disengaged students having been one herself, in actuality she may feel a type of revulsion for those students recalling her own days of lackluster achievement and the difficulty and sacrifice she had to make later as an adult to elevate herself. In essence, Rachel's inability never to give up on an underachieving or disengaged learner is not a reflection of a professional weakness, but perhaps a personal one deeply rooted in her unchangeable experience and indelible memory. Thus, Rachel acknowledges that she is only one component in the complex equation of teaching and learning within her own created community. She offers,

> I've always been fair and moderately demanding. I consider myself to be a likeable person, and I have a lot of students who respect me and know I'll do whatever I can to help them. But they have to be willing to meet me halfway. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Having students meet her halfway is consistent with her experience of admitting being a "C" student in her own schooling. Rachel feels that she met her teachers "half-way" with average achievement in spite of her perception of their lack of motivation or concern for her. Pacesetter students, for the most part, meet Rachel's expectations and sometimes more given what she sees as their motivational levels, commitment to learning with and by each other, and for their collective work ethic. For Rachel, teaching is more effective when students have or share a common knowledge and experience base of what Applebee (1996) refers to as a "knowledge

in action," knowing based on participation in series of learning traditions and core experiences. But Applebee (1996) also explains that knowledge in action is open to scrutiny and transformation as such traditions are only fundamental "to the extent that they continue to address the present and the future as well as the past, providing satisfactory frameworks for addressing issues that concern us" (p. 17). Try as she may to elicit their cooperation and engagement, Rachel may not be able to reach the low-achieving or disengaged students to take on new knowledge in action traditions for them continually to reconstruct their learning worlds and embark on self-discovery. Thus, her frustration with this inability is evident when she comments that students have their parts to play in the process of learning.

Rachel's classroom experiences have swayed her that no teacher can do his or her job completely without a certain level of student motivation and some degree of parental support. She strongly believes that much of a student's success in learning activities is determined by these two factors. She states,

> A student must have a support system in home and must be motivated somehow to do something in class. Parental support is of the utmost importance, and I have seen this through experience. Of course, I have seen parents who have been very, very supportive, and their students continue not to do well. But I think 'What if that student didn't have that supportive background? There's no telling what might happen to that child.' So, I think being able to be in contact with parents, knowing that a parent will support me, knowing that a parent will support his child and is interested in his child's study and values education are essential because parents are the ultimate role models. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel believes education is a triangular construct requiring parental and student input, two aspects she not only cannot control, but for which she cannot make up every void when parents and students do not perform their parts. She states,

> I work so hard to reach [students]. I take it personally since I work hard to make my classes interesting, to make it highly student-centered, and when someone doesn't respond to that, I take it personally. Those are the students I generally have the hardest time with. They can be the bane of my existence in a classroom. So I have talks with them. I call parents if I can find them. Maybe I would give them an alternative assignment. Let's find something in this text or this study that you might be interested in and let's look to get your interest back into the classroom. Sometimes, again it doesn't work, and I have to realize...when I know I have done everything I possibly can do, then based on what I know, then it's like what my Mother used to say, 'Angels can do no better.' (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel states that her job is twice as difficult when she has little to no parental support, and trying to elicit responses from lower-ability, disinterested, or apathetic students in her regular classes becomes her greatest challenge and test of her personal and professional resolve. She worries that without parental support on her side and despite her efforts, many low-achieving students will remain passive and cannot meet the requirements of the classes they are required to take to pass through high school. Rachel states,

> When I ask why they will not complete work, some students have told me they've been read to, watched film versions, or listened to books on tape with worksheets to fill out in lieu of having to read and discover for themselves or with partners. Now they are in a college preparatory class requiring higher ordered thinking, abstraction, and synthesis, and they cannot function well because they lack the foundation. (Interview, 03/11/04)

To understand part of Rachel's concern for some of her World Literature students, it is necessary to know that she receives no outside assistance for her eleventh grade classes unlike the teachers of ninth and tenth grade classes who have "collaborative" special education teachers to assist with students identified as having special needs or lower ability levels in those general level classes. At the eleventh grade where

Rachel mainly teaches, students may ultimately choose to enter the college preparatory class or the Applied Literature class, a different language arts class generally designed to teach the students non-college bound. The Applied classes, however openly unacknowledged as such, become the dumping ground for lesser-ability students, and for many, avoiding that stigma is paramount. Thus, they enter the college preparatory classes despite being non-college bound, and many have lacked some of the foundation Rachel speaks of as necessary to function in class per curriculum standards. In addition, research reveals that some students have been disengaged from literature study by being passive learners instead of knowledge seekers. Langer (1995) notes effective literature instruction requires interaction based in "social cooperation" between teacher and student for meaningful learning exchange (p. 16). Students unaccustomed to this practice involving their cooperation and regulation of activities leading to eventual successful learning over rote teacher-delivered instruction may in fact not recognize the instructional opportunity Rachel offers and reject her and the lessons. Rachel realizes students need attention and engagement on a different level that requires considerable thought and effort in instruction. She admits,

> Coming up with interesting, engaging activities requires constant thinking on the teacher's part, and sometimes that is difficult. I don't think it is impossible, but I think it requires a lot more work than some teachers are willing to put out. Good teaching strategies do require a lot of hard work and creativity. (Interview, 03/11/04)

However, when a teacher's method may not get across to a certain type of learner, or if a student is having some difficulty learning, Rachel believes it is up to the teacher

to try different avenues and techniques to teach the material since not all students learn the same way. She states,

> If a student is still having difficulty learning, that's when I feel like the tutoring program here at the school is effective. If another teacher shows a different approach, then the student may understand the material better. Just having a different approach that is more one-on-one helps. Neither party should give up the search, especially if the student genuinely wants to learn. If a student could not care any less about learning, then you can't always help those students. I know as much as we would love to [help], it can break out hearts, but there are factors in a student's life that we cannot control, and that is his motivation to try to learn with attentive help. (Interview, 03/31/04)

By the time some of the lesser-able students arrive in Rachel's classes, she believes that they have been exposed to varying degrees of spoon-feeding, failure, and learned helplessness that make her efforts to effect achievement more difficult. For the more able students in her Pacesetter course who do not work to their potential or who display varying degrees of disinterest, Rachel's critique is sharp. She states,

> I do feel like some of the students placed in the honors class should not have been in there. They were not truly honors or gifted students. I mean that as we learned in our honors classes (teacher education training), an honors student is highly motivated, and I found that some of my students were not that motivated to achieve and participate. I had two gentlemen in that class who I think are probably intelligent, but their interests were not as academically focused as they should have been, and had it not been for the five points that our school gives honors students, both of these guys would have failed. I tried to engage students whom I felt were not putting forth their best effort. I tried my best to clarify anything that maybe they were having difficulty with, but I just noticed that some of the students did kind of slovenly work or didn't turn in assignments. And I don't expect a lot of that to happen in an honors class. I believe this: a student should not be in an honors class in every subject unless he or she has an intrinsic desire to learn, is very self-motivated, wants to contribute to class, and grow in knowledge. I don't think an honors student should be in an honors class just to be in there. The class should be one of the student's favorite subject matters and not just a class to be in because of friends, to be in a smaller class, to get a particular teacher, or to get those bonus points for a transcript. Too, I've met a few parents who brag their child is in an honors

> class, and it is simply a matter of prestige to have him or her in the class and not seemingly for the educational experience. (Interview, 03/31/04)

After all she gives of herself through her teaching efforts, Rachel reaches a point of saturation where she can neither give nor construct any more to teach her students, due to factors she believes are beyond her control: parental involvement, student motivation, and student placement according to ability. Although more of her efforts to teach and reach students will become evident in the next chapter regarding her actual classroom practice, Rachel summarizes her efforts this way. She states,

> For all that I do, if I have a student who fails in the end, I don't feel I have failed. I've have done my homework. I have put in my time and more, my blood, sweat, tears, money--you name it. No teacher I recall reached out to me. I make a point to reach out to every student I can, but if they choose to fail, then they have that choice. (Interview 02/11/04)

That all students respond to her student-focused leadership approach by taking ownership of choices allotted them from her style of instruction and philosophy about the nature of teaching literature is imperative to their success. Rachel states,

> I don't see teaching success as some great mystery. I see it as a person gets out of it what he or she puts into it, and this is something I've learned through experience. As a new teacher I wanted to reach every student and...have them love me, but I have realized over the years that is not always going to happen. So I just continue to be myself, realize I have more success than failures. and try to reach the people who don't want succeed. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel realizes that teaching requires giving more than one usually gets in return in the form of professional acknowledgement and salary. The monetary rewards of teaching are not at the level she feels they should be as other professionals. However, she does feel that teaching is a service from which the rewards must come elsewhere. Rachel states,

> If one is in education, he's not in it for the money but for the desire to impart knowledge about the subject matter and about life. The rewards come from other places that money could never touch, and those are the places of the heart when you know you've helped another human being perhaps to get over a hard time in his or her life or that you've effected a change in that child that will last forever. That's something that cannot be measured with money. (Interview, 03/11/04)

The Self as Practitioner: A View of Curriculum

Rachel's beliefs about the purpose of a Language Arts curriculum emanate not only from a curricular stance but a personal one as well. She wishes for her students to leave her class with a desire to read and see the relevance of reading literature in their own lives and applying it to their lives, "even if it were written two thousand years ago" (Interview, 03/11/04). Rachel believes the purposes of a language arts curriculum are manifold. She wishes her students to learn about themselves through literature and by tapping into the different voices they have to express themselves given different venues for expression. Perhaps most importantly, Rachel wants her students to connect with texts not just in an academic manner, but also in a personal one drawing upon their collective experiences to relate to texts while also keeping open-minded to elicit new connections. She offers,

> I want their response, their feelings about the text. Then once that's done, we'll talk about specifics...specifics in plot development, the author's tone and style, major character's motivations, things like that if they don't come up in students' conversations. I ask them to tell me a time in your life where you may have done the same way as this character. Tell me a situation where this happened to you and did you respond and if so how? I want the students to interact with the text. If you cannot interact with what you are reading, it is going to be meaningless. (Interview 02/09/04)

With no graduate study or exposure to current educational literacy theory in her teacher training, Rachel is not formally familiar with reader response theory. She is not familiar with the theories of Rosenblatt nor any other contemporary reader response theorists. Insisting on interaction with texts for Rachel was a self-learned activity, but one she has used effectively in her honors class. She offers,

> To be honest, this is one of those things that just made sense to me. It's an instinct from my own experience with reading. As a child I did not like to read. I was not encouraged to read, and I did not grow up with books in my home, so it's just one of those methods I've found out works. Earlier this week I gave a writing assignment to my students and they had to write about a time when they were in a relationship similar to the one of a character in the text. I got the best writings, and they will share their writings with us. They bring in the fact that this is like Owen and John in the text. So, they are relating to the text. If they can relate to it, I feel they will learn more. (Interview, 02/09/04)

She believes that the best way for students to learn language arts is through the practice of examining different pieces of literature from one's own and then multiple points of view. Rachel believes that a student may view a piece of literature from his or her own knowledge base and experience, but also "take that same piece of literature and consider it from the viewpoint of someone completely different with a completely different background" (Interview, 03/11/04). Rachel then asks her students to examine works both universally and personally. She realizes it is challenging for teens to "step outside of themselves because they do not know themselves very well and are still searching for identity" (Interview, 03/11/04). Thus, her view of practicing multiple viewpoints to include the self is one of the most essential skills she wishes for her students to take away from her classroom

experiences. Much of what Rachel espouses is congruent with the reader response theory of Louise Rosenblatt (1938/1995) who states,

> Teaching becomes a matter of improving the individual's capacity to evoke meaning from the text by leading him to reflect self-critically on this process. The starting point for growth must be each individual's efforts to marshal his resources in relation to the printed page. The teacher's task is to foster fruitful interactions-or, more precisely, transactions-between individual readers and individual literary texts. (p. 25-26)

Rachel believes that activities directed toward developing students' enthusiasm for continued learning are paramount to simply relaying information and giving some sort of written evaluation. She views learning as a "lifetime adventure" that begins with one's ability to transfer learning from one situation to another, and that such cannot be measured on a multiple choice test or from a book report. Rachel states,

> A concrete question from a text should evolve into applying the knowledge one has to a different situation. To me, that's higher-level thinking, that's critical thinking. Yes, I got the knowledge from this text, now I'm presenting it in an entirely different textual situation, and I ask 'how can I use the knowledge in this text to the other?' That's when I see the greatest gain in student learning. (Interview, 03/31/04)

Students do not have to always produce measurable success in their learning, as Rachel does not necessarily view numerical or letter grade proof as the ultimate sign of a student's growth. She believes that a simple change of attitude or acknowledgement of a new viewpoint can demonstrate that a student has had a "life-changing experience" from the classroom. On the other hand, Rachel states that she cannot deny measurable success has its place among students who have shown growth through overcoming a particular weakness and turning it into strength through practice, study, and tutoring. She admits that when the lower-achieving student sees a more than passing grade on a report card, it usually does something to

inspire that student and give him a sense of great achievement, since that may be the only standard they know for assessing success in learning.

In teaching language arts and writing, Rachel wants her students to know there is both formal and informal language, and that those languages are used in various contexts. She stresses,

> It's O.K. if you want to use some slang or improper English with your buddies, but if you're at a cocktail party or more formal setting such as a meeting with one's superiors, one doesn't use slang. That doesn't make one fake, it makes one smart. Too, many of our students are getting away from good writing other than what they can do in a chat room, which is so stilted and chopped, it has nothing to do with formal English. They need to know the differences about when to use what. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel has observed that a high number of her collective students have weak formal writing skills for argumentation or analysis, and she sees writing instruction as a major part of her teaching task. She strongly believes that people will judge a person on his oral and written skills, so she teaches the writing process and formal diction so her students will be prepared for communicating in various situations. Rachel's teaching is to a certain degree controlled by curriculum mandates set forth by the county and state, but she achieves the mandated goals with a spirit of individuality. She states,

> I wouldn't want someone coming in here and telling me how to do my job, I will tell you that. I like to follow the mandates that are set forth by the school curriculum, but I do so in my own fashion. I am lucky that in the school system where we work that we do have a lot of choices, so I can pick and choose the literature my students read based on the needs of the class and some of their interests. That makes the class our own. I follow the mandates, but I don't feel tied to them. (Interview, 03/11/04)

While she feels the need to follow some requirements, she does not feel restricted by them. Choosing from among a variety of literature selections for the students to read shows Rachel's flexibility and student centeredness in framing the literary context of her classroom. Not surprising is her admission of not wanting to be dictated by a person "telling her how to do her job"(Interview, 05/26/04). Rachel thrives on creative individuality in her classroom as already discussed. Such is not only a personal and pedagogical outgrowth of who she is, but also is a reflection of her thirteen years of experience in working with students in general and at this particular school location. Rachel also maintains her singular self-expression among colleagues and administrators whom she fails to trust for their treatment and regard for her. The choices she makes for herself and her students reflect aspects of her classroom dynamics which she controls to the exclusion of others and a stated county curriculum. On the school level, Rachel believes it is necessary for her not only to teach at the level she instructs but also teach in a way that scaffolds students in preparation for high school graduation tests, exit exams, the SAT and the next year's English courses. Rachel states that the school curriculum does not necessarily mandate she vertically scaffold instruction, but she views it as essential for making a student's literature and composition experiences. She states,

> Instruction has changed in that we are becoming more test oriented and having to prepare our students more for tests to be taken such as the SAT, Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT). It impacts my instruction greatly because I include a lot more of the skills the students will need to pass these tests than I've ever done before. Also, I feel the need to help prepare them for what is expected of them in the AP Literature class or British Literature next year. By the time some of my students reach my class, they have had little experience with SAT vocabulary, writing analytical papers, or forming an opinion and then trying to write about it

> persuasively. I feel the need to bring them up to speed if I can and then help them prepare for the challenges on the next level. (Interview 03/11/04)

It may be easy to characterize Rachel as a teacher by her upbringing, previous personal and work-related experiences in and outside of the classroom, her colleagues and administration perceptions of her and her work, how she says she teaches, and by how she views students, their aptitudes, learning styles, and motivations, but all of these may only partly describe what she actually accomplishes in her classroom. Careful observations and analysis of the relationships among what people believe, say, and actually produce must, to a certain degree, be interpreted for the time, the environment and multiple social dynamics in which the actions take place. The next chapter examines and seeks to interpret from theoretical perspectives how Rachel's beliefs transfer into practice and how she develops and executes curriculum in one of her eleventh grade honors courses for one full term.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRACTICE OF THE RESPONDENT

"The world is not what I think but what I have lived through."
Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Like any captivating storyteller or performer on a stage, Rachel Gibson narrates and practices all of herself, her knowledge, beliefs, and curriculum in the classroom before a live student audience that holds various expectations of her. The students wish to be instructed, entertained, awed, or even perhaps moved to a new level of literary contemplation and awareness of themselves. With student participation Rachel creates her teaching world as a total lived-through experience of various phenomena with certain perceptible success. Observations reveal her practice to be a daily lived occurrence of social interaction and self-awareness within the four walls she has comfortably constructed for herself against the backdrop of an often wavering yet challenging school environment. Her closely-held beliefs, her unchangeable personal history, and attitude altering experiences within the professional milieu all make up the person and inform her perception of what Greene (1978) refers to as the "primordial landscape in which we are present to ourselves" (p. 213). This primordial landscape is as much Rachel as it is her space to teach where she carries out the experience of her art and craft of shaping young lives through literature that reflects so much of the human condition, that asks and sometimes answers critical questions, and reminds us of our human complexities,

limitations, and possibilities. A preliminary view of the landscape of her teaching practice manifests itself over the course of a representative day of events carried out in the classroom and influenced by the greater school environment. Within one of those representative days a unit of study follows to offer a more in-depth portrait of her practice, curriculum and its delivery via teacher and student-focused instruction and activity, and these are shaped by her beliefs. Lastly, the chapter is organized according to emergent themes arising from the constant-comparative method and researching the respondent and her teaching practice to saturation.

A Day in the Teaching Life of Rachel Gibson

For Rachel Gibson no one day is ever the same at Downeyhill High School. Upon her eight o'clock or later arrival, students have already been dropped off by bus service as early as 7:20 a.m., and a many of her colleagues have been on campus for thirty minutes or more. By having a first period planning session from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., Rachel assumes the luxury of arriving later than most of her colleagues. She justifies her late arrivals by her early evening departures. Rachel frequently remains on campus long after the last teaching colleague has left the building by virtue of her afternoon tutorial program, her need to evaluate papers, or plan for the next day's activities. Many nights I observed Rachel leaving after 6 p.m., a time when usually only coaches are still on campus finishing practice sessions on the sports fields.

