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SEEKING COMMUNITY: NARRATIVE INQUIRIES INTO THE  
TRANSITION EXPERIENCES OF INTERN TEACHERS THROUGH  
ELECTRONIC AND FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

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Denise Michele Ousley  
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## DEDICATION

For Wilma Ousley (1934-2001), my first teacher

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## ABSTRACT

Secondary education interns in fifth-year licensure programs assume a complex variety of identities: preservice teachers, graduate students, and licensed first-year teachers. Inspired by a dual interest in the complexities of the transition experiences of novice teachers and in the effectiveness of community building through communication, the purpose for this study was to examine four novice teachers' transitions—from student to student-teacher to licensed teacher—throughout the internship year. The impact of participation in a peer learning community, through electronic and face-to-face communication, was also explored.

The study employed a qualitative research design, which provided the intern-participants with extended opportunities for anecdotal dialogue in both electronic and face-to-face environments. The research questions guiding this study asked first about the issues involved in the participants' transition experiences, and second, how participation in a peer community, through electronic and face-to-face communication, influenced that transition.

The findings for the study are presented through the participants' transition narratives, and organized into the study's five themes: major and minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, and identities. An additional theme, atypical experiences, was added following a face-to-face group meeting.

Based on the participants' comments and on the perceived benefits of their community participation, the study's findings support the formation of peer learning communities. A combination of online and face-to-face communication methods

appeared to be the most accessible and least intrusive during the busy internship year. Teacher education programs interested in providing purposeful, consistent, and candid dialogue through peer communities need to carefully consider issues of confidentiality, comfort with electronic communication, facilitation, community support, and implications of required participation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION STUDY	
Introduction	1
Purpose of Study	3
Description of Study	3
Research Questions	4
Assumptions	4
Preview of Research Findings	5
Definition of Terms	6
CHAPTER II: TEACHER EDUCATION LITERATURE REVIEW	
Chapter Overview	8
Introduction	8
Trends in teacher Education and Reform	9
Teacher Induction Programs	15
Teacher Thinking	17
Cyberculture	22
Conclusion	25
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY LITERATURE REVIEW	
Chapter Overview	26
Introduction	26
Research Questions	27
Qualitative Research	27
Triangulation in Qualitative Research	30
Qualitative Research Possibilities	31
Narrative Inquiry	34
Narrative Cognition and paradigmatic Analysis	37
Recent Qualitative Studies in Teacher Education	39
Discourse Analysis and Dissertation Study	44
Discourse Analysis and Computer mediated Communication	51
Conclusion	54
CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY—PROCEDURES AND SPECIFICS	
Chapter Overview	55
Methods and Procedures	55
Conclusion	60
CHAPTER V: TRANSITION NARRATIVES	
Introduction	62
Mae	66
Lynne	77
Renee	86
Janet	96

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION, CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Chapter Overview	106
Introduction	106
Online and face-to-Face Communication	108
Computer-Mediated Communication and Cybercommunity	108
Discussion of Electronic and Face-to-Face Discourses	109
Discussion of Transition Themes	113
Transition Themes and Teacher Education	121
Perceptions of the Community	122
Discussion of Dissertation Study	115
Qualitative Inquiry and Intern Teachers' Transitions	126
Conclusions	127
Recommendations for Future Transition Communities	128
Suggestions for Further Research	131
REFERENCES	122
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Application for Research Involving Human Subjects	128
Appendix B: Participant Information letter	133
Appendix C: Informed Consent	135
Appendix D: Sample E-mail Discussion	137
Appendix E: Mae Interview Excerpt	138
Appendix F: Face-to-Face Chat Excerpt	144
VITA	163

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION STUDY

#### Introduction

Ask any teacher to identify the most demanding, exhilarating, and engaging year of her/his career as an educator, and more often than not, that teacher will emphatically answer, “My first one.” Although researchers and teachers alike recognize the extremes of the transition year, few studies have embraced the entirety of novice teachers’ experiences. In their critical analysis of recent research on learning to teach, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) call for a paradigm shift in the methods researchers use to study first-year teachers. According to their review, the last three decades of teacher education research have moved from a primarily positivist tradition in the 1970s, to the progressive tradition’s innovations in the 1980s and early 1990s, to the tradition of social critique in the late 1990s, which addresses diversity, gender, and systemic reform. Unlike the previous positivist and progressivist traditions, social critique recognizes that researchers “must view the traditional structures of learning to teach as problematic and at times dysfunctional” (133) and consequently, attempt to lay bare the contradictory realities present in everyday experience. An essential component of social critique research is the deliberate inclusion of teachers’ voices.

Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon also call for a shift from a positivistic approach, which seeks to conduct large-scale studies and provide generalized or idealized representations of preservice and novice teachers, to an ecological approach, which espouses the concepts of diversity and “systems thinking” (168). A systems thinking approach recognizes the interconnectedness of teachers’ social and cultural contexts

(their ecosystems) to their training, attitudes and classroom experiences. In their review, the authors identify studies that tell stories within the context of researchers' and teachers' experiences, and argue for increased attention to narrative research, which can "capture the richness and complexity of dynamic social situations in ways that correlation coefficients or statistical tables cannot" (165).

Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon invite new studies to address the ways that other individuals invested in novice teachers (their students, supervisors, family, and friends) "affect the landscape and process of learning to teach" (169). This study attempted to respond to these appeals by intimately examining the local experiences of four preservice teachers. Guided by an ecological understanding of the interrelated processes involved in learning to teach, I designed a study where the participants and I could form community and interact through face-to-face and electronic communication. Rather than supporting a generalizable grand narrative of learning to teach, I attempted to learn more about the individual ecosystems of these new teachers through group discussions and community participation.

All too often, first-year teachers find themselves facing an astonishing number of responsibilities. And, although traditional teacher preparation programs may provide their students with descriptions of the surprising and immediate nature of teaching, these discussions often become academic and/or abstract. I wanted to provide a space for acknowledging incongruities between theory and practice through extended opportunities for anecdotal dialogue.

## Purpose of Study

Inspired by a dual interest in the complexities of the transition experiences of novice teachers and in the effectiveness of community building through communication, the topic and purpose for this research was to learn more about the particulars of novice teachers' transitions—from student to student-teacher to licensed teacher—in a deeper way. Additionally, I wanted to explore the impact of an intervention, participation in a peer learning community through electronic and face-to-face communication, on the transition experiences of these participants.

The secondary education interns in this university's teacher education program find themselves in a unique situation. Because this College of Education offers a fifth-year secondary licensure program, its students assume multiple identities: preservice teachers, graduate students, and first-year teachers who hold apprentice-teaching licenses. They have the qualities, benefits, and challenges of all of these roles. Accordingly, this dissertation study included an exploration of transition themes particular to the participants in the community, and an investigation into the impact of weekly dialogues with a peer community on the transition year.

## Description of Study

This study involved in-depth examinations of the perceptions, day-to-day experiences, and evolving identities of secondary English Education interns. Throughout the study, the participants told their own transition stories, and through qualitative research methods (specifically, in-depth interview, observation, and narrative construction), I asked, listened, read, and added my own teaching stories to our electronic and face-to-face discussions.

I also employed online technologies to build and reinforce community. Through online communication, via an electronic discussion board and group e-mail, I established an environment where the participants and I candidly discussed topics of interest, sharing news about our experiences in the classroom and in our daily lives. Because the participants in this study communicated through several different contexts (an online discussion board, group e-mails, a personal interview, and a face-to-face group meeting), I also explored methods of discourse analysis to examine the similarities and dissimilarities among these communication methods.

Subjects which informed and contextualized this study included teacher education programs and reform, teacher thinking and practical knowledge, preservice, novice, and intern teachers, and the use of online technologies for communication and community participation.

#### Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study. These questions were first formulated in an introductory course to qualitative research methodology.

- 1) What are the issues involved in the transition experiences of intern/novice teachers?
- 2) In what ways will participation in a peer community, through both face-to-face and electronic communication, impact that transition?

#### Assumptions

Throughout this research, I communicated with the participants under the assumption that the participants did not purposefully misrepresent their experiences, perceptions, or opinions to the community or to me. A guiding principle in qualitative research and in narrative inquiry is the value of naturalistic inquiry, which assumes and

embraces multiple interpretations of reality. Additionally, researchers who are working within this perspective strive to understand how individuals construct their own realities. Morse (1998) explains that qualitative researchers must be prepared to learn and to be trusted in the setting, be patient and wait until they are accepted by informants, and must be flexible and resilient. Included in this framework is the acceptance that the participants shared as much or as little of their realities as they desired.

#### Preview of Research Findings

The findings for the study are presented through the participants' transition narratives, and organized into the study's five themes: major and minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, and identities. An additional theme—atypical experiences was added following the face-to-face group meeting. Based on the participants comments and on the perceived benefits of online and face-to-face community participation, this study's findings support the formation of peer learning communities. Though the percentages will vary according to teacher education program, a combination of online and face-to-face communication methods appeared to be the most accessible and least intrusive during the busy internship year. Teacher education programs interested in providing purposeful, consistent, and candid dialogue through peer communities need to carefully consider issues of confidentiality, comfort with electronic communication, dedication to community support, and implications of required participation. The findings presented in this study identify ways in which the participants' anecdotes, narratives, and communication styles connect to research in teacher education, teacher thinking and personal practical knowledge, discourse analysis, and cyberculture.

## Definition of Terms

**Preservice, novice, and intern teachers:** Preservice, novice, and intern teachers are educators who are participating in field experiences, student-teaching or internship. Student-teachers are generally found in four-year teacher education programs and participate in 9 to 18 weeks of supervised practicum/field experience. Intern teachers are generally supported by fifth-year teacher education programs, and participate in a one-year program of supervised teaching experience.

**Teacher induction programs:** Teacher induction programs are designed specifically to meet the needs of novice teachers who are transitioning into their careers. Induction programs typically last one to three years and may include mentoring, classroom observation, and supplementary coursework.

**Electronic communication:** Electronic communication is any computer-mediated communication which takes place via the Internet, such as electronic mail (e-mail), listservs, newsgroups, chat rooms, discussion boards, etc. Electronic communication and online communication are used as synonyms throughout this study.

**Synchronous/Asynchronous communication:** Asynchronous communication takes place in real-time (i.e. live chat or America Online's "instant messenger" feature). Asynchronous communication takes place at varying times and can be read and responded to at the communicator's choice (i.e. e-mail, Internet discussion boards, and listservs).

**Blackboard Courseinfo:** Courseinfo