Rachel's school mornings are busy ones with her completing myriad tasks. She eats a quick breakfast while reading emails and checking her mailbox for any

messages from the administration. Rachel may spend up to half of her planning time perusing the Internet for teaching ideas or any information ancillary to the lessons or readings the classes are carrying out. She spends most mornings working at her computer revamping or creating new material for her classes. Such is a common practice with Rachel, especially if an idea has come to her from the evening before or during the drive to school. Rachel may quickly type or cut and paste the information, lesson, or activity during her early morning planning period and then dash to the one of only two copiers for teacher use in the entire school building. On slower mornings she may review the day's readings for each of her classes to refresh herself before she teaches. She aligns the day's lessons or handouts on a table at the front of her room for students to procure their own copies and save class time. A note on the dry erase board reminding students to get copies of the day's material is evident for viewing as is the day's agenda, essential question (a question directly related to the day or week's lessons' content), reading schedules, vocabulary words, or other notices. By the time she checks her appearance in a large mirror in the front corner of her room before the start of her first class session, a few current and former students walking in the hall have stopped at her door and spoken to her.

When the bell sounds for students to exit first period and proceed to second, Rachel dutifully stands along side her door observing students as they pass in the hall. She is now "on the clock." The noise level of shrieking voices, laughter, shouts, and chatter make her passing statements to students almost inaudible, but a "Hey sweetie," or "Thank you, and I hope you have a great day" can sometimes be heard above the hallway clatter. The ringing of the warning bell frequently elicits a

"Hurry it up people, let's go to class," or "Sir, you need to pull your pants up around your waist" for all remaining in the halls to hear. Many tardy students continue to meander the halls, but Rachel turns inside her classroom to greet the students who managed to slip in unnoticed. On this day her second period has already spotted the Danish she brought for students to enjoy. Rachel tells the students who are hungry to "help themselves." Students mill around her room socializing and eating their snacks for a few moments while she prepares some last minute detail right after the bell rings to begin class.

Students in this class, Pacesetter, settle in quickly while Rachel visually checks to see who is present. A student asks Rachel if she heard a certain song on the radio, something that reminded the student of some aspect of his readings from the day prior. Rachel responds to the student and acknowledges his making a connection between something he has experienced and read as part of class. She gives him a "ticket," a pre-printed paper token signed on the back by her that the student may cash in as a bonus on a homework, quiz, or major test. This is an unexpected reward for a class contribution. With that done, Rachel begins class by announcing for all to take out their writing drafts from the night before and share them with a peer of their choice for the next fifteen minutes. Such activity is called a "pair and share" from one of the best teaching practice manuals given her and all teachers by the previous year's administration. While students are sharing, they may also edit each other's work, making last minute corrections before they must write their final drafts in class as a timed writing. Rachel monitors student progress by answering questions about wording, grammar, mechanics, or other small items, but

she largely leaves editing up to the students on this particular assignment. By the close of class, Rachel has 19 handwritten three to four page timed essays to evaluate and return by week's end.

As her day progresses, Rachel continues on with the routine hall duty in between classes, unless a student need arises in her classroom. She greets the vast number of her students at the door, whether or not they respond to her. For her subsequent classes she begins the session almost immediately with checking attendance then starting or continuing an assignment. The next groups of students follow the established class routines, and depending on the lesson or activity, Rachel conducts class as smoothly as the school day's events will permit her. Students in the following class, a World Literature course, turn in a prior assignment and then choose teams to play a review game in preparation for an examination the next day. Frustrating for Rachel is the inability of many students to answer the review questions correctly, and scoring in the game is low. Just before the bell rings to dismiss class, Rachel admonishes her students to review their study notes and the topics covered in the review game for success on the next day's examination.

The final class of the day follows the same agenda as the one prior, but the review game proceeds more successfully with students highly engaged in the competition. In most any given day Rachel's classes may work individually in teams or in small groups to complete a hands-on project, read aloud in class, write timed-essays, complete word puzzles for vocabulary study, write answers to study questions, visit the media center for research, or write in journals. Rachel moderates class discussions, and less frequently lectures to her students. At times when

students need individual attention, Rachel must put the class on "auto pilot" with what is commonly known as a seat work assignment in her class done in student pairs. In one such case Rachel works with a student who has been absent from school for the last four days. Informing him of his missed assignments and arranging for meeting on the days he is able to stay after school to take a quiz and in-class essay requires noticeable time and effort all the while she attempts to manage the class' on-task behavior behind her back. In another case Rachel receives a hand-delivered notice that one of her students has been sent to ISS (In School Suspension). She stops the class lesson long enough to give the student aide a few handouts, and she tells the aide she will send more work later. Such interruptions are annoying but routine occurrences with the job of teaching at Downeyhill. When the lunch break for the mid-day class arrives, seldom does Rachel eat with her English teaching colleagues in the workroom; instead, she remains in her room during the 26 minute lunch period eating and working. Occasionally, a few students obtain their lunches and return to her room to eat, although school policy prohibits such. At times administrators round up Rachel's students and return them to the cafeteria until the end of the lunch period.

Routine Interruptions and Loss of Instructional Time

At Downeyhill, many of Rachel's instructional days are interrupted with any number of emergent situations beyond her control. With the exception of true emergencies, clubs, teams, and special events are to be planned and notated on the school calendar well in advance of their occurrence, but at Downeyhill, many

unscheduled events are announced only a few days or even moments before they occur. Some days as many as twelve announcements may interrupt class sessions for all teachers. Students called out of class for various reasons may not return to class for up to the entire 90 minute class period or beyond. Rachel states,

> In the last month I have had several students out for three complete days because of a play rehearsal and performance. Many of my students are in theatre, and so I had eight students who missed three days of my class because they were performing for the elementary schools in the vicinity. Just about every day there is a sports team checking out at three o'clock. Baseball players, tennis players, soccer players, and the like cause us to lose at least 30 minutes of instruction then. We had a blood drive Friday. Students were going in and out of classes giving blood and wandering in the halls in the meantime, too, and instruction was lost. The biggest pain to me, though, or the biggest obstacle has been the way our school has conducted the Georgia High School Graduation Test and review. During the GHSGT review, I lost my Pacesetter class one day. I never lost my third period because that is lunch and it is sacred in our school, so we don't mess with lunch. I lost my fourth period class four full days. And when I say I lost them, I lost three-quarters of them. The rest of the students in the class continued to have class, and these students who missed will have to make up the work they missed because I still have to continue with some type of instruction. And then this week we had the GHSGT. Each one of my classes lost two complete days of instruction while they were testing. It was very frustrating, and at times I felt my fourth period was getting further and further behind, and they are at a disadvantage. They whine to me 'It's not fair,' and maybe it's not, but right now it's not fair to me either. There needs to be another way, in my opinion, to handle the GHSGT and the review because it becomes like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* at our school when it come to testing every spring. We need to do something differently. There is too much class time lost and we are at a disadvantage. (Interview, 03/11/04)

The loss of instructional time is as great a concern to Rachel as is what she deems as the mismanagement of the standardized testing routines that impinge on her and her students, among other interruptions. Such intrusions, albeit state mandated ones, compromise instructional time and the sense of fairness Rachel tries to establish in her classroom for all her students. However, interruptions and disturbances do not

end there. It is not unusual for a student to want or need to visit a school counselor. Rachel, like all teachers, has been instructed to allow the student to see the counselors at any time he or she wishes, especially if that student is feeling some sort of stress. In such incidences, Rachel then has to meet with the student a separate time to inform the student what he or she missed, and work usually is submitted late.

Other instructional interruptions are more severe and directly affect Rachel and overturn the learning environment. Downeyhill has been plagued with such gross disturbances as bomb threats, false fire drills caused by students furtively pulling a fire alarm from within the building, or lock-downs, times when the school is under in-house arrest so that an internal security risk may be handled. When a fellow English teacher is absent and a substitute is not obtained to cover the class, Rachel may, like the other English teachers, be alerted to cover at least a portion of that missing teacher's class causing her to lose part of her own planning period. Substitute teachers are frequently difficult to find as many stopped working at Downeyhill due partly to social conditions at the school. The need for substitutes at the school ran high during the study period, as many teachers are absent on Fridays and Mondays taking what appeared to be extended time for weekend rest. One morning the department head is absent, Rachel is called upon to send a video from her personal movie collection to her class since emergency lesson plans for the department head could not be located.

Depending on the work week Rachel can expect a faculty or staff meeting for any number of reasons, although many have been scheduled and then cancelled at the last minute. Because she has other duties besides teaching, Rachel is required to

attend various training sessions for administering a state mandated vocational assessment during her planning time, despite her not being a vocational teacher. Every few weeks during a partial class period she advises 23 grade-level students by keeping track of their report cards, schedules, and standardized testing requirements as they move toward graduation. The meetings compromise instructional time but are necessary as part of the school's functioning since three counselors cannot each maintain the academic needs of nearly 1400 students. After her usual work day, Rachel remains after school up to three hours as she tutors as many as 10 students who stay with her for up to 90 additional minutes. Such students have been either teacher or self-referred for the STAR program (Student Teacher Academic Referral) in order to improve their level of skills or understanding in language arts classes from all grades. Frequently, Rachel may be seen reading with a student, checking his or her comprehension level with an oral quiz, or guiding a student in completing a short assignment from a workbook. Many students attend the tutoring program for assistance with writing essays. Rachel rereads student essays and edits them for students to correct and rewrite before submitting them to their regular classroom teachers. In the latter part of the spring semester, Rachel's tutorial students attend from her Pacesetter class attempting to catch up on missed work due to other school commitments that take them out of class. She remarks,

> I've had some Pacesetter students who are behind four days because of extra activities and events [the administration] allows to go on during instructional time, and others missed because of standardized testing. I feel very frustrated, and at times I do not handle it well. I feel like throwing up my hands. How in the world are we supposed to instruct these children when here again, we are taking them out of classes, teaching to the test? And so to me, our time would be better spent teaching the

> students. It seems we are more worried about test scores than we are about kids. (Interview, 03/11/04)

While Rachel may regard her remaining after school to assist students as part of her required job, at times the reason she must tutor after school is to reiterate what she's accomplished in class for students she feels should not be taken out of the learning situation. It is evident Rachel regards the administration's actions as antithesis to her classroom mission, and it causes her more labor for those days times the number of needful students. Such puts her further and further behind in her regular work on a four-by-four teaching schedule. With days at Downeyhill frequently uncertain with myriad unplanned interruptions to routine events, Rachel demonstrates the extra effort and flexibility necessary to weather the changes as only a veteran teacher can by pulling from within herself the strength to forge her own path to effect her own goals. She accomplishes such through two emergent and distinct themes arising from the observational and interview data.

Themes in Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is complex and not easily relegated to neat, consistent descriptors that comfortably categorize the sharing of information and interaction among participants in a classroom. However, interviews, observations, and artifacts produced from this study all provide information offering unique insight into Rachel Gibson's teaching practice, and from utilizing a constant comparative method, certain recurrent themes emerge. These themes are intended as the best possible descriptors of the phenomena occurring with and around the respondent in her created, lived-

through world, but they are not intended to be all-encompassing or static. These themes are autonomy, self-reliance, and resistance and community of learners, four seemingly divergent themes that explain Rachel Gibson's praxis with her Pacesetter students, her working relationship to her colleagues and administration, and at times her relationship to herself taking into account her personal history and experience.

Autonomy, Self-Reliance, and Resistance

The themes of autonomy, self-reliance, and resistance illustrate Rachel's attitudes and behaviors of self-preservation and personal and professional separation from the school collegial environment emerged as a predominant theme that I call autonomy in this study. For Rachel, autonomy occurs as a result of outside circumstances by her own free choosing. Rachel exhibits a high degree of singular autonomy away from faculty and administration, and she places a higher degree of dependence on her students for academic and emotional support. A second theme of self-reliance also emerged and is located in her work with students and design of her curriculum. She remains independent from the professional milieu of formal, advanced graduate study and conversation. Additionally, Rachel demonstrates resistance to compliance with certain school procedures and requirements rendering herself as the authority for what she accepts and delivers within the walls of her classroom against the greater school setting. The personal and professional autonomy Rachel practices is indicative of a created world she has constructed for herself to remain a vital link to the school community that tends to marginalize her but where she acts independently, not anonymously.

Autonomy Within School Practices and Procedures

Rachel exercises dynamic and reflective student-centered pedagogy in the classroom among her created learning community. Rachel demonstrates a keen self-knowledge and awareness, a type of self-sufficiency nourished by the actions and needs of her students and prior veteran experience. Rachel presents a portrait of a self-contained practitioner much like that of an island among a great body of water. As Rachel reaches out universally to her students, her sounding board and network for measuring self-efficacy, she carries out her craft without the aid of strong collegial or administrative ties, formal graduate study, or scripted curricula that would disallow her the freedom to create her own literary envisionment with her students.

Thus, Rachel has fashioned for herself a type of autonomous praxis defined in this study as professional sovereignty against the larger teaching environment to include the administration and fellow teachers, and she has created self-inclusion among her students in her classroom to practice the teaching arts and singularly advance her own praxis in an eclectic, but informal manner. I found that autonomy in this respondent manifests itself in three distinct ways: forced autonomy, welcomed autonomy, and self-imposed autonomy. Forced autonomy is that which is imposed by the school administration and fellow teachers where she must turn within herself for practitioner support. Welcomed autonomy is that which Rachel chooses to exercise to distinguish her practice for the student audience against the greater school teaching environment. Self-imposed autonomy is that which allows Rachel to

design and develop curriculum and practices without in-person fellow practitioner communication in a formalized setting.

Forced Autonomy

Across the 13 years that Rachel has worked at Downeyhill, the school has made few efforts to support strong relationships among its faculty, and thus encourages some teachers, like Rachel, into autonomous positions. Few teachers at Downeyhill, based upon my observations, are autonomous from others, but events and actions by the school officials and leaders push strong teachers like Rachel into what I have named a forced autonomy.

Despite teaching at Downeyhill for many years, Rachel has not formed strong collegial relationships among her English teaching nor her other departmental peers. While she will attend most required school meetings and assemblies, will participate if asked to share in an in-service forum, and will on very rare occasions eat lunch with a few teachers in the workroom, Rachel remains independent of her peers. Such autonomy is not by choice, but largely due to Rachel's large number of teaching awards and accolades by students, other faculty members are less than welcoming and force Rachel to confine herself to her class space. As a result, Rachel spends large amounts of time in her classroom during school hours and ventures out only for specific purposes and not to socialize, even when afforded the opportunity. She seldom if ever visits other classrooms and is never seen in any other parts of the school campus during the day. Rachel's unwillingness to initiate collegial relations

may very well be a form of self-protection and preservation. Moreover, sharing and cooperating with her adult peers is not a priority for Rachel. She states,

> Well, [sharing ideas with other English teachers] is not one of my main goals. I am very willing to share what I know, what I have, and there are certain teachers within the department that I would like to share with, but I don't go to them. My goal is not to make the other teachers in my department happy. It is to be the best teacher I can be in my own classroom. (Interview, 03/30/04)

While Rachel says she is willing to share her ideas, she will do so on her own terms—that is when colleagues ask her. While it appears Rachel is exercising a type of professional courtesy not to impose voluntarily her ideas, in actuality she is guarding her practice against further criticism or misunderstanding she claims to have endured in the past. A second way that autonomy is forced is through the lack of support from the English department chair. One of the roles of a department chair is awareness of how the teachers work in the department and how teachers like Rachel carry out their teaching in their classrooms. Another is to offer support, guidance, and information on issues related to the teaching of English and operation of the school agenda. Such relationships have not been encouraged nor even attempted by the department chair. Rachel states,

> The only word I would use to describe that [relationship] would be nonexistent. Our department head does not-- is not a part of what I do. She doesn't have any idea what I do. She does not concern herself with it, and we don't have regular department meetings so we can discuss curricular issues. I believe we only had one departmental meeting, and it was about lesson plans. I'm supposed to turn them in weekly, and I do turn them in sometimes, and sometimes I don't, and there're no repercussions if I don't. [Laughs] (Interview, 05/31/04)

The void of a relationship with the department head serves as a further indication of Rachel's forced autonomy, but it also serves as a partial reason for her lack of compliance with departmental procedure since she has a lack of immediate supervision. Rachel's statement references two issues that substantiate her forced autonomy. First, the department chair has little concern for what she does. Not said is Rachel's desire to be known, to be seen as a part of a department. Yet, the department chair "forces" her into professional autonomy because there are no set meetings to talk about curriculum. Since Rachel believes the department chair cares so little about her teaching, Rachel shows resistance by not turning in required lesson plans "sometimes." If the department chair does not care about her teaching, then Rachel will have no care for what she requires them to complete.

Further autonomy is forced when there appears to be little to no professional support within her English department. The English department head organizes no department meetings to address issues and practices, nor visits faculty to see how the year progresses. According to Rachel, during the eighteen week study period, the department chair sent only two memos to English department members and called no meetings. The one time Rachel recalls the department head visiting her was to borrow a video tape to show to her ninth grade classes. Little guidance and extremely limited communication force Rachel to be autonomous, and while the department heads at Downeyhill carry with them very little authority, they are expected to lead and guide the department, but Rachel has become accustomed to a hands-off policy. She states,

> There have been times when we've had department chairs who not only did not have my best interest at heart, but were actually trying to thwart

> anything I was doing that was the least bit creative. 'We don't have money for this or that,' or 'you're using too many ink cartridges' is what I'd hear. I've never felt like we had a decent department chairman, and that is honest. I've been here going on 14 years, and I don't feel like I've had one, well, maybe my first couple of years I felt supported with [Joanne] who was much more flexible and supportive. (Interview, 05/21/04)

Rachel's autonomy manifests itself in a different way since she is actively prevented from carrying out simple classroom goals because of lack of materials While most public school systems do operate from highly-structured budgets made in advance of the ensuing school year, department chairs at Downeyhill do have built-in margins in the budget for ordering and obtaining essential supplies for teaching. Rachel's recollection of a comment that she uses too many ink cartridges, a relatively inexpensive item, appears to be a front for relegating her to a subordinate position of importance and significance as a departmental member. That Rachel recalls only one former department head she perceives working favorably with her magnifies the disillusionment Rachel feels with her current administration.

Rachel's autonomy also manifests itself with the lack of communication between Rachel and others in the English department. Not only do her peers not discuss curricular issues, they do not discuss the other daily occurrences at Downeyhill suggesting a kind of denial for where they are, who they are, and what they are about. However, in my observances of the faculty at Downeyhill, nearly all faculty experience a lack of collegiate kinship. In rare cases some will gather to give a wedding, baby, or retirement reception in honor of another, but few collaborate in other areas. In spite of the senior administrator of the school announcing from time to time that Downeyhill is a great school because of its familial atmosphere, Rachel

and other teachers fail to engender or experience a spirit of professional collegial cooperation, and the administration fails to foster an atmosphere of practitioner support and importance. At the end of the study, which was also the end of the 2003-2004 school year, 24 teachers left Downeyhill to either retire or pursue teaching positions elsewhere in or outside the county. Teacher absenteeism was high with numbers topping over 300 within the entire 180 day school year. The senior administrator missed 26 total days during the semester of the study. The atmosphere affects Rachel as she states,

> Because I do have a lack of supervision not only with the department but also with the administration, there's just a real lackadaisical attitude. I pretty much do what I want to in my classroom. You know, as far as cooking food, dressing up in costume, the books we read, how I teach them-I pretty much come into this room and I'm an island to myself. I do what I want to do. (Interview, 05/31/04)

With no real collegial ties or concerns about repercussions for any of her teaching behaviors, Rachel feels free to do as she sees fit for herself and her students. She appreciates her liberty, but would appreciate more a type of validation for her teaching that goes beyond mere administrative supervision. She remarks,

> I believe if we had a bit more structure in our department I would feel more comfortable in what I'm teaching. Not that I don't feel comfortable, but just to have some backup. Right now I feel I have no backup (Interview, 05/30/04).

Although Rachel seems confident with her autonomy and relationship with her students, she would prefer to have more administrative support for all of what she produces in her classroom. Given the discipline problems at the school and events from her prior experience, Rachel does not wish to feel so alone in standing for her pedagogical beliefs and practices. She states,

> In the event of, say, a parent complaint about something-if a parent wanted to challenge me, I don't feel as if I would get the support I would need. I don't feel I have someone I could go to and discuss academic issues with, nor that I have someone to talk to about my problems I would have in my classroom. I especially don't feel as if the department head would have my best interest at heart and give me any kind of advice I could use to make me a better teacher. (Interview, 05/31/04)

Rachel's disappointment with the administration has made her feel less responsible to them for their lack of involvement. She states that she doesn't "feel accountable to anyone other than her students" (Interview, 05/30/04). Even though county procedure dictates that administrators are to observe each veteran teacher at least once a year and new teachers three times, Rachel says she recalls only one time all year any administrator spoke to her about her classroom practice. She states,

> They play no role in [my teaching] whatsoever. They don't come in my room and they don't know what I do except for that one time for about twenty minutes each year. Otherwise, they don't have a clue. I did have one meeting and was asked, "What are your goals?" And you know what? I never take any of that stuff seriously because there is no follow through with it. It seems like every year we start something new that we never finish. So, because that is happening year after year after year, I see no follow through with the administration that I just don't take it seriously. They don't come in just to check on you to see how you're doing, and I think that'd be nice. (Interview, 05/31/04)

Clearly Rachel perceives she is alone in her teaching endeavors and only receives the bare minimum administrative acknowledgement afforded any teacher in the building regardless of her experience or success. Because of feeling ignored and perceiving the administration as ineffective and inconsistent, Rachel disregards new mandates as the latest trend that will not be consistently followed nor checked. Moreover, she states she has not seen a county curriculum director visit the school in "many years," nor does she have a current copy of the actual county curriculum. She states,

> I'm sure there is [a county curriculum] but I'll be darned if I have a copy of it. That's just not something we receive. At the beginning of the year I asked for a copy, but it was never produced. For a written curriculum I use the Pacesetter guide the most for carrying out my teaching in all the classrooms, but since we no longer do the end of the year assessment, I don't follow that as closely as I used to when I had to 'teach to a test.' (Interview, 05/31/04)

Rachel does not feel constricted by the absence of a hard copy of the county curriculum, as she adapts the Pacesetter curriculum for her other classes. In addition, her adaptation of the Pacesetter curriculum is non-restricted since the students are no longer held to a standardized assessment forcing her to teach toward a certain measurable outcome. The English department head is charged with disseminating copies of the curriculum or addressing any curricular issues; however, with the absence of such at Downeyhill, Rachel resists the administration's lack of professional responsibility. She fashions her own curriculum in which she can be freer with the choice of readings and activities the class carries out based on student interests and her veteran knowledge. Without strong administrative acknowledgement or departmental guidance, veteran teachers like Rachel are required to turn inward and advance their pedagogies. While such may come with unknown hidden prices, it may also lead to self-satisfaction and an appreciation for a specialized form of individualism, welcomed autonomy.

Welcomed Autonomy

The theme of welcomed autonomy is outgrowth of the forced inclusiveness Rachel endures largely because of her being marginalized within her own department and school. Welcomed autonomy obviates itself with Rachel's comforting sense of

freedom in designing her own curriculum, implementing new ideas she has discovered, teaching and assessing experientially, and choosing among a variety of texts for her students and trying to match those with her knowledge of her audience. She states,

> Because I have different students every year, I have different needs in a classroom. And if I feel a piece of literature is going over, and because I am very lucky to have a huge choice, I have many novels and memoirs from which to choose in Pacesetter, I can spend more time with a certain genre than if I were working toward the test. Honestly, I pick the activities I have had success with in the past, and I add new pieces that I hope will add to my repertoire that will help get the different units across to the students (Interview, 03/11/04).

Such welcomed autonomy allows Rachel choice, a feeling of control within her classroom, and the liberty to expend time on units and activities despite a fast-paced four-by-four teaching schedule at Downeyhill. Experience has taught her what works well with the age group and interests of the students she teaches, but she relishes the freedom to select and add new pieces to her repertoire that may or may not directly reflect mandated school curricula. Rachel is eclectic with finding resources to add to her classroom collection as she relies on the Internet for adding to the activities in her Pacesetter class. She states,

> To me the Internet is a good source for ideas. I usually just go to Google and type in what I want, and so many other teachers have websites for their classes that I get ideas from there. Some resources there have complete teacher guides for a particular book, and those can be helpful for a new approach (Interview, 03/11/04)

With no actual collegial relationships among her department members for the sharing of ideas and no involvement with the department head for curricular support, Rachel

searches on the Internet for communication of additional teaching ideas she synthesizes into refreshed curriculum. She states,

> I create some 90 percent of everything my students do-as far as quizzes, tests, activities based on previous trial and errors-and ideas will pop into my head to tweak what I've found on the Internet. I don't use handouts I've found in books but maybe 10 percent of the time. What students get is usually what I've created (Interview, 03/11/04).

A certain amount of self-reliance accompanies the teaching profession as all teachers fashion new ideas. However, Rachel synthesizes information considerably, and she believes fresher ideas, even borrowed ones, create learning explorations. She states,

> Learning is a lifetime adventure and different ideas and different techniques to help someone learn is much more effective than what I can do alone. That's why I seldom use the questions at the end of the chapter because to me, well, they rarely make a student apply his knowledge. Too, I depend on my students to give me feedback since they are the ones for whom I am doing all of this anyway (Interview, 05/11/04)

The welcomed autonomy theme reflects Rachel's openness to new innovations and belief that literature study should be an ongoing conversation of a multitude of ideas and approaches for continued literary envisionment. Rachel's inquiry into ongoing learning and fresh ideas demonstrates the flexibility in her praxis and enjoyment of freedom that the autonomy brings her to effect her classroom goals. In addition, Rachel is in tune with what is effective, and she continually listens to her students as the primary source for curricular issues. She states,

> I know what works for me. I know what works in the past, and I know what students tell me works when they say 'thank you,' for instance, that we studied so much vocabulary since there is so much on the SAT. I know what I've heard from them, and what I've seen in here is what I do. We went overtime with it, but I don't care. It's what they needed. (Interview, 05/31/04)

Rachel's exercises her autonomy to study a topic in depth based on her experiential past or the current needs of her students and in spite of time constraints or other impending curricular demands. Moreover, she depends on her students for feedback and uses that to reflect and plan for the future. She takes an apparent servant-leadership role with her students, always placing them and their needs as priority over a mandated curriculum, other policies and directives, and even her understood authority over the students to guide and direct as she would see fit. Rachel considers herself an integral part of the learning community and therefore exercises no superiority over her charges.

Self-Imposed Autonomy

Rachel's independence reveals itself in a third and final avenue through her own self-imposed autonomy from formal professional graduate study or conversations via membership into professional organizations or attendance at professional conferences. Rachel has consciously chosen not to attend graduate study. During formal interviews, Rachel gave no specific reasons why she has not attended even when asked; however, she did frequently allude to lack of finances and time as reasons. Decisions such as these lead to her self-imposed autonomy, that perhaps she, herself, is less aware. From my observations and interviews throughout this study, Rachel has not attended graduate level courses, or professional conferences even when they are in the major metropolitan area approximate to Downeyhill, or used the websites for such professional organizations whose purpose is to advance the study and understanding of language arts. Rachel keeps both her

autonomy and anonymity by perusing the Internet via a number of general search engines to locate cyberspace authors and/or practitioners like herself who have created grade-level portfolios of activities, research, or general information on topics germane to the literature she and her class are studying. Rachel has no direct contact with the authors; she remains as anonymous as they while she scrutinizes the ideas of others in comparison to her own. Against the backdrop of an indifferent administration and disinterested fellow language arts faculty, Rachel's use of the impersonal Internet is not only understandable but also likely the next most efficient vehicle for her to have even limited exposure to developing ideas on the teaching of literature and language.

Even though Rachel indicated administrative disregard for the work that she does, she did not appear to be proactive in changing the nature of the relationships and procedures within the department of the school. Much academic activity goes on in the school around her that she believes needs professional notice, yet Rachel does nothing to effect any changes to the environment outside her classroom, even though she complains about the voids in interviews. Rachel seems as if she has given up on the prospect of a better teaching setting, and this makes her more self-dependent and insular as a veteran teacher. Rachel's reluctance to do so may stem from her admission of not being vocal since the false arrest episode, or it may be due to her satisfaction with maintaining a type of control over her own teaching environment against the backdrop of what she deems administrative mismanagement in a highly-changing school.

Resistance

From these three areas of autonomy Rachel actively engages in multiple forms of personal and professional resistance which she chooses to exercise in regard to county/school policies or standards. Rachel's resistance to administrative policy manifests itself in a number of ways. She chooses to write and submit lesson plans every week she teaches. By doing so she almost seemingly challenges the administration to confront her. This would force a relationship which she appears to want and need. Further, she chooses to challenge policy by using floor lamps in her room, openly burning candles, and cooking food in her classroom with electric appliances, sometimes preparing entire meals with bacon, eggs, grits, and coffee, or other times hamburgers. This resistance violates not only school policy, but also State Fire Marshall codes and has caused temporary electrical shortages tripping breakers in the main electrical room and requiring county maintenance personnel to repair banks of florescent light ballasts for the hallway where her room is situated.

Even students are pulled into Rachel's resistance. With her permission, they painted a Pacesetter mural on one of her walls over the fresh paint applied by county personnel earlier that year. Although she was admonished, she states,

> Well, I was nice to the county maintenance and building supervisor when he came to see me because he used to work here. So, I apologized. But I really didn't care he was upset. My students wanted to do it and that was fine with me. Besides, they did a great job. (Interview, 05/31/04)

Rachel's open defiance demonstrates her firm stance for doing as she pleases within her personal workspace. She also permits students, usually former ones, to enter her room from other classes, frequently without the other teacher's

knowledge or permission. Students enter Rachel's Pacesetter class and join the discussions or view the presentations. Rachel states,

> They [former students] will always be welcomed, and they've never been a distraction such as [Robbie] who's supposed to be on hall patrol with Public Safety. He really participated and wanted to get into the conversation. I see no harm in that at all. He had a lot of positive things to say about being a stranger in a village. Robbie and I have always gotten along. He likes me-I have this motherly thing, and it works for me. And I can use that to my advantage. They know this is a safe place, and I will help them further their education any way I can. (Interview, 03/11/04).

Clearly, Rachel disagrees with the academic and procedural policy that does not allow former students in class. She perceives their visits as contributing to the community of learners. Yet in this show of resistance, Rachel further alienates her colleagues from her when they discover that their students have been in her class without their knowledge or consent. I observed one teacher visit Rachel in person at the end of a class session to tell her not to allow the student to visit her unauthorized. Rachel displayed an indifferent attitude with the colleague and later told me she "did not care what the other teacher said." In addition, Rachel frequently allows her Pacesetter students to leave the room without the use of a hall pass to attend the restroom or to procure a snack from the machines she does not readily support. Such actions and attitudes, although contrary to policy and the development of improved collegial relations, represent further manifestations of Rachel's purposeful resistance against the backdrop of rejecting professional anonymity. Moreover, the course of the years that Rachel has been marginalized by her teaching peers and immediate supervisors may indicate that she has learned not to care about general policy or the people behind them.

Self-Reliance

Forced, chosen, and professional autonomy and resistance to certain forms of structure, procedure, and subordination all may culminate in the last theme of self-reliance, a self-dependent and self-protecting mechanism Rachel utilizes to continue in a type of survival mode as she works in the collegially indifferent environment at Downeyhill. Rachel demonstrates self-reliance in a number of ways. With the lack of school supplies, Rachel purchases her own teaching materials, especially craft items for students to complete projects. To make up for the financial deficit since she does not get reimbursed by the school, Rachel states that she occasionally sells soft drinks she purchases on credit from a wholesale club for a small profit to recuperate her expenditures. Such is expressly prohibited by school and county policy, yet Rachel has never been reprimanded for such formally. She seeks out her own teaching resources anonymously and independently, and she does care significantly for her students and openly admits and demonstrates that they are her first concern.

However, Rachel's self-dependence and lack of collegial relations results in her having a curious dependence on her students and sets up one half of a dichotomy I observed in her relationships with the Pacesetter class members. While she does indeed give of herself legitimately as professional, reflective teacher, and integral member of the community, she also places a type of emotional dependence on her students to reciprocate understanding, appreciation, and even adult-like friendship that tend to blur the lines of appropriate professional distance between teacher and student. During one session of a book talk I observed, Rachel told students private

details of her father's incarceration and how that affected her after a student-generated comment regarding some aspect of the readings. She additionally volunteered that her father served as her worse critic by frequently demeaning her with emotional abuse. Starting a class session one Monday after asking students if anyone wished to share details of his or her weekend when a student volunteered she had a pleasant date with a young man she had been awaiting, Rachel subsequently volunteered brief details of a personal, social date with a male. Rachel states,

> It depends on the makeup of the class how much of myself I reveal. In this particular class I think you would agree with me that I had an awesome, close-knit group of kids, and so because of our closeness, I could allow them to see more of my places I've been vulnerable. When I use myself as an example I think it gives them insight into me and the fact that I've been in the position that a lot of them are in or may be going through now. It just helps foster more camaraderie in the classroom. (Interview, 05/26/04)

Rachel's intentions may indeed be wholesome in revealing much about herself as it relates to the readings and comments from the community of learners so they get to know her on the personal level she feels is essential. Rachel engages in the telling of personal details even though county policy states that teachers are to maintain a certain level of professional distance so that familiarity will not propagate misunderstandings among minors or their parents Such risks that Rachel takes in revealing details about herself may be indicative of her dependence on the community of learners she has worked to create internally against the outside backdrop of an aloof and critical collegial community and a deconstructed administration.

Within this construct of autonomy Rachel has learned how to be self-reliant in light of her teaching materials, ideas, and workings with students. Teachers working daily with students need adult professional relationships, administrative support and understanding, and proper acknowledgement for their academic contributions and individuality as persons. However, when those professional expectations are not met even on a basic level, veteran teachers such as Rachel will find satisfaction in rejecting administrative and departmental procedures and will carve out their own comfortable existence as an independent artisan and practitioner within their working space. From such autonomy comes the design and construction of her curriculum for Pacesetter English.

The Community of Learners

The community of learners theme embodies concepts of individual action and collective interaction, belongingness among class members and other participants to each other and to the learning environment, confirmation and celebration of the individual, respect for social differences, and security for self-expression all carried out within a synthesized curricular framework built upon school mandates and the respondent's beliefs and experiences. Rachel facilitates students' individual learning activities and supports team and group interrelations as students work collaboratively to study texts in a relaxed, safe atmosphere. Members of the class are celebrated as unique persons with their own voices, and they are made to feel comfortable and important in Rachel's classroom with her encouragement of student camaraderie and the giving of her own personal attention. She carries out textual studies dynamically

as conversations among students and herself and the occasional classroom guest, namely a former student. Rachel shares aspects of her life and experiences with the students, mostly as they relate to issues surrounding textual study, and she invites students to do the same given their level of confidence. Finally, but importantly, she makes critical allowance on a rigorous four-by-four block schedule of four ninety-minutes classes per day, for students to share their individual and collaborative work among themselves. Given all of these inclusive and nurturing practices within the walls of her classroom, Rachel fosters a private, collective community within a public school.

By their junior years most students at Downeyhill have been exposed to myriad forms of literature and various methods for writing expression that should optimally prepare them for the learning atmosphere Rachel effects in her classroom community. However, not all students have experienced literature study by her methods where their responses are pushed to the forefront, where they drive the learning, and interact with peers and the teacher in mutually satisfying ways that promote self-examination, personal growth, and expanded literary understanding. Langer (1995) explains that while it seems apparent that literature study in all classrooms should be engaging and thought-provoking, instead it usually is "answer-giving" (p. 57) and only superficial in eliciting understanding and involvement. The teacher asks questions, students may respond, but if they do not, they look to the teacher to provide the answers to fill in on an upcoming assessment (Applebee, 1996).

Rachel achieves community in her Pacesetter classroom by establishing trust among the class participants with each other and with her, something she must achieve quickly each new eighteen-week semester with students. Throughout the term Rachel places value on her students' experiences and offers them opportunities for interaction, personal response to literature, and the sharing of life stories. She believes this is effective learning if students are engaged with the literature and make connections with characters and scenarios. Rachel hooks students' imaginations with introductory activities and projects to create works eliciting their creative and insightful interactions with texts. To bridge student learning, Rachel conducts mini-lessons on subtopics of class and curricular interest, and when her leadership is demanded, she provides meaningful instruction via guided questions usually requiring both oral and written responses. She spends quality time with students after school and at break times such as lunch or in-between classes to value them personally or give pointed direction in tutorials. By a personalized blending of student-centered awareness and teaching expertise, Rachel brings about positive and engaging literary instruction reflective of numerous best practices for assisting students to learn the discourse of English for life-long readership.

Pacesetter Units: Voice and Stranger in a Village

The Pacesetter units of study focus on a particular topic or issue and involve the students into a community to effect unit goals. Throughout the study learners are provided opportunities to reflect on what they know, bring their own experiences and questions to bear on the focus of the study, construct new understandings, and use

those new understandings in support of further learning. Embedded in her curriculum and approach are respect for individual voice, personal response and sharing, and acknowledgement and celebration of the ideas of others as well as attention to the elements of learning further literary discourse. The Voice unit in Pacesetter is one whose activities and outcomes align well with Rachel's personal teaching philosophy. Rachel believes a major component of literature study is that of personal response as well as understanding the voice of another, whether that voice emanates from an author, writing style or tone, the story's characters, or from a reader's opinion or cultural experience. The very first unit of study in the Pacesetter class involves students becoming aware of various voices, the representations of people and entities all around them who "speak" various languages and statements. In addition it involves students becoming aware of who they are and the multiple voices they use according to the communities or cultures to which they belong. The Stranger in a Village unit provides multiple literary opportunities for students to explore peoples' "otherness," and the many ways culture, language, and tradition exclude people from settings unfamiliar to them keeping them always as outsiders. Rachel fashions a unit of study based on some recommended selections and her own found readings of short stories, novels, plays, and poetry to maximize students' exposure to learning of themselves and the modes of self-expression. Thus, Rachel's construction of a unit of study highlighting voice and its manifestations is congruent with Greene's (1978) notion of emancipatory education:

> A curriculum ought to provide a series of occasions for individuals to articulate the themes of their existence and to reflect on those themes until they know themselves to be in the world and name what has been up to

> then obscure. If this is to happen, disciplinary opportunities of many kinds must be provided...(p. 19)

Emancipatory education must enable students to name their world and make meaning out of obscurities. Accomplishing such is possible through a variety of academic opportunities, one being the vehicle of literature study. Within this setting of autonomy, self-reliance, and resistance, Rachel works with students to emancipate their thinking. She does so through a framework that emerged in this study.

The Community of Learners: The Curricular Framework

Rachel's classroom praxis manifests itself through a curricular structure she creates from the Pacesetter unit of study, curricular requirements adopted by the county school system, and her own experiences and beliefs in a real life setting involving the participants in her classroom. Langer (1995) explains that the complexities surrounding social settings such as those in a classroom affect the type of discourse between teachers and students. Specifically, what participants are thinking and doing, as well as their cultural and group associations, personal identities and pasts, all impact how information is organized and how ideas are shaped and consumed. Such is especially true of Rachel as the facilitator-teaching expert in her own classroom. Rachel's past and lived-through world or landscape further shapes her approaches, choices, and intended outcomes if they are not driven solely by known and formerly practiced curricular standards. Rachel brings forth a primary focus of discourse that is both subjective and objective in its nature, and can

best be understood from a curricular design made up of integral components involving the classroom participants, her community of learners.

However, before she can work with her curriculum, she believes that it is essential to design a comfortable and safe atmosphere where students' voices are heard and where no child is ever humiliated for his ignorance or background. These two elements are crucial in building a community of learners. She states,

> The class atmosphere is very relaxed. It's a non-threatening atmosphere. It's very homey. It's very student-oriented. I have my candles, my lamps, decor, pictures, just small elements of home I think this makes students feel comfortable and more open to share of themselves and with others once they get to know each other a bit. I think the home environment makes them feel safe, and if you're not in a threatening situation you are more apt to be open to learning. But if you are in a situation where you are scared to death, then you are not going to do your best work. I feel I can be more of myself in this atmosphere, able to help them find some new aspect of themselves as they learn and grow as a teen, one of the most difficult times of their lives. (Interview, 02/06/04).

Rachel establishes a nurturing, comfortable environment for her students, but also one in which she may feel relaxed and may integrate herself as a vital member contributing to the academic and especially the social dynamics of the classroom. As I entered Rachel's classroom, I noticed the home-like environment, a sense of warmth and welcome unlike that of a standard four-walled classroom. The lights were dim more than in other classrooms, and the scent of a burning candle was evident providing an aroma in the room. Pictures adorn the room in various places, especially around Rachel's desk and bookshelves. She believes that the environment is conducive not only to learning but also to eliciting student responses in an atmosphere free of competition or judgment where students may respond and grow in and of themselves. She also believes that the atmosphere in her room allows her

to be more of herself as teacher-expert and nurturer of teens still needing certain guidance to navigate the tumultuous adolescent period.

Rachel has fashioned a curricular framework in the Pacesetter class concentrating on a particular topic or issue and utilizing inquiry or focused study as its avenue for execution. Although Rachel is not aware that she uses a framework for teaching, through my observations six essential components were evident as she organizes her curriculum around six key components:

Introductory Engagements: Introductory engagements prepare and initially engage student interest and participation for the topic under study. Short texts, movies, and journal prompts are some of the myriad activities she designs.

Language Study: Language study encourages students to study language, study about language and study through language by contextualized vocabulary study, sustained writing in the form of essays and journaling with its public sharing component.

Text Studies: Text studies encourage students to look between and across texts and participate in group oral book discussions and paired readings used to highlight themes and issues in the core text.

Mini Lessons: Mini-lessons are short strategy-based instruction used to reinforce textual readings, thematic issues, and elements of literature.

Organizing and Sharing: To organize and share their learning, students engage in individual and small group activities and projects, some with display and presentation components to share their advanced understanding of texts studied.

Reflection: Students reflect on their success and learning, while the teacher reflects on the practices and engagements that might be modified or improved. Reflection about learning is essential when planning for future learning.

Each of these components is described in more detail with supporting examples in the ensuing section.

Introductory Engagements

Rachel's Voice unit entails the study of a number of literature selections and completion of various activities, requirements, assessments, and student choices conducted over a three-week period in 90-minute classes. Rachel begins each unit by framing it with the use of essential questions, interrogatives that focus on various aspects of learning that students should be able to master upon completion of the unit. They are written in her lesson plans as well as on the dry erase board for students to view. The essential questions serve to guide students toward multiple learning outcomes from all study units of any subject matter, something school administration deems necessary for tangible and measurable student academic growth and development. For Rachel, the questions may cover a variety of topics germane to the unit contents. Such essential questions for a unit may investigate literary elements, student opinions and knowledge of the self, political or social issues, or ideas and concepts emanating from the selection contents. The essential questions change every few days as the unit progresses.

Rachel's introductory engagements activate student interest in a way she has stated she believes is essential for connecting with a text. The stance Rachel takes is

congruent with the theory of Rosenblatt (2005) who acknowledges that text is mere "marks or squiggles on a page" (p. x) that await meaning from a reader and his or her engagement, personal involvement, and past experience. Rachel's introductory engagements provide for what Rosenblatt (2000) refers to as the beginning of the journey of transactional experience involving any number of personal, textual, and contextual factors that will result in a certain reading of material by the reader at a certain time in his or her life. The introductory activities that Rachel uses serve to draw in reader attention, elicit engagement and hold it by linking it to subsequent activities making the reading experience meaningful for both academic outcomes as outlined by the essential questions and aesthetic experiences that will come to fruition in the way of projects as students interact with the texts within the community of learners.

Rachel arrests student interest and imagination with an introductory writing prompt for the reading of Ayn Rand's (1946*) Anthem*. Rachel's essential question is, "Can a society without freedom be productive? Explain." Students have no idea at this point that such a question will be answered by their reading the book and conducting book talks, roundtable discussions among her and students, in class. Rachel wants their initial reactions to effect discussion and personal sharing in class before they've had an opportunity to read. When students are invited to share their writings openly in class, she is further nurturing their cooperation for participation in the book talks. With their written responses, Rachel now has a point of view for comparison when she asks how a student's position has changed or not since the writing prompt as a result of students reading portions of the book as the weeks

progress. Other engagements Rachel may use involve students reading dialogue or acting out a scene from a section of a reading selection then asking how that made them feel or think. She may even ask other students their opinions, thoughts, or feelings about the reading or acting in order to elicit responses for initial discussion, such as "What if that happened to you or a friend of yours" or "What situations could possibly cause a character say or do that to another?" After initial student responses, Rachel offers students an overview of the ideas they will read about and activities in which students will engage themselves.

To begin a literary piece in the Stranger in a Village unit, Rachel engages students with a dramatic technique. She dims the lights of the room and places burning candles on each of her students' desks as they enter. As soon as class begins Rachel passes around a jar filled with quotations of the next reading selection. Students each take from the jar a typed quotation about Shakespeare's *Othello*, read it aloud to the class, and then comment on what they think the quotation signifies. At the time, students are unaware the quotations are from the drama, but many guess that the quotations are Shakespearean due to the language and syntax. Rachel does not confirm nor deny their guesses. Each of the quotations introduces a character, an important segment of the plot, or a significant theme that students will be investigating. As the reading of the play progresses in class over the next several days, students must comment on the significance of their quotation as it relates in the play, thus the introductory activity comes to fruition by the end of the unit of study. Introductory engagements to literary study serve dual purposes in Rachel's Pacesetter class. Rachel purposefully launches new units of study with engaging and thought-

provoking activities to captivate student interest, and she sets the foundation for purposeful interaction among the students to develop as belonging members of the community of learners with each student acting both independently and co-dependently to effect academic and social dynamics.

Language Study in the Community of Learners

At the heart of Language Arts instruction is language study, the reading and interpreting of, and response to the written words in novels, short stories, plays, and poetry. Standard instructional fare for a unit of study includes sustained reading and its related activities such as vocabulary lessons from the major readings, written work of various forms to include essays and journals, additional readings to complement or contrast against the main readings, one or two mini units of written and oral work that delve more deeply into a major unit theme, book talks and roundtable discussions, paired readings, presentations, reflective opportunities, quizzes and major assessments, and the assigning of at least one major project for each student to complete for the entire unit of study that may have an oral presentation component. Essential questions continue to guide the learning activities. For regular unit assignments the questions ask why vocabulary instruction is necessary, how music and film may be used as text, and why journaling is essential in a language arts class, or how various literary conventions dominate a work.

The four-by-four schedule from which Downeyhill operates requires teachers to cover an entire year's subject curriculum in an eighteen-week time period. This

compacted time frame provides precious little class time for individual reading if the subject matter's contents are to be delivered within time constraints. Rachel insists that her students conduct their reading outside of class and reserve time together for discussion and interaction among the class members. On rare occasion Rachel will allow independent sustained reading to occur during at least a portion of class time. However, she does strongly support the use of class time for sustained writing activities to include vocabulary study, journaling, and formal and informal essay writing.

Rachel constructs vocabulary lessons in a variety of forms. She takes words from the context of the reading material herself as she reads, or she may occasionally rely upon a textbook trade material copy masters for the lists. In one approach, Rachel teaches vocabulary words in an oral lesson calling on students to guess meanings given context clues and synonyms germane to the novel or some aspect of their adolescent lives. Other lessons may occur on paper by way of handouts to include puzzles, word matches, or other layouts, and students work in pairs or small groups to complete the activity. Nearly each lesson has a word study component framed as an SAT format so students may become more comfortable with taking sections of the SAT. Units of study always contain multiple forms of writing lessons. Students may write about a topic as an in-class timed essay, a personal journal response, an essay question on a quiz or major test, or as a separate formal or informal essay outside of class. Other written assignments take the form of class or homework as graphic organizers that may compare and contrast elements of the readings, delineate the plot sequence, focus on literary conventions such as figures of

speech or characterization, or outline conflicts, resolution, or some related literary feature Rachel highlights that is essential to the curriculum. At times these written assignments are conducted individually, and at times Rachel allows class time for students to complete them in pairs or small groups.

Sustained academic and personal writing is part of Rachel's work in language study that assumes a large role given that writing instruction and practice is essential to any language arts class. Rachel takes the writing component of Pacesetter one step farther in requiring students to keep written journals where they may respond academically and creatively with art and design in what she refers to as a "left-brain-right brain" activity. The journal assignments are part of the class curriculum, but the topics are not always directly related to the readings in the class. In fact, Rachel plans the journals in such a way for students to continue to develop their own voices and opinions in an effort of self-knowledge and discovery. Rachel states,

> The journal is a two-part activity that students turn in almost every week. The topics come from various sources. I have two books I use: *The Book of Questions* and *The If Book*. Both have great questions. I also use the newspaper to see if there are any worthwhile topics I think students would have an opinion on such as the smoking ban, gay marriages, or the Ten Commandments being removed from an Alabama courthouse. I try to get relevant topics and I get some off the Internet, too. The criteria for the journal are to answer in three solid paragraphs using research, anecdotes, personal experiences, and they have to be pretty much error free grammatically and mechanically. The answers cannot just be a repetition of ideas or a summary of the topic. It has to get someplace. Also there is a creative portion of it where they have to use a right brain activity to substantiate or justify or support their answer. And my rationale for that is that every college application I've ever filled out for a student and had to check off boxes, the first two usually ask, 'does this student show creativity and originality?' And so here again I am trying to help them use that right brain to develop that creative aspect of themselves, too. (Interview, 03/11/04)

As a sustained writing engagement, journaling, a part of language study, encourages students to study both technique, as in the three-paragraph writing experiences, as well as personal response. At the same time that students learn to write, they write for purpose, creativity, originality. Students may choose from a list of journal topics, prepared on a handout, Rachel entitles, "A Plethora of Points to Ponder." To Rachel, choice is important for students, because over time, she has learned that students continually bring new interests to the classroom. She states,

> Every once and a while I'll have some students, usually boys, who don't enjoy doing the journals, but that is one reason why I have added the questions about current events because usually the guys are more interested in current events than some of the more mushy topics when given a choice. I give them many from which to choose. They have to do one a week, so if I give them a list of fifteen topics, it breaks up the monotony for them and me since they are not doing the same topics as everyone else. But I still expect that right-brain response as well and I try to balance that with the range of topics I offer. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Within this list, students choose to write on such questions as, "How many barriers do I place between myself and my ability to seize an opportunity," "If you didn't act on an opportunity, determine why, and if, in retrospect, you wish you had acted upon it." These questions encourage learners to be creative in their approach to their opinions while at the same time they learn about writing as a structure. As a reflective and experienced teacher, Rachel continues to build on previous work with students. She knows that boys want to write on different topics than girls, and that certain question-types are more appealing to some than others, as with current events. Yet, journals are not just about language study; they also provide interesting reading. The different topics that she compiles, not only offer student choice, but

also through their different writings, she gets a much better sense how community of learners work.

Rachel senses the importance of nonlinear thinking and writing, and encourages her students to develop their creative voices and "find interesting quotes or words to songs, poems, etc., when answering the questions." In doing so, Rachel is continually challenging students to be creative, use the right-side of their brain by their use of music and other literary genres as texts to add to their experience. She also tells them they may combine questions of a related topic such as those that address the topic "opportunity." When Rachel offers choice in how students respond and to which questions, she demonstrates the importance of providing freedom for individual written expression with their variety and also with the requirement for creative or symbolic representation. The latter is more than just a decorative manner of representing information.

In my observations, I had an opportunity to examine student journals, many of which showed that students took great care to arrange their ideas and craft a visual that was congruent with or mirrored ideas in the journal response symbolically, metaphorically or both. For example, one female student wrote about why she chose a certain person as a best friend, and embellished the page with a number of symbolic pieces she believed characterized their relationship. A picture of pair of scissors stood for their mutual interest in cosmetology, a swatch of cloth pasted next to a pumpkin cut-out represented twin costumes they made and wore as children one Halloween, and a broken heart made of foam craft material with the names of former boyfriends represented lost love and attraction they both experienced. The written

portion described this student's artworks, which made this journal entry meaningful to the respondent both personally and academically. The integration of art and writing enables Rachel to carry out her teaching philosophy of personal student development, as well as her interest in helping students develop their creativity. She states,

> I feel that creativity is quelled when they get out of first or second grade. Teachers start telling students to color inside the lines, to write a certain way, that if you don't do it one way it's wrong, and so I believe because they no longer can feel free to color outside the lines, it stifles their creativity. I think that is something everyone is born with as young children. Watch young children play and how free they are to experiment with different ideas with colors and notions, but when they get older they are told, "No, no, and no." I like for them to rediscover that inner child that liked to experiment with color, words, and songs, and not be afraid to be slapped on the hand because he or she is different or has a different way of expressing himself. I think by allowing students the freedom of choice and freedom of expression gives them more self-confidence. It comes into that whole safe environment that I feel my room is. They know they are not going to be slapped on the hand and told "color inside the lines." (Interview, 03/11/04)

In this statement, Rachel suggests that people must have more freedom to think, do, and say as they believe. The establishment of a norm for some aspects of life, especially creativity, is too restricting. She believes especially for her maturing students that exploratory activities such as the journals validate their responses and themselves individually and prevent them from becoming "cookie-cut" people. Why Rachel chooses the journal activity to bring out the free child-like expression in her students she believes is quelled in grade school resonates with her personal philosophy of whole student development and freedom of choice. She offers,

> Students do have to purchase their own journal books, and my requirement is that the journal has to be unlined. I borrow a saying from the preface of *Fahrenheit 451* that says, 'If they give you ruled paper, write the other way.' And so I tell them not to get a journal that is lined because I don't want them

> to be confined by lines. It [the journal] becomes something personal to them, and I've had very positive feedback for the most part. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Journals give students ownership in their learning, both financially-they have to buy their own books-and also give them physical space to develop ideas. Just as Rachel believes that far too much control is taken from people's choices, she does the opposite with these journals. They become a sort of metaphor for her belief in one's ability to grow. The fact that these journals are unlined is not arbitrary, but carefully considered. Unlined paper provides the physical space for her students to write freely and in any way they choose, and which becomes the metaphor for the space she gives her students intellectually, creatively, and personally.

While the journals offer a range of experience for her students, they nevertheless require of Rachel a vast commitment for reading and evaluating. She remarks working long hours many times into the weekends evaluating the journals with a rubric so that she may return them to students to work on for the next week's submissions. Rachel is careful to maintain certain curricular standards in evaluating the students' work. She states,

> The journals are a small portion of their class writing grade, but reading them does exhaust me because I usually have, depending on who turns them in, anywhere from 60 to 65 journals. I do them for all my classes, not just Pacesetter. That's why I come up here on Saturdays and have developed a rubric. I do correct grammar, and if they have more than three errors, points are taken off for that. And many do use their vocabulary words without taking away from their voice. I don't want them just throwing in vocabulary words and lose their own voice in them because if they do, they are not being true to themselves, and then the vocabulary does not serve its purpose. But I do give them extra credit when they use vocabulary words correctly, and they get two points added to their grade. (Interview, 03/31/04)

In her community of learners, Rachel hopes her students will become strong writers with distinct voices. Such care and time taken with these journals supports her belief in students' abilities when given advice from the teacher-as-expert. Her role as teacher is to support their language use with vocabulary, but at the same time, she does not want them to lose their voice. The journal activity serves myriad purposes to include integration of curricular standards and as scaffolding for knowledge building and application. Moreover, Rachel stresses the need for student authenticity in preparing the journals; she is careful to acknowledge a student's voice must take priority over rote learning and parroting, but there are rewards when students thoughtfully use prior knowledge.

By journaling, Rachel's students learn to interact with texts based on their experiences and thoughts to create responses purposefully and selectively that result in the continual growth of their linguistic skills. This type of journaling reflects Rosenblatt's (2005) notion of "individual linguistic capital" (p. 16), or what students bring to the blank page. Based upon their previous language experiences, their transaction with a new text will always depend upon this relationship. Like the reader, the writer's products are meanings constructed anew from on-going personal, social, and cultural influences at a moment in time. In the community of learners, such transactions are essential if they are to learn to use language as a tool for learning about content, about life, and about themselves. She states,

> I may offer a few topics from which students may select, and pairing them with another classmate to pre-write will help them write with and for each other. Since we discuss these books and poems as a community, we should write like one and at least brainstorm ideas for inclusion in a paper. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Paired thinking and writing are important in students' development as writers. Rachel believes that it takes a community to build a writer, just as it does to build a reader. Supporting one another's literacy is foundational in her sense of community.

Essays are standard fare for any language arts class, but they provide another avenue for Rachel's students to respond to and interpret a text with a new one produced by their reading and writing transactions with literature. In allowing the students to peer edit, a well-known technique among many English teachers, the students enter into what Rosenblatt (2005) refers to as "authorial readings" (p. 19), that is, second readings of their own and each other's works that carry on a spiraling transactional relationship with new texts. Rachel's' insistence on the writing of multiple drafts with peer editing of essays further ingrains the positive effects of building the community of learners.

Students' essays are evaluated individually, and if a paper is not up to an acceptable passing standard, Rachel will offer students a chance to revise, and the paper is due usually the same week she returns the papers. Although the curriculum does not state the number of papers Rachel should assign in any given term, students can expect to write three to four formal essays in addition to the other assigned writings. If Rachel deems a paper highly indicative of sound writing, she will ask the student to read a portion of his or her paper or read it herself with student permission if the student does not wish to read aloud.

The back-and-forth work with students in the class and with Rachel supports her belief and desire to sustain a community that truly cares about each other personally and takes care of each other as readers and writers. This collaborative

effort to build strong readers and writers is an important strength in a community of learners. Rosenblatt (2005) speaks to this characteristic,

> The reader's to and from process of building an interpretation becomes a form of transaction with an author persona sensed through and behind the text...The closer their linguistic-experiential equipment, the more likely the reader's interpretation will fulfill the writer's intention...Other positive factors affecting communication are contemporary membership in the same social and cultural group, the same educational level, and membership into the same discourse community.... (p. 21)

Rachel's students reinforce and reinterpret each others' works as the writer and the author share a transactional experience through text. In addition, such transaction reinforces the aura of membership in the community of learners as students build discourse capital. In this part of her curriculum, Rachel supports the development of students' language, both written and oral. Not only do they learn to become strong writers, but they also become apprenticed into the discourse of English, an aspect that is essential from Rosenblatt's perspective.

Text Studies

Text studies, the third component in Rachel's curriculum, is one of the most frequent literacy engagements Rachel conducts in the Pacesetter classes in which book talks, paired readings and group discussions occur. The book talk sessions, which can last as long as a 90-minute class period, become a version of what Applebee (1996) regards as a "conversational domain" (p. 37) a construct allowing multiple selections of foci or themes hailing from a larger cultural or curricular tradition, in this case the Pacesetter course, to develop. Investigating particulars of the conversational domain require specific ways of thinking and interacting that are

unique to that domain; thus the discourse develops according to "socially-negotiated" (Applebee, 1996, p.40) processes among the participants.

In her classroom, a conversational domain, Rachel establishes a sort of social club centered in talking about books. She sits among all of her students gathered in or atop a circle of desks facing each other and discusses the prior evening's readings. Rachel states that the purpose for the circle is so everyone has an equal voice. She considers it an allusion to King Arthur's Roundtable so all participants may see, hear, and participate and with no one, including herself, at the head of the table. Rachel considers it important that students view her as a participant in the classroom as well as a facilitator. Book talks often start with a student's comment or question once everyone is situated. Rachel invites them to tell her something they found interesting, troubling, amusing or questionable about the text, plot, a character's behavior or something similar. Beginning with students' responses to the text is not only student-focused but also aligned with Rosenblatt's (1939/1995) transactional theory of literature. Starting conversation about a text regarding student feelings or impressions as opposed to factual information is taking an aesthetic stance—the reading of literature from one's own personal experiences and impressions. Rachel states,

> I care that my students really get into a book and have a relationship with a character such as Owen Meany. They can only do that if something peaks their interest or something they may have read about or experienced from the past jogs their recall. Even if a student reads about something he or she wanted to be or knew of someone like a character, or if they found themselves in a similar situation, it invites conversation. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel is assured that students will make a personal connection to a text that will in turn enable them to enter the literary curricular conversation beyond her class as well as the conversation surrounding their own personal lives (Applebee, 1996). Equally important is individual student aesthetic response. Rachel states,

> I like it when students tell me they like the language in a book or the author's choice of words they found poetic or...even if they say they've never read anything like that before and they hate it, at least they are responding to a text. That opens a door. (Interview, 03/11/04)

While such student responses are consistent with Rosenblatt's (1939/1995) transactional theory, students in Rachel's class may, in addition, be guided to learn and make worldly connections to their readings. Rachel finds the space in her synthesized curriculum to allow for knowledge-in-action (Applebee, 1996) to emerge to help students connect to texts and participate in the discourse of English. She states,

> And I've had a student tell me just how much he hated this particular book because it clashed with his religious values. At least we could talk about that. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Interest in a text may develop from a student's contrary response, yet the discussion, however it develops, serves to build further the tight community of learners in the Pacesetter class. In my observations of the book talks I noticed that a portion of the class time was used for spontaneous questions, answers, and comments. Students respond to Rachel's invitation to reflect on some aspect of the novel that intrigued them, and eventually students began making comments to each other about their impressions or recollections. Thus, at times, Rachel did not speak in the circle. Student trust in sharing responses and carrying the conversation was evident. Langer (1995) notes that such class interaction and sharing of ideas

> legitimates students as thinkers in their classrooms and unhesitatingly invites them to further develop their understandings...students take ownership for their own developing ideas; they use the knowledge they came to school with to make sense, observe others, and seek assistance when they think they need it. (p. 57)

When students are permitted to carry the momentum in a literary discussion, they legitimate themselves as worthwhile contributors to the process of learning and advance their own understandings. The ownership students take further seats their confidence and provides justification for their schemas which inform their perspectives. While students' responses largely drive book talks, at times Rachel takes on a slightly greater role of guiding students toward conversations based on their level of background knowledge or understanding of novel events. To contextualize how a book club operates, I describe two different types of clubs, one that is more student-centered and the other more teacher-directed, both occurring for the novel *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (Irving, 1990). On this particular day, discussion started with two individual students questioning Rachel about the events of the novel that surround the 1960s, a time students are too young to remember. A different student, remembering that the time period is marked by hippie culture, moves Rachel to clarify issues and open discussion for related topics. Clearly, Rachel responds to the needs and queries of her students and leads and guides by their prompting. After much discussion, Rachel invites students to conduct mini-research on any of those topics if they wish as an enrichment activity. Another portion of the book talk lends itself to further investigation of the novel's contents, themes, archetypes, images, literary conventions, and individual student responses. Rachel states,

> I want students to focus on an author's style-how the author uses literary devices and such, and this is part of the language arts curriculum. Of course movement of the plot is essential, but an author's style is equivalent to his or her voice. This is a large component in Pacesetter. (Interview, 02/21/04)

My observations and Rachel's comments indicate her ability to combine student-driven conversation about a novel with curriculum requirements of examining literary conventions for students to understand the elements of larger literary works.

In this second book club, Rachel continues in subsequent class session covering a chapter entitled "Ghost of the Future" in *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (Irving, 1990), This is one of the more difficult chapters and Rachel takes a leadership role. She begins by inviting students to discuss the chapter's title, and Rachel states that one of the main themes she wants students to pay close attention to is that of prophesy. Rachel seems noticeably pleased when one other student offers that the prophesy theme reminds him of foreshadowing, a literary convention he has learned from prior reading. She next initiates a discussion on allusions and why a particular allusion is appropriate for the author to use. One student, a devoutly religious person, finds the allusion disturbing because of its blasphemous effect and criticizes the author's choice of imagery. Another student suggests that the author intends the main character to be an archetype such as a sacrificial hero. Rachel affirms that it is important to understand what message an author may be suggesting, especially as he or she uses literary devices, and what motivates a character that advances a storyline. Thus, Rachel ensures that her students learn the discourse of English through student-driven and teacher-led discussion.

Book talk contents extend to a different level of sharing and openness when the questioning lends itself to personal thoughts and experiences of the roundtable

members. Another discussion of religious allusions yields a comment from a student concerning miracles, and during the course of the conversation, Rachel opens up and shares her own story of miracles with the group. A subsequent book talk leads the class in a discussion over various aspects of sexuality and social taboos associated with it, but such does not intimidate Rachel. She openly offers her own impressions and shares with the students a brief account from her personal experience on the topic after eliciting responses from the class. Teachers at Downeyhill are cautioned every year not to reveal information about their personal lives that might compromise professional distance. Such is especially true amid media reports statewide concerning teachers and coaches alleged inappropriate contact or relationships with students. However, Rachel not only invites personal stories for sharing, but also selectively reveals many of her own, because she, like her students, is a member of the community of learners. She states,

> I want my students to know me. I am not only their instructor, but I take the word teacher a lot differently than I do instructor. I hope by some of my stories it will jog something in their minds...one of the main themes of *A Prayer for Owen Meany* is prayer and faith, and so that's why I brought in my story about what I feel like are little miracles that happen all the time. The other stories develop as a result mainly of what they say to me and each other, so they naturally develop. Not only will these [stories] help them appreciate literature, but I think it will help them appreciate life and maybe deal with some of its issues. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Rachel believes that personal story-telling is a venue for modeling classroom community values and placing attentive emphasis on the students as individuals. She also believes it aids in preparing her students for aspects of life beyond the classroom setting. In addition, Rachel may also be showing that she desires to be an integral member of the learning environment in a more personal level as well.

Book clubs serve several important purposes. First, they are places where students can talk, agree, and disagree. They share very candid comments about life, religion, race, and other such topics, yet because Rachel has built the open, safe learning community, students feel free to share their questions and comments openly without fear of ridicule or embarrassment. Personal connections to literary texts also form a part of book clubs. Students as well as Rachel share personal stories pertinent to the issue in discussion. Although such stories shared by teachers are frowned upon, to maintain a community of learners, Rachel, too believes it is her place to story alongside her students. Third, book clubs apprentice students into the discourse of English. They learn to talk about texts using literary terms, an essential part of learning a discourse.

Investigating particulars of the conversational domain requires specific ways of thinking and interacting that are unique to that domain; thus, the discourse develops according to "socially negotiated" (Applebee, 1995, p. 40) processes among the participants. Moreover, Graff (1992) offers:

> In short, reading books with comprehension, making arguments, writing papers, and making comments in a class discussion are social activities. They involve entering into a cultural or disciplinary conversation, a process not unlike initiation into a social club (p. 77).

Rachel insists that the community of learners engage socially as persons as well as literary students. She wishes for them to engage in as many of cultural literary discourses as possible among the various texts that book talks and paired readings allow. As a result, such engagement continues to reinforce the ideals of the community of learners in the class.

Paired Readings

To complement book talks and vary the structure and contents of discussions, Rachel incorporates paired readings into the Pacesetter curriculum. Rachel frequently integrates other literary genres, such as poetry and short stories, into the classroom curriculum as students raise topics from the discussions and interactions. These selections highlight major themes that surface in the main readings or life lessons that arise for group discussions. For the Voice unit, Rachel selects poetry from Margaret Atwood. "This is a Photograph of Me" and "You Fit Into Me" segue into other lessons and discussion of Anthem. In the poem "You Fit Into Me" Rachel highlights the connectedness between the speaker and the speaker's companion. Conversely, in the poem "This is a Photograph of Me," Rachel discusses with students the ironic ending of the poem with its deceased speaker. In having students examine these two poems, Rachel wishes for her students to experience other voices of imagined people within their existence or lack of one. To reinforce novel themes or issues or sometimes to contrast against them, Rachel will show TV or video clips of other media to accompany her original lesson, as she considers film to be a text. The use of film or video allows students a different perspective where directors interpret texts for students to evaluate and incorporate into their own reading experiences. Students are required to use this information in conjunction with the novel, whether in written or oral form. Paired readings not only highlight original reading contents but also show students how to interact with different genres, therefore expanding their repertoires for discourse. In addition, paired readings encourage cross-textual analysis and synthesis of new ideas for new interpretations.

Mini-Lessons

Mini-lessons are short, strategy-based side instructional presentations that address aspects of English as a discipline. Lessons may be on a particular literary genre, thematic issue, or ideology Rachel feels is essential to highlight or further develop a facet relative to the main unit of study. Rachel conducts the mini-lessons, which usually extend from book talks and paired readings and may utilize modeling, direct instruction, or even a student-centered approach to deliver the contents. A representative mini-lesson I observed was the teaching of a poem entitled "Not Waving But Drowning" by Stevie Smith. Based on her prior experience Rachel has learned that many high school students recoil from studying poetry due to its perceived complexity on many levels. Rachel's mini-lesson begins with her placing a copy of Smith's poem on the overhead projector for all to read silently. Silent reading provides students with a chance to personally explore the poem. This is followed by an initial discussion in which several students share their thoughts. Knowing that teenagers may not be able fully to understand the abstractness associated with poetry, Rachel pushes them to think more holistically and about the concept of the poem and asks them, "How can a person die and not actually be dead? "Students respond with many examples, and begin to grasp a better sense of the poem. She follows this by having students read the poem again, this time looking for literary devices that signal meaning. Rachel then encourages them to think about the poem in the context of the unit of study, Stranger in a Village. At the mini-lesson's end, students write a brief reflection on a prompt directly related to the poem.

In teaching literature Rachel keeps in mind her audience, its experiences and how she might make a literary reading more attainable for her students by relating it to their constructed, familiar worlds. Such attests to her belief that literature is only meaningful if a student can relate to it on some level. She often uses analogies when she presents her mini-lessons. For example, she tells her students that reading and analyzing poetry,

> It's like when you're out swimming, and you're not paying attention to how far you've swum-your mind is just concentrating on the swimming. Then you stop and look back to shore. At that moment you realize you've gone too far. The speaker of this poem has felt that desperation, that aloneness all his life. (Interview, 03/05/04)

Analogies provide a support for students as they build knowledge about poetry. Even for those who continue to struggle with a poem's meaning, Rachel makes the reading of a poem personal, and therefore accessible to all students. She states,

> Poetry is universal and personal all at the same time. A poem may speak to one person in a very personal way depending upon his or her circumstances in life. Sometimes we do have a different interpretation depending on our age and experience. However, there is a universal theme to all poems. It is the same thing with music-what is the name of your favorite song? What does it mean? Why didn't the artist just write it in prose without music? Poets are artists too. Their words are their music. (Interview, 03/05/04)

Mini-lessons that include poetry reading and discussion are essential to the main unit of study. Rachel uses the poem as a springboard for other learning experiences given time and opportunity with her class. She states,

> I would read their personal responses to evaluate their understanding of this poem-perhaps by a rubric or pre-established checklist of items. But I also evaluate by the reading of other material, say Atwood's "This is a Photograph of Me," to further investigate the theme of dying and really being dead. I could compare students' readings and responses. Dunbar's poem "We Wear the Mask" is another excellent poem to further study the art of hiding behind

> our feelings, and a student's discussion of this material may lend me information as to how well they comprehend the universality of the original poem. (Interview, 03/05/04)

Mini-lessons that include paired readings, especially poems, builds necessary synthesis and deep cross-analysis of texts providing students more opportunity to augment their prior knowledge and gain more experience entering into various cultural and contextual conversations.

Organizing and Sharing Learning

Pacesetter students share and organize their learning through a variety of ways including class discussions, various writing activities, journaling, art, multi-media and technology-based projects, and dramatic interpretations both individually and as group members in the community. Rachel knows that student interest drives learning and its outcomes and that literature study should be expansive, interactive, and engaging. Through organizing and sharing Rachel encourages students to apply, evaluate, and synthesize their learning into smaller curricular units, and the units have components for student and teacher assessment. Within this component of her curricular framework Rachel allows her students to choose from a menu of teacher-generated projects and applications which best suit students' level of interest to demonstrate what they have learned through their study of texts.

As an option while teaching the Voice or Stranger in a Village units, Rachel may have her students complete a three-day mini-unit on some aspect related to or from the major reading. This mini-unit may be to research and report on a modern-day issue, an ethical dilemma, a critical event informing a character's actions, a

development within a character such as a mental illness or physical aberration, a historical event or other phenomenon mentioned in the novel. Rachel's students visit the school media center or the one computer lab to investigate the subject, prepare a written report and small visual aid, and prepare an eight-to-ten minute oral report on the findings.

Major projects culminate students' study of Pacesetter units, sometimes individual work and other times partner or small group work. For the Voice unit, students compiled their own Voice CD or a created tri-fold board presentation. The Voice CD was a collection of instrumental music and songs with lyrics that describe aspects of their multiple voices and was accompanied by artwork. One of her lessons prior to assigning the CD project was to examine how music can be viewed as a text and how music can express one's voice. Students presented excerpts of one or two of their most favorite songs to express themselves to the class. A second alternative project for students, a tri-fold project board, invites students to compare issues in one novel to another novel they may have read with either convergent or divergent messages or themes. This particular assignment works well for students lacking the computer technology needed to produce a music CD, and attests to Rachel's non-exclusion of any student by virtue of his or her personal means to complete an assignment.

Many of the sharing and organizing activities in Rachel's repertoire for the Pacesetter class segue into others along a continuum of lessons that build on prior knowledge and major themes. Book talks lead to in depth discussion and sometimes new mini-research or investigative projects to complete on some aspect of the

readings. Journal writing leads to similar activities as well as the examination of other media to emphasize themes or objectives. As with any individual project, the possible exception being a formal essay or test, Rachel asks her students to present their activity findings orally and visually for the class with her as a member of the audience. The individual presentations then become interactive and serve as showcases a of the student's understanding of a theme or concept for his or her peers. It also affords all students another opportunity for becoming further rooted into the class community as a peer teacher.

Popular culture, in particular film, is another way in which students share and organize their learning. Rachel elicits the responses of students in the class from presentations in the Stranger in a Village film clip activity. For a class assignment students had to recall from films they had viewed a scene that depicts the overall theme of the unit of study. Students demonstrated scenes from a movie depicting character's difference apart from a larger society or entity with the student's interpretation of how that scene best represents the stranger theme. In a number of the presentations Rachel was also familiar with the movies and, after the student finished his or her presentation, she asked the student to rewind or forward the film to another part. She would then ask the class to view the new section of film and make comments relative to the unit of study and, if possible, their personal lives. For a number of class periods over the next several days such dynamics took place, and at several intervals Rachel would interject comments and make points germane to the unit of study and to more of her personal experiences.

Rachel believes her integration of language arts and sharing of personal stories of various natures are justified and fit in well with her philosophy about literature instruction and further integrates her as a vital member of the community of learners. She states,

> Through literature and other media, we can learn about life and about people's lives, that connecting with a character you can relate to him or her in that at a time in your life you have felt like a stranger in a village, at a time in your life maybe you had someone tell you an apocryphal story...it just allows a student to be able to make a connection with literature on a personal level. (Interview, 05/26/04)

By sharing herself and her own life experiences, Rachel models a type of personal connection to literature. Students' connections with literature on deeper levels to form new contexts as reader and text come together (Probst, 1992). Again, Rachel ends a discussion by having students make a connection with the literature on a more personal point, and at the same time, she continues the group dynamics of the community. The students' responses lend credence to an interpretive reading of the short stories that meaning lay within the readers and their transactions with the text. Probst offers that "they [students] define themselves against the background of the text, and the text against the background they themselves provide" (p.61) in their dramatic interpretations of the short story texts.

Journal entries also served as a way for students to organize and share their learning. Rachel extends the idea of personal development and sharing when students have an opportunity to disclose their journal entries among the class. At least one day a week Rachel asks students to read from their journals as another way of building community and recognizing students as individual artists. Rachel asks

students who volunteer to read before the class to show their journal page or pages, and to give a brief explanation for some of the creative portions. On such occasions, three or four students share their journal entries and, sometimes as an unanticipated reward, receive bonus tickets for later use. Not uncommonly, students in the class respond to the presenter asking questions or making comments on the oral presentation, and frequently Rachel will interject a comment or relate a quick personal tale after a presentation to show her interest in the subject matter and remain a vital part of the learning community herself. In addition, the sharing of journal responses serves another purpose to encourage non-participants to action. Rachel states,

> I ask students to share their journals for themselves, mainly, but it also tends to motivate others to work if they have not turned in a journal and elected to take a zero for whatever reason. It's like an indirect peer pressure to move others toward the experience. And students will know over time who writes a journal and who does not on a consistent basis. With some of the competitiveness in an honor's class, that can go pretty far towards effecting class goals. (Interview, 03/11/04)

While sharing journal entries may serve Rachel's secret purpose of motivating one or two non-participants, in actuality the sharing allows the writer a self-reflection on his or her own writings, something Rosenblatt (2005) states is a vital part of the recursive nature of authorial reading and writing. Moreover, the readings allow the writer and others within the community a time of reflection and self-knowledge that Probst (1992) suggests is justifiable for literature study. He states,

> The significance of introspection and reflection on one's own values and beliefs, one's own place in the culture, should be recognized, and our teaching should invite and encourage such exploration...coming to know oneself better-may be pursued through the use of journals, in various ways...we might hope that the outcome of discussions focused upon the

> readers' feelings and thoughts, upon their perceptions of both text and unique personal experience, would be further insight into themselves. That insight should be the first goal of the literature classroom (pp. 64-65).

The sharing of individual works and completion of small group projects within the community of learners affords all the opportunity to experience different readings of the same texts. This in turn permits students the ability to respect difference as the very uniqueness of a reader thereby effecting solidarity among the community as its members get to know each other on deeper, personal levels. Although such is not usually celebrated as a main curricular goal in most language arts classrooms, it does allow for the communication of cultural heritage and assist with the incorporation of members into a society (Probst, 1992).

A short small group dramatic skit serves as another community sharing experience in Stranger in a Village. The night before the presentation, students read two stories, completed a graphic organizer, and the returned the next day prepared to work with others to develop and perform a skit. They are given only 15 minutes to prepare a television news segment on one of two concepts, rejection and acceptance, in the short stories that Rachel identified. She explains,

> The reason I gave them such a short amount of time is to see if they had read, thought about what they saw from the previous day, and to see if they could come up with a skit to get their creative juices flowing amid their analytical brains. To me, that activity takes all parts of the brain. I've also learned that students are going to take as long as you are going to give them to do [an assignment]. If I told them they had 45 minutes, they would have taken the 45 minutes. I think if I gave them more time, they would have gotten off task. I think to really measure a level of teamwork and maybe even intelligence is to show how quickly you can come up with something by thinking harder. I was looking for their interpretation of the short stories, and since even that can vary, it was necessary for them to come up with a mutually agreeable interpretation. (Interview, 05/26/04)

Rachel uses the short group activity for myriad reasons to include assessing her students' knowledge of the material, their interpretive skills based on former practice in the classroom, and their ability to choose others and work with them under time constraints to produce a dramatic skit. Rachel's assessment of the students' work is carried out through discussion concerning what she and the other students have viewed, and she readily admits the evaluation will be a subjective one.

Following the presentations, Rachel invites students to reflect upon this experience. Students discuss their strengths and weaknesses, but all suggest that the time limitations were too strict. Rachel asks students to reflect on what the rejection of the stranger in the village tells not only about the stranger, but also about the villagers and their mindsets, thus asking students to extend beyond the text into speculation of human behavior. She ends the discussion by asking all students to reflect upon a time they or someone they knew was ostracized and write a brief reflection to submit by the next class period. The community of learners theme is reinforced when students reflect openly and express their opinions when Rachel asks them their impressions on the activity.

Reflection

The last component of Rachel's curriculum is group interaction and reflection on their learning. Group interactions are purposefully organized and require students to interact without the teacher. Reflection offers students a chance to talk through aspects of the unit of study that they found important, and how their learning will impact future learning. A group interaction activity involving every student in a

dramatic role exhibits total student control and interpretation. From the same Stranger in a Village unit of study students are so engrossed in the reading of *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958) that they tell Rachel they wish to have a mock trial for an accused main character. Rachel agrees and students elect leaders among themselves to act as judge, jury, defendant, witnesses, and prosecution to try a character for his actions against the village. For five full class periods students prepare their case based on facts from the novel with only a few requests for assistance or clarification from Rachel. She states,

> The students are taking this ownership very seriously. They have prepared witness scripts and done research on manslaughter, homicide, and murder to see which description fits the accused. It's very interesting to see these young students step outside normal English curriculum and study that particular field [trial law] for an English class and take it very seriously. (Interview, 03/11/04)

In conducting the mock trial of a fictitious character, the students not only continue to reinforce the community they have already established, but they also exhibit the creation of meaning from texts and their collective interpretations, which reflects higher ordered thinking, synthesis, and transaction. Evaluation for the trial was purely subjective for Rachel. She explains,

> The Trial of Okonkwo is an activity with a visual and oral assessment. The students were well prepared with opening arguments, closing arguments, and a plethora of information from all of the witnesses involved. Every single student took it seriously from the student who played Okonkwo on trial-he even dressed the part of a native tribesman. It took about twenty minutes to get the verdict and their rationale for it. I was impressed with their performances and they will be graded on those. I told them I would watch and make notes on how well they presented. I did not have a single problem with any of this evaluation, and, in fact, I had three other students from previous classes I've taught to come in and observe since they found it so interesting. (Interview, 03/11/04)

Such full-class activities demonstrate the completion of the community of learners theme as established in Rachel's Pacesetter class, and it serves as the capstone to student involvement and to her successful personal and curricular nurturing of students.

Class discussions, reviews, and various personal inquiries into the readings and issues surrounding them are mainstays for rumination on learning. Thus, Rachel provides myriad opportunities for students to share among themselves, but at times she expertly leads students into contemplation of their transactions and the class' achievements. Moreover, a guided review session that Rachel frequently conducts with the community is "Beaches and Mountains." She rationalizes the name by saying the beaches or mountains are where she would rather be than reviewing for an examination; however she allows students to organize themselves according to each designation, hence one team is "beaches" and the other "mountains." Rachel utilizes such reviews for vocabulary or literary term quizzes, or for more formal examinations over major literary works entailing identification of characters, themes, or scenarios. From time to time students arrange themselves in teams according to their gender, hence the four males challenge the females in the class. Rachel states,

> The boys being full of themselves and their machismo wanted to take on the girls. Well, they took them on very well because they beat the girls, and so I gave them the choice of a prize, as I would have the girls, and they chose to skip the test altogether. I give so many daily grades missing this little test was not an issue. (Interview, 02/06/04)

Rachel continually finds avenues for celebrating her students, allowing them the freedom of choice, and the friendliness of competition, all of which continue to build and support the strong community of learners she reinforces in myriad ways.

Reflection on the unit culminates the study of Stranger in a Village. At the close of reading *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (Irving, 1990), a novel the community spent almost three weeks reading and discussing, Rachel surprises students with a unique reflective activity. Upon entering class one morning, students find the lights dimmed, candles burning around the room, soft chanting music playing in the background, and a desktop water fountain flowing at the front of the room. Rachel speaks to each student as he or she enters with "It's good to see you here today. I'm so glad you could come share with us." No one speaks as students seat themselves and quietly await the beginning of class. Rachel begins the class session by asking a student to read a poem she shows on the overhead projector. After the student reads the poem, Rachel opens the floor to comments from the group. A couple of students note how the poem seems to sum the main character's life.

Rachel then calls on a female student asking, "Would you like to comment on how Owen gave his life?" When the student nods disapprovingly, Rachel states, "I understand. Are you too choked up? Me, too." Such questioning and responding continues for several more moments until Rachel ends what is clearly a review session with the singing of one verse of the main character's favorite hymn, "Amazing Grace." Most students join in the singing and she draws the review to a close with "And into Paradise may the angels lead you. I feel as if I have lost a friend." Rachel's thematic and dramatic approach to review and reflection is not only innovative but also pedagogically sound as she continues to build community among her members allowing them the freedom of expression. She states,

> We had spent forever reading that book because it is a pretty long book, pretty in depth. [Owen] had become part of our lives, and I thought it appropriate that we had closure as his life ended, and I also thought it was a good way to bring the event of his passing. It was also a good way for students to recapitulate what they knew of Owen's life, so in a way it was a review set in a different atmosphere. (Interview, 05/26/04)

Equally, Rachel allows for student's reticence or ill-preparedness. Such is congruent with her own voiced philosophy of never embarrassing a student but making him or her feel ostracized. She states,

> I don't like to put students on the spot nor make them feel uncomfortable. I know that particular student is quiet and reserved, and at times she's not as vocal as most of the students in the class, so the fact that she didn't have anything to say, well, I just kind of covered up for her and went on my way. It was not an activity for which they were receiving a grade; it was more of an impromptu nature I thought of right before they came in. (Interview, 05/26/04)

Rachel's' admission that the memorial service was impromptu is indicative of how she regards her process of always thinking about delivery of curriculum. In actuality, Rachel's admission is a sign that she actually thinks metacognitively about her praxis, attempting always to keep classroom dynamics fresh and innovative for the community as she "does" her philosophy of difference which mirrors that of Greene (1979).

Monitoring or leading book talk discussions, having students play review games, engaging students in dramatic skits and play acting, and making students more aware of their changing world perceptions through the avenue of literature are all viable ways Rachel brings about reflective action among her community of learners that serves to complete the cycle of the curricular framework Rachel institutes in the Pacesetter class.

Additionally, Rachel also practices reflection within herself, as much of her classroom practice emanates from her continual thinking about her students and their needs, her prior experiences, and exposure to cultural media via newspapers, television, or the Internet. Rachel claims to borrow the ideas for her book talks from viewing popular television talk shows. She states,

> I took [the book talks] from watching Oprah and knowing about book clubs. So, I look at Pacesetter as a type of book club. The dynamics of the book talks are largely student-driven, although sometimes I do ask specific questions to make certain points I feel they need to know. (Interview, 02/21/04)

Reflection on how popular media can benefit the dynamics in her classroom shows Rachel to be a reflective educator with her students as priority as she integrates new curriculum. The means and materials by which Rachel delivers her instruction show she reflects continuously about how to reach students the most effectively. Upon discovering her students were not as familiar with the history of the Globe Theatre as she expected, Rachel demonstrates not only her creativity but also her spontaneity. She states,

> I was getting gas at a convenience store the morning after starting Othello and began thinking how I could make the Globe memorable to my students. That's when I saw the packages of powdered donuts and candy corn and thought how we could all make mini Globe Theatres at out desks. I brewed coffee and told the students that it was to represent the Thames River, dirty for the time period, but they could make it better with creamer and sugar! (Interview, 05/26/04)

With two stacked mini donuts serving as the multi-leveled theatre itself and the candy corn on a toothpick representing the flag for the type of play to be performed, Rachel made a curricular study more entertaining and memorable all the while demonstrating pedagogically how metacognitive thinking serves as the hallmark of a

reflective practitioner. However, not all activities pan out to fruition, and Rachel's reflective practice has taught her flexibility as a means of dealing with curricular malfunction. She states,

> Early on I didn't drop activities or readings in thinking it was not in the best interest to stop something we started, especially if I gave it to students to do. But a few times I've had to alter something, and I've abandoned plenty of activities that were taking way too much time and that I felt were not getting the ideas across or were not engaging students (Interview, 05/11/04).

As a result, Rachel plans her instruction from metacognition--thinking about her teaching and making alterations and additions as they come to her--therefore eschewing ongoing lesson plans. She states,

> Something new will come to me, and at the last moment I will decide I'm going to change the way I do something. For instance, when we did the funeral for Owen Meany, that was something that just came to me the day before. (Interview, 05/11/04).

The foundation for her ongoing metacognitive approach for teaching is rooted in her experiential past and her continual reflection on success, the viability of constructs, and what works best for her students. Unwittingly, Rachel has constructed a recursive curricular framework that is highly effective given her many beliefs about teaching literature and language. Rachel's practice emphasizes life applications, values student voices, provides a safe community environment, and offers opportunities to complete meaningful multi-modal activities allowing students a range of personal and academic expressions to learn the discourse of English with a reflective component to evaluate and impact future learning.

While noticeably divergent, the two themes, autonomy and the community of learners, serve to frame the complexities of an individual, experienced practitioner

working within safe boundaries she has created for herself and selectively invited others to attend. Rachel depends a considerable amount on herself as an experienced teacher, informed of her students, her environment, and her own personal and professional expectations to be effective in her own classroom among the community of learners; however, in the course of 13 years, Rachel has also learned the skills of self-preservation that keep her more than professionally autonomous from her fellows. How an experienced, highly student-oriented, largely self-teaching, slightly non-conforming, and mildly irreverent language arts instructor at a metropolitan school with rapidly-changing demographics makes her created world the primordial landscape where she presents herself and its implications for education are offered as the discussion for the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

"A certain amount of opposition is a great help to a person.
Kites rise against, not with the wind."
John Neal

The teaching tapestry of a veteran instructor is a woven artwork of experience, belief, and practice biographically, culturally, and historically positioned, and ever evolving. It serves as a constantly developing reflection of the teaching practitioner as new scenes are added marking involvement with pupils, colleagues, and even oneself. New experiences, thoughts and perceptions shape and define who the teaching practitioner becomes as she engages in self-awareness and meta-reflection. Tapestry threads that are textured and smooth weave the portraits of the various lived-through experiences: the adoptions and resistances, the growth and stagnation, the freedoms and the limitations, all carefully-crafted vignettes representing multiple realities along a continuum of consciousness and interplay within a milieu at a certain time and place. The tapestry here is solely Rachel's, and if she contemplates the colors, textures, and images in it, she will notice the patterns she has created justify her existence and explain her doing of philosophy.

Doing Philosophy: Reflection from the Past

In her treatise on "doing philosophy" Maxine Greene (1973) tells us that we must be highly conscious of phenomena and events around us in order to perceive ourselves, create multiple realities, and make meaning for our existence. She offers that one must think critically about those events, deliberately evaluate them to make meanings clear, and when necessary, consider background consciousness and boundaries that substantiate our lives into "what might be, what could be, and the forging of ideals" (p. 7). Rachel Gibson does her own philosophy in her four-walled classroom as a product of what was from her past that shaped her resolve to teach and find personal meaning in it, what is for carrying out the current mission of teaching against collegial and environmental challenges, and what will be as a construction of ideals and patterns for her students to become active members engaged in life-long literacy pursuits among diverse communities with their own discourses.

Personal Meaning from Past Anonymity

As a veteran teacher Rachel Gibson makes personal meaning in her teaching. Much of that meaning is a direct manifestation of events from her past she has critically contemplated making her into the reflective practitioner she is presently. Greene (1973) reminds us that reality is a "mediated, selective process" (p. 10) of negotiation closing gaps, drawing conclusions, and codifying the world. Rachel's selective process of meaning making is evident in what she chooses to reveal about her past that has direct impact on how she believes and what she practices with her students. Rachel's marginalization as a child of poverty and two unskilled high-school educated parents

makes her critically aware of students from similar backgrounds. Allowing a student to sell items in her classroom in order to raise personal monies her parent could not supply and giving the student a personal donation both testify to Rachel's recollection of the disappointment of poverty and how she might rectify impoverishment for another now that she is able. Rachel's apparent respect for the student's resolve to earn her own way against the odds is likely rooted in Rachel's own personal determination to improve and advance herself as a young adult clerking in a law firm and years later working a part-time job and attending college as a single mother well into her adulthood.

Rachel makes personal meaning in her teaching by reflecting upon her invisibility and disengagement as a young student. The humiliating scenario in Physical Education in which Rachel's shoe broke and she lost the relay race as her teacher audibly predicted serves as the antithesis to Rachel's construction of a safe, home-like environment where every student is valued and no one is disgraced. Rachel's being a mediocre student detached from learning doing "her own thing" and "Christmas treeing" her SAT serves as the springboard to her professional stance that a dynamic, interactive classroom environment is vital to drawing in students into a community of learners where contributions matter. Rachel's interaction with students in the hallways and in her doorway whether or not they are "her" students attests to her desire not to be anonymous among those whom she values the most. Such is the opposite of what she experienced in her formative schooling years as she recalls no teacher's actions positively impacting her. Rachel's playing "school" with discarded papers from a dumpster represents more than mere child's play. For Rachel, it is an attempt to order an unhappy construct in

childhood-education-one she now manages with a self-developed expertise from deeply-rooted and indelible experience.

Another way Rachel overcomes the anonymity and isolation from her formative years of schooling is through her creation of the community of learners. From her perspective Rachel may have been a nameless and faceless student in school, but she makes certain that she maintains a central profile among her students in the community as much as she promotes them and their personal and academic welfare. Rachel did not receive nurturing and encouragement as a student, but she willfully gives those elements to her students in myriad ways. From her own admission Rachel displays a servant-leadership role in the classroom by guiding and facilitating in addition to accommodating the academic and personal needs of her students. She treats them maternally by feeding them, emphasizing them as individuals, personally responding to their creations, and giving them special allowances by bending school policies. Academically, Rachel's creation of her own curricular framework serves as a testimony to building community among the learners in her classroom by mutual interaction, multiple learning opportunities, freedom of choice and expression, and celebration of the individual as a unique and valued contributor. Such student-centeredness and educational altruism has its roots in what Rachel didn't receive as a student. Teachers like Rachel may reflect on voids from their formative schooling years and consciously put the opposite into their practice and curriculum. While such inclusions may be personally-motivated and even carried out against the greater school culture and collegiate network, Rachel's purpose in doing so is a larger one to ensure that all students are treated with respect and care. Such

a conscious act of inclusion based on the awareness of need is not without an emotional factor which will be discussed next.

Doing Philosophy: An Emotional Journey

Creating personal meaning in teaching through experiences, beliefs, and community is closely linked to emotional factors in teaching that allow teachers like Rachel to connect with their students on deeper levels. Teaching is a highly emotionally-charged endeavor (Hargreaves, 1998), and the emotional element is virtually impossible to remove from the teacher-student relationship. The emotional element in teaching includes various degrees of caring for students but additionally includes passion for ideas, enthusiasm for inquiry and discovery, experimentation, and amusement in the classroom (Woods & Jeffrey, 1996). One consideration for Rachel's level of emotive display is her gender, as women exhibit a more caring orientation with teaching in general and with their students (Noddings, 1992; Hargreaves, 1998). For Rachel, an understanding of what informs her caring nature may be partially explained in terms of her upbringing as the eldest, responsible sibling of four, her perception of the lack of caring shown to her in her formative schooling years, and her desire to be liked and cared for in return by her students as she relates with them in the classroom setting. Rachel's desire to be liked by her students is incumbent upon a type of emotional understanding in which participants enter into each other's fields of experiences through subjective interpretation (Denzin, 1984).

The emotional side of Rachel's teaching is evident through her student relationships and behavior towards her class. Nurturing students by being attentive to

their physical and affective needs in and outside of class above what teachers are required to do are forms of emotional communication Rachel engages in purposefully with her students. In turn, the students' positive reactions to her emotionally-influenced attitudes and behaviors further fuel the dynamics of the community of learners and her own self-efficacy as a teacher. Rachel's sharing of personal stories in light of textual study and responding to their productions in clearly emotive ways creates an emotional intelligence between her and her class members (Goleman, 1995). Such emotional intelligence serves as an expression of Rachel's competence and deliberate, personal choice through self-reflection to exhibit affectively as both teacher and participating member of the learning community. The emotional side of teaching engenders a phenomenon that is unique to the community of learners. On-going and positive emotional communication with the entire group brings about a significantly noticeable pride and exclusivity to the extent that former students return to be a part of Rachel's learning environment when they belong elsewhere. Rachel in essence "spoils" the Pacesetter class with treats and favoritism because of its small size and population of honors students whom she regards as "more motivated" to carry out instructional tasks over that of general level students. Metz (1993) explains this phenomenon as a teacher's providing something in exchange for her students' cooperation. Rachel's achievement of the community of learners' cohesiveness and apparent success with the group as a whole opposes Lortie's (1975) contention that teachers' most prideful moments are measured by individual student success.

In addition, Rachel's emotive expressions, while they are sincere, serve another purpose that appears to fulfill both a personal and professional need for reinforcing her self-esteem. Having lacked esteem as a young student and endured forced autonomy

within her current teaching milieu causes Rachel to rely on her students for a form of emotional support. Rachel's sharing of sometimes intensely personal stories from her childhood about her dysfunctional family or her single life tend to blur the lines between mutual confidence and professionalism to outsiders, but for her it is an essential part of revealing herself as human wanting additional connectedness with her carefully crafted community of learners. When teachers are displaced intellectually, they may rely on students to provide the intellectual and emotional support they need, even though the power balance between adult and child may be imperfect and potentially socially demeaning (Metz, 1993).

Doing Philosophy: A Journey of Expectation

Rachel has been forced to make professional meaning in her teaching due to the lack of administrative backing at the immediate and senior level at Downeyhill. This void has caused disappointment as her expectations of support and acknowledgement for her teaching have gone unmet. Rachel depends almost solely on herself for support in her teaching endeavors, as she is not observed or assisted professionally even at the lowest of administrative levels. Her self-dependence forces her to do her own philosophy and think reflectively on those practices which work for her and her students even in the face of high stakes education and standardized testing mandates. Again, Rachel's developmental past aids her as her strong sense of self-reliance and internal motivation to succeed propel her forward against a backdrop of a self-absorbed administration and non-existent collegial network. Rachel's first attempts at teaching in the preservice internship challenged her to be resolute with no prior educational experience and only a four-year

English degree informing her decisions when she was deliberately shunned and thwarted by a seemingly jealous mentor teacher. Thus, Rachel's first exposure to collegial relations was hostile as she dealt with an unsympathetic and unreceptive teaching fellow, herself a voluntary teacher of teachers. Such beginnings for collegial resistance bear examining, especially when teachers are not readily welcomed into the profession by other teachers assisting in training them. Per her own admission, Rachel states she relied on her mentor teacher's methods early in her career suggesting that new teachers may feel they need an arsenal of methods and activities to begin their craft. Moreover, as a preservice teacher, Rachel may have needed to see another teacher in practice to build more confidence, especially since she was mature entering the field as a second career choice removed from the school setting for several years. Thus, the dependence of one teacher upon another in such a scenario is paramount. However, the veteran teacher, more confident and experienced when left to her own devices, constructs her own professional meaning when none is formally scaffolded for her even as a guide, not as edict. Furthermore, Rachel may have "gotten the last word" with an unsupportive mentor teacher when she was practically handed the job teaching at Downeyhill; however, without discounting Rachel's qualifications, the senior administrator at the time breeched protocol offering her the position without following County policy. Thus, Rachel's induction into the realm of professional teaching was conflicted at best by no fault of her own and would ironically set the stage for unmerited tension and several levels of professional autonomy as years would pass.

Rachel's understandable expectancy for assistance beginning a new career would remain unfilled just as would her expectancy for support when she was challenged

beyond reason as a veteran teacher arrested on false charges. Rachel states that even after repeated attempts to get administrative assistance with the obsessive student, the senior administration did little to remedy a situation going afoul and did even less after the charges were pressed and then dropped. The administration's apparent lack of care in supporting Rachel in a severe situation let alone observing her teaching other than the mandatory one time per school year creates professional autonomy and resistance for a lack of trust in those who should support her endeavors. In addition, with no departmental support Rachel becomes more reclusive and self-reliant for obtaining her own professional needs whether they are ink cartridges or ideas for teaching via the Internet. Receiving the disdain and criticism of fellow teaching colleagues brings about a welcomed autonomy she exercises in her classroom, but one that many scholars caution may alienate teachers like her further having possible implications for achievement of school goals (Metz, 1993). Such may partly manifest itself in the selective compliance Rachel practices with certain school policies such as the writing and submission of lesson plans or disregarding of a superior's request not to have students in her room during lunch break, among others.

Even though Rachel exhibits a certain level of personal confidence and professional composure through self-reliance, it is not without its price of a singular survival-mode mentality against the backdrop of virtually non-existent administrative and collegial understanding and confirmation. From a veteran teacher's perspective and experience, an administration should be proactive and responsive to a teacher's needs, especially if those needs are extraordinary. A structured, trustworthy administration that actively recognizes the accomplishments of its faculty, especially those with unique

contributions firmly established by experience and beliefs, creates less tension minimizing the likelihood of the heresy of individualism, a social and cultural construct in which the teacher withdraws professionally in largely unconstructive ways in the work environment (Hargreaves, 1993).

Doing Philosophy: Metacognitive Practice

As Rachel has fashioned meaning from her past and meaning from the lack of overt administrative support, she has equally fashioned pedagogical meaning in a curricular framework that is uniquely hers. It is built from personal need, professional space, self-reflection, and democratic principles placing the student and his or her learning experiences as central to its recursive structure. It is furthermore built from experience as new ideas are added and old constructs are eschewed according to the needs of classes and the social dynamics of the entire community of learners. Rachel alters existing activities and blends new information into them keeping literary connections fresh and in tune with the changing demographics of her teaching environment, hence, her admission of teaching literature other than that of "dead white men." Such changes occur only when the teacher is thoughtful about the backgrounds and schema of her students in order to make new connections to learning.

The curricular framework is not subject to the mandates of a one-size fits all county curriculum, but tuned surprisingly to current teaching theory of knowledge in action (Applebee, 1996), literary envisionment (Langer, 1993), and reader response (Rosenblatt, 1939/1995) largely without the teacher's awareness for lack of a graduate teaching education or purposeful access to professional organizations or conferences

where such may be discussed. In light of those theories, Rachel chooses a variety of texts and genres that students may manipulate, synthesize, organize, and present based on their individual and collective impressions and personal backgrounds. Such allows students to make larger connections to their lives and world issues with the Stranger in a Village and Voice units requiring students to broaden their perspectives and consider literature from multiple interpretations. A curricular framework embracing democratic elements can emerge as a result of a teacher's purposeful knowledge of self and reflection upon what she does towards the forging of ideals for her students to acknowledge.

Such forging, however, is not without its risks. Part of Rachel's doing of philosophy is incumbent on academic and some personal needs of her students, but it is also subject to their levels of maturity and quests to find themselves, sometimes a dangerous prospect for young adults without solid role models or stable home environments. Teachers are open to various forms of boundary testing from their students (Metz, 1993). With a teacher such as Rachel always striving to have a harmonious classroom, such challenges to boundaries may not be welcomed. When they occur, the equilibrium Rachel perceives she has established becomes overturned, and she is then forced to deal with a negative circumstance that leaves her personally and professionally vulnerable, especially if she fails to receive professional support or her efforts. Unpleasant incidences such as the false arrest and the social problems associated with the largely ignored rapid demographic and cultural change at the school have caused Rachel to ponder how to be self-protective, even though her personal and teaching natures are ones of openness and altruism. Hence, her statements that she maintains a lower profile after the arrest incident and that she doesn't park her car in the same place in

any given week attest to her reflection upon self-preservation and recalculation of trust she places within her general working milieu. Rachel is keenly aware of how she grasps the reality of her greater teaching world by virtue of the experiences she has lived. Greene (1973) offers that a teacher who is keenly aware is "primed to do philosophy" though critical attentiveness and conscious "choos[ing] to what to appropriate and what to discard" (p. 10) as she makes meaning along the continuum of teaching and living.

Doing Philosophy: Tensions in Professional Development

With no graduate work completed in 13 years of teaching practice and no indication to pursue it from the interview data, Rachel limits her awareness and exposure to professional development to sources in the Internet. By her own admission she peruses the Internet for additional teaching ideas from educational websites such as those created by teachers and their students, but not those created by such organizations as the Modern Language Association (MLA), the National Council of Teachers or English (NCTE), or The College Board. While the Internet can be a valuable resource for some information, it does not lend itself to being the most efficient of sources for continued professional development per se. However, the Internet affords Rachel the anonymity and privacy she appears to prefer, as she does not have to interact with others in person to procure information or exchange ideas, however limited by time and scope.

Rachel once cited a lack of funds as her reason not to complete a graduate education, but with scores of student aid programs available, it seems evident that Rachel has made a conscious choice not to further her education formally at the time of and subsequent to this study. For most educators, the need for continued formal education

seems obvious if only for keeping abreast of new theory and practice in the trade, personal growth and monetary reward notwithstanding. However, Rachel chooses what is comfortable for her—depending upon herself and impersonal sources for continued study and refinement as a teaching professional. Thus, Rachel exercises her welcomed autonomy, self-reliance, and resistance against obtaining graduate education.

Implications for Further Research

Given the nature of this case study and the developments in the data as presented, the need and usefulness of further research are apparent. Veteran teacher beliefs manifesting themselves into practice is a nebulous construct culturally, biographically, and historically situated varying according to the individual teacher as she creates meaning within the world of lived-through experience. That meaning is not always apparent by observation but may only come about through interview and philosophy. For teacher educators more research into the internal motivations and thoughts of teachers to practice what they do in light of or contrary to formal teacher training programs or what occurs as a result of background or experiential phenomena in addition to teacher training are warranted. Each of these situated phenomenon, culture, biography, and history, assumes further investigation to understand more deeply the locus of control and praxis of veteran teachers working and living in conflicted teaching milieus such as Rachel. Such investigation will likely reveal information on how teacher's backgrounds and instructional settings shape their praxis and whether the praxis changes across a range of effects or possibilities.

Further study into the perceptions of veteran teachers concerning rapidly changing school demographics and how to weather such in a non-supportive atmosphere is warranted as is study into teacher perceptions of and praxis against a weak or flailing administrative staff. Research into veteran teachers' levels of self-reliance and individualism within teaching environments lacking in collegial networks bears investigation, especially where school goals are established and either are or are not being effected. Although challenging, further study into the roles teachers' personal pasts and experiences play in shaping and informing their praxis is essential to explain behavior and attitudes, especially in veteran teachers acclimated to their teaching settings. Additionally, research into veteran teachers' collegial perceptions and practice would clarify issues surrounding not only the welcoming of new teachers into the field, but also elucidate the appropriateness of collegial relations in established settings among veteran teachers.

Implications for Practice

This case study presents a number of implications for teaching practice for teachers of all lengths of service. Teachers will teach as they see fit based on experience, beliefs, and their view of themselves as practitioners. With this in mind, teachers need to know themselves and reflect metacognitively and critically about their practice considering their past history and experiences that might determine outcomes for the classroom and the nature of relationships with their students. Teachers should also remain flexible to the needs of students, the characteristics of the collective class, and to changing their teaching practices as those practices develop along a continuum of time

and place. Such practices will enforce literature instruction as dynamic and matched to the learner creating new contexts with various forms of text thereby broadening opportunity for students to master and utilize the discourses of English across a number of literacy communities.

In the realm of the professional community all teachers, including veterans, need reinforcement and acknowledgement for their individual contributions more frequently than what is only required for contract renewal. Even highly-effective teachers cannot be ignored or left to their own devices for professional practice and growth for the long term against the backdrop of a weak, incompetent, or non-supportive administration. Over time such teachers may develop survival-mode mentalities which affect them personally and the greater school instructional goals, and hinder them from purposefully interacting with fellow colleagues for fear of misunderstanding or criticism. Consideration must be given to the motivations for and ways that teachers train teachers in the field. This is especially true for those teachers entering the field as a second career choice as mature, experienced adults needing the most positive role models for teaching practice and foundational collegial relations. Unlike Rachel, not all teachers may have the internal resolve to weather challenges in preservice. Finally, but not least among considerations, school systems must be attuned to the changing demographics, cultures, and social forces that inform school atmosphere and be prepared to assist teachers in adjusting to the various demands associated with that change.

For the realm of teacher education, implications for further study are more complex, largely because teachers such as Rachel who choose to drink from the well of professional development only on their own terms are challenging to understand and

reach. Justifiably, such may make teacher educators uncomfortable about all they comprehend and execute in the way of teacher knowledge and training when practitioners like Rachel actively choose not to attend formal study. In addition, it appears that the monetary rewards associated with advanced degrees are not enough for teachers like Rachel to pursue graduate study.

We might speculate on any number of reasons that teachers such as Rachel choose alternate forms of professional self-development to include the use of the Internet apart from what is offered through professional organizations such as MLA or NCTE. What is clear is professionals at the school and county administrative level need to be aware of teachers such as Rachel, since they do not make themselves known to graduate schools to attend on their own volition. Hence, teams at the school and county level through staff development or subject-matter departments need establishing so they may be aware of and attuned to the practices and needs of autonomously-working teachers, especially. Many meetings at the school and county level at best offer procedural instruction or counsel for carrying out the latest trend in standardized testing or curriculum implementation. However, well-orchestrated formal and informal county or school-level meetings or consortiums formed to bring together veteran teachers for the sharing of ideas may be effected for continued professional growth. Added to that, national organizations' implementation of on-line study groups county systems might recognize for staff development credit would allow veteran teachers such as Rachel another avenue to pursue additional training with anonymity while staying abreast of the latest practitioner research. Such may offer a type of instructional scaffolding for self-reliant, veteran teachers resistant to workings within their teaching milieus as well as

offer developmental options for mobile teachers in transition among schools within a county or state.

Teacher educators must continually strive towards meeting the needs of practitioners, especially with all the demands placed upon practitioners in the field. While studies into theory and practice have their place of importance, teacher educators need continually to bear in mind such acts as No Child Left Behind and state professional teaching standards or hallmarks that make specific requirements on teachers that theory does not always address. At the same time, such graduate focus need not succumb to being reductive, even though demands on practitioners' time in the classroom and greater teaching environment frequently relegate teachers to some modes of rote practice, therefore compartmentalizing instruction. Hence, graduate study cannot become a master's bag of tricks or methods for teachers to maintain effective instruction in the classroom. Teacher educators can understandably argue that no one formalized training program can ever suit the needs of every potential or veteran teacher and his or her unique classroom or school situation. However, courses may be designed that allow teachers to examine and investigate issues germane to themselves as veteran professionals much like the studies done to investigate teacher's beliefs prior to service (Nespor, 1987; Elbaz, 1983; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). Such investigation and creation of a study program or series of courses may reveal why teachers engage in certain practices tending to isolate themselves against the larger learning community, or why teachers need newer approaches to teaching curriculum within their individual settings beyond needing a new "trick" with which to reach students.

The Study of Veteran Teachers

This single-method case study examined the personal and pedagogical beliefs of a veteran secondary English teacher and how those beliefs transfer into practice with additional consideration to her teaching milieu. What I gleaned from this study working with the data for eighteen months exceeded my expectations and broadened my perspectives of the art of teaching and its myriad complexities.

First this study confirmed what I strongly suspected: teaching beliefs seep their way into practice in sometimes tacit and other times overt ways, and those beliefs are not easily changeable, even when one is presented with various educational and personal challenges taxing the belief system. Beliefs are rather firmly established and may only change after one has engaged in a practice that works according to the instructor's meaning-making over time. As I got further ingrained in the study, I observed that teaching is intensely personally driven, at least in the case of my respondent who teaches with sincerity and heartfelt concern for her learners under her charge. This observation further grounded my belief that veteran teachers especially bring to their classrooms personally and professionally constructed approaches based on any number of phenomena to include beliefs, experience, their unique pasts as students themselves, and interaction with a teaching venue or acting against the lack of one or one that is anathema to the individual teacher.

Common sense dictates that teachers adapt and change over time in their practice. Highly effective teachers such as the respondent adapt and revamp their teaching according to the needs of the students, curricular demands, and past successes. However, not all adaptations may be viewed as constructive ones for maintaining a place among the

greater teaching community unless that is fostered by a strong administrative presence. Teachers may become more insular over time given perceptions about administrative and collegial relations and the effectiveness they feel within their teaching setting, especially when they sense a lack of support. Equally, what became apparent was that even when teachers are afforded small opportunities to join the collegial network, they may still resist for reasons of self-preservation or even control, forcing others to step into their created worlds of comfort and familiarity.

From a researcher's perspective, I realized there is no real objectivity in observing another person and that, intentionally or not, I do become a part of the researched landscape. My relationship with the respondent both grew and took on new meaning between us as colleagues as I elicited information from her and attempted to portray her as accurately and fairly as I could. Most of all, this research demonstrates that it is possible to observe and admire a teacher of a very different instructional style without forfeiting my own held beliefs and practices or feeling threatened by her successful methods that work for her to maintain her teaching community. In the realm of education, we should exalt each other's person and practices and refrain from personal and professional jealousies that might one day serve as a part of the impetus for a new study on teacher beliefs into practice.

Epilogue

Today Rachel continues to teach at Downeyhill High School in the same room, and she has added to her teaching repertoire. For the first time in the ensuing school year after the study, Rachel taught College Preparatory English Literature and Composition to

seniors, something she regarded as a challenge. However, one of her students formerly in the Pacesetter class reported to me at graduation that he felt the class was a major success. Rachel endured a personal hardship with the loss of her mother, whom she called her best friend, early in the new school term. The passing of her mother caused Rachel to miss several days prior and subsequent to her mother's death, and colleagues, including myself, provided lesson plans and activities for her substitute to use. In times of crisis, even alienated and former colleagues assist.

The senior administrator was put on medical leave in the ensuing fall term and was allowed to return after ninety-days. During that time the County Office called out of retirement one of Downeyhill's former principals to operate the school. This formerly retired principal remained on campus three to four days per week even after the senior administrator returned. The senior administrator did not receive a renewed contract at the end of the school year, and the former retiree became the senior principal in the subsequent school year.

I left Downeyhill High School and the Meadowbrook community in June 2004 to pursue a teaching position offered me in another metropolitan county system. When I experienced some adjustment difficulties in the new teaching setting after being in the former system during my entire teaching career, I turned to Rachel for counsel, and she generously provided at the time of need. Since the death of her mother and my leaving Downeyhill, Rachel and I have not maintained regular communication.

References

Achebe, C. (1992). *Things fall apart*. New York: Knopf.

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In. N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Agee, J. (2000). What is effective literature instruction? A study of experienced high school English teachers in differing grade-and ability level classes. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32,* 303-348.

Agee, J. (1997). Readers becoming teachers of literature. *Journal of Literacy Research, 29,* 397-431.

Alexander, P.A., Schallert, D.L., & Hare, V.C. (1991). Coming to terms: How researchers in learning and literacy talk about knowledge. *Review of Educational Research, 61*(3), 315-343.

Alvermann, D., O'Brien, G., & Dillon, D. (1990). What teachers do when they say they're having discussion of content area reading assignments: A qualitative analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly, 25*, 296-322.

Amarel, M., & Feiman-Nemser, S. (1988, April). *Prospective teachers' views of teaching and learning to teach.* Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Angrosino, M. V., & Mays de Perez, K. (2000). Rethinking observation: From method to

context. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (2 ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Applebee, A. N. (1996). *Curriculum as conversation: Transforming traditions of teaching and learning.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ashton, P. T., & Webb, R. B. (1986). *Making a difference: Teacher's sense of efficacy and student achievement.* New York: Longman.

Athanases, S., & Heath, S. (1995). Ethnography in the study of the teaching and learning of English. *Research in the teaching of English, 29* (3) 253-287.

Ayers, W. C. (1998). Dinner with Maxine. In Ayers W. C. & Miller, J. L. (Eds.), *A light in dark times: Maxine Greene and the unfinished conversation* (pp. 3-21). New York: Teacher's College Press.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

Berliner, D. C. (1988). Implications for studies on expertise in pedagogy for teacher education and evaluation. In new directions for teacher assessment [Proceedings of the 1988 ETS Invitational Congress] (pp. 39-68). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Britzman, D. P. (1991). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Britzman, D. P. (1986). Cultural myths in the making of a teacher: Biography and social structure in teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *56*(4), *442-456.*

Buchmann, M. (1984). The use of research knowledge in teacher education and teaching. *American Journal of Education, 93*, 421-439.

Bullough, R. V., Knowles, J. G., & Crowe, N. A. (1991). *Emerging as a teacher*. London: Routledge.

Carter, K. (1990). Teachers' knowledge and learning to teach. In W. R. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 291-310).

Carter, K., & Doyle, W. (1995). Teacher-researcher relationships in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *70*(2), 162-174.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Christensen, L., & Walker, B. J. (1992). Researching one's own teaching in a reading education course. *Literacy research and practice: Foundations for the year 2000*. Kent, OH: Kent State University.

Clandinin, D. Jean, & Connelly, F. Michael (1986). Rhythms in teaching: The narrative study of teachers' personal practical knowledge of classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 2*(4), 377-387.

Clark, C. M., & Peterson, P. L. (1986). Teachers' thought processes. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook on research in teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Cochran, K. F., & Jones, L. L. (1998). The subject matter knowledge of preservice science teachers. In B. Fraser & K. Tobin (Eds.), *International handbook of science education* (pp.707-718). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Cochran-Smith, M., and Lytle, S. (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Colberg, J., Desberg, P., & Trimble, K. (1996). *The case for education: Contemporary*

approaches for using case methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D.J. (1984). Personal practical knowledge at Bay Street School: Ritual, personal philosophy and image. In R. Halkes & J. K. Olson (Eds.), *Teacher thinking: A new perspective on persisting problems in education* (pp. 134-148). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. (1984). *On understanding emotion*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Denzin, N., & Y. Lincoln, Eds. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process.* Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

Dillon, D. R., O'Brien, D.G., Moje, E. B., & Stewart, R. A. (1994). Literacy learning in secondary school science classrooms: A cross-case analysis of three qualitative studies. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 31*, 345-362.

Duemer, L., Benitez, J., Hurst, J., Juarez-Torrez, R., Teague-Smith, M., Collins, C., et.al. (2002). The edification of successful teachers: The role of the family. *Education 122*(4), 844-849.

Duffy, G., & Anderson, L. (1982). Conceptions of reading project final report (Research Series No, 111), East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Institute for Research on Teaching.

Eisenhart, M. A., Shrum, J. L., Harding, J. R., & Cuthbert, A. M. (1988). Teacher beliefs: Definitions, findings, and directions. *Educational Policy, 2*(1), 51-70.

Eisner, E. (1991). *Enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Elbaz, F. (1983). *Teacher thinking: A study of practical knowledge.* New York: Nichols

Erault, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London: Falmer Press.

Feiman-Nemser, S., & Floden, R. E. (1986). The cultures of teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 505-526). New York: Macmillan.

Fenstermacher, G. D. (1978). A philosophical consideration of recent research on teacher Effectiveness. In L. Shulman (Ed.) *Review of research in education, 20*, (pp.3-56). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H., (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. L. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research.* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Fox, D. L. (1994). What is literature? Two preservice teachers' conceptions of literature and of the teaching of literature. In C. K. Kinzer & D. J. Leu (Eds.), Multidimensional aspects of literacy research, theory, and practice (pp. 394-406). *Forty-third Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*. Chicago: National Reading Conference.

Gans, H. J. (1982). The participant observer as a human being: Observations on the personal aspects of fieldwork. In R. G. Burgess (Ed.), *Field research: A*

sourcebook and field manual. London: Allen & Unwin.

Glaser, B.G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1994). Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research. Orlando: Academic Press.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence.* New York: Bantam Books.

Graff, G. (1992). *Beyond the culture wars: How teaching the conflicts can revitalize American Education.* New York: W.W. Norton

Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as stranger*: *Educational philosophy for the modern age*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Greene, M. (1978). *Landscapes of learning*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Green, T. (1971). *The activities of teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Grossman, P. L. (1990). *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge and teacher education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Grossman, P. L., Wilson, S., & Shulman, L. S. (1989). Teachers of substance: Subject matter knowledge for teaching. In M. Reynolds (Ed.)., *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp. 23-36). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon

Guba, E. G., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1991). *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Guskey, T. R. (1986). Staff development and the process of teacher change. *Educational Researcher, 15,* 5-12.

Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*(8) pp. 835-854.

Hargreaves, A. (1993). Individualism and individuality: Reinterpreting the teacher culture. In J. W. Little and M.W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teacher's work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts* (pp. 51-76). New York: Teacher's College Press.

Hines, M. (1995). Complicating the coherence quest(ions): What's theory got to do, got to do with it? *English Education*, 240-257.

Hoffman, A. M. (1996). *Schools, violence, and society.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Huberman, M. (1993). The model of the independent artisan in teacher's professional relations. In J. W. Little and M.W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teacher's work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts.* New York: Teacher's College Press.

Hynds, S., & Appleman, D. (1997). Walking our talk: Between response and responsibility in the literature classroom. *English Education*, 272-294.

Irving, J. (1990). *A prayer for owen meany*. New York: Knopf.

Janesick, V. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuets, improvisations, and crystallization. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Johnson, M. (1987). *The body and the mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and mind.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kagan, D. M., & Tippins, D. J. (1992). How US teachers "read" classroom performances. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 18*, 149-158.

Kagan, D. (1990). Ways of evaluating teacher cognition: Inferences concerning the Goldilocks principle. *Review of Educational Research, 60*(3), 419-469.

Kirsch, G. (1999). *Ethical dilemmas in feminist research: The politics of location, interpretation, and publication.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Knowles, G., & Holt-Reynolds, D. (1991). Shaping pedagogies through teacher's personal histories in preservice teacher education. *Teachers College Record*. *93*(1). 87-113.

Kutz, E. (1992). Preservice teachers as researchers: Developing practice and creating theory in the English classroom. English Education, 24(2), 67-76.

Langer, J. A. (1995). *Envisioning literature: literary understanding and literature instruction*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (with Tesch, R.). (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). New York: Academic Press.

Leher, K. (1990). *Theory of knowledge*. San Francisco: Westview Press.

Leinhardt, G. (1990). Capturing craft knowledge in teaching. *Educational Researcher 19*(2), 18-25.

L evin, B. (2003). *Case studies of teacher development: An in-depth look at how thinking about pedagogy develops over time.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

Lincoln, Y., and Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lundeberg, M. A., Levin, B.B., & Harrington, H. L. (1999). *Who learns what from cases and how? The research base for teaching and learning with cases*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

Marshall, J., & Smith, J. (1997). Teaching as we're taught: The university's role in education of English teachers. *English Education*, 246-268.

Mayeroff, M. (1971). *On caring.* New York: Harper & Row.

McDiarmid, G. W. (1992). What to do about differences? A study of multicultural education for teacher trainees in the Los Angeles Unified School District. *Journal of Teacher Education, 43(2*), 83-93.

Mead, M. (1934). *Mind, self, and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1967). *Phenomenology of Perception.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, xvi-xvii.

Metz, M. H. (1993). Teacher's ultimate dependence on their students. In J. W. Little and M.W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teacher's work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts* (pp. 104-136). New York: Teacher's College Press.

Merriam, S. (1988). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Munby, H. (1984). A qualitative study of teachers' beliefs and principles. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *21*, 27-38.

Neal. J. (2001). "Opposition." In Bret Nicholaus & Paul Lowrie, (Eds.), *Give it some thought.* Novato, CA: New World Library.

Nesbit, R., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment, and reflective inquiry: A critical perspective.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, New Orleans.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19,* 317-328.

Noddings, N. (2001). The caring teacher. In V. Richardson (Ed). *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed.). Washington: American Educational Research Association.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (1991). Instructional discourse, student engagement, and literature achievement. *Research in the Teaching of English, 25*, 261-290.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(3), 307-332.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation methods. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Pintrich, P. R. (1990). Implications of psychological research on student learning and college teaching for teacher education. In W. R. Houston (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 826-857). New York: Macmillan.

Post, D., & Killian, J. E. (1992-93). Accommodating adult students in undergraduate teacher education programs. *Action in Teacher Education, 14*, 9-15.

Probst, R. E. (1992). Five kinds of literary knowing. In J. A. Langer (Ed.), *Literature Instruction: A focus on student response* (pp. 54-77). Urbana, IL: NCTE

Rand, A. (1946). *Anthem*. New York: New American Library.

Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research in teacher education* (2nd ed., pp. 102-119). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.

Richardson, V. (1994). The consideration of teachers' beliefs. In V. Richardson (Ed.) Teacher change and the staff development process. (pp. 90-108). New York: Teacher's College Press.

Rikert, A. (1992). Voice and power in teaching and learning to teach. In L. Valli (Ed.), *Reflective teacher education: Cases and critiques*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Riley, M. W. (1963*). Sociological research: A case approach:* Vol.1. Orlando: Harcourt Brace.

Ritchie, J. S., & Wilson, D. E. (1993). Dual apprenticeships: Subverting and supporting critical teaching. *English Education, 25*(2), 67-83.

Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes, and values: A theory of organization and change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rosenblatt, L. (2005). *Making meaning with texts.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rosenblatt, L. (1939/1995). *Literature as exploration.* New York: Modern Language Association.

Rukeyser, M. (1976). "The Poem as a Mask." In Joan Goullianos *by a Woman writt.* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 379.

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructivism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Sears, S., Kennedy, J. J., & Kaye, G. L. (1992). *Personality types of prospective educators who complete and who do not complete their preparation to become teachers.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwestern Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Serow, R. C. (1993). Why teach? Altruism and career choice among nontraditional recruits to teaching. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 26*, 197-204.

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4-14.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A.L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sturtevant, E. (1996). Lifetime influences on the literacy-related instructional beliefs of experienced high school history teachers: Two comparative case studies. *Journal of Literacy Research, 28,* 227-257.

Su, J. Z. X. (1993). The study of the education of educators: A profile of teacher education students. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 125-132.

Thompson, A. G. (1985). Teachers' conceptions of mathematics and the teaching of problem solving. In E. A. Silver (Ed.), *Teaching and learning mathematical problem solving: Multiple research perspectives* (pp. 126-141). Hillsdale, NJ:

Lawrence Erlbaum.

Twain, M. (2005). “Three-Thousand Years Among the Microbes.” Retrieved July 25, 2005, from http://www.twainquotes.com/beleifs.html

Woods, P., & Jeffrey, B. (1996). *Teachable moments.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Press.

Zancanella, D. (1991). Teachers reading/readers teaching: Five teachers' personal approaches to literature and their teaching of literature. *Research in the Teaching of English, 25*, 5-32.

Appendix A

Interview questions listed subsequently are related to the guiding questions of this study. Following are formal interview questions; however, numerous informal questions not included here were utilized when debriefing class observations.

1. How long have you been teaching? How long in this school?

2. Tell me something about your personal background.

3. What made you decide to become a teacher? Did parents or other significant adults encourage you to do this?

4. Where there any particular teachers you had in school who were role models for you? Why did you look up to them?

5. Can you describe their teaching methods? How do you try to be similar or different from this(these) teacher(s)?

6. How would you describe your teaching style? Why have you chosen your style?

7. Where and when did you student teach? What was that experience like for you? Do you think your teaching style and methods today reflect your cooperating teacher's methods? Why or why not?

8. Have you been particularly influenced by any of the education courses you have had? Explain. Were any professors influential? If so Explain.

9. Has your teaching been influenced by any in-service workshops or professional training/meetings you have attended? If so, in what way?

10. Has your teaching been influenced by your current or past colleagues or administrators? Explain.

11. How do you view your role in the classroom? How do you view your relationship with your students?

12. In your view, what are the major purposes of language arts education? Can you reflect on why you believe this? Did anyone influence your beliefs about this?

13. What do you see as the most important things you would like your students to learn about language arts this year in Pacesetter and why?

14. Do you think your colleagues share your views on what is most important?

15. What do you think is the best way for students to learn language arts? Are you able to teach this way? How do the students respond?

16. Do you think your manner of teaching is consistent with the mission statement of the school?

17. To what degree is your instruction controlled by curriculum mandates from the school or district? Do you feel bound to the mandates in any way?

18. How have mandates in curriculum impacted your instruction?

19. How would you describe the school social and academic environment within which you teach?

20. How would you describe the greater school community in which you teach? Has it changed over the years you have taught here? If so, what are the differences?

21. How have changes in the school and its community affected your teaching?

22. How would you describe your classroom's social atmosphere and dynamics among your students and between you and your students?

23. In thinking abut the arrangement of your classroom, do you have a seating chart? Describe your classroom.

24. How would you describe the make up of students in your "regular" classes? In your Pacesetter class?

25. Do you follow a specific curriculum for the Pacesetter class? Explain.

26. How do you decide what you choose to teach within that curriculum? How do you decide what to teach within a unit of study?

27. Describe some of the activities you will have students complete for a unit of study. From where do you obtain your ideas for the activities?

28. Do you create your own materials to use in class for a unit of study? Do you use other printed materials for carrying out a unit of study?

29. How do you decide what to use and from where? From where do you obtain your teaching materials? Does the school purchase these materials for you?

30. What types of home assignments do you give? Why? How do you decide what types of home assignments to give? Do the students complete them?

31. What types of interruptions have occurred in your classes? Did these interruptions affect your classroom instruction? Explain.

32. What are you beliefs about standardized testing? What are your beliefs about field trips and other curricular or extra-curricular activities that affect your teaching?

33. Would you describe for me the support or supervision you have received from within the English department.

a. How many dept. meetings?
b. Any grade level meetings?
c. What kind of supervision or support do you have? How does that supervision affect you?
e. Has the amount of supervision in the past been different from what it was this past semester?
f. Were you ever visited by a county office curriculum director?
g. Is there a stated county curriculum to follow?
h. How do you know what to teach?

34. Would you describe how you got to teach the classes you did this past semester?

35. Do colleagues approach you for teaching advice? If so how often or for what reasons?

36. Do colleagues voluntarily get together to discuss curricular issues?

37. What role did the senior administration play in your being able to carry out the mission for teaching this past semester?

38. What kind of supervision/meetings did you have from the senior administration? How often?

39. Do you consider a lack of supervision to be a hindrance to your teaching?

40. Would more direct support from an administration affect your teaching?

41. What tools or training would you like to have and why?

42. From where do you obtain new information on teaching English?

43. Do you have membership in any professional organizations in your subject area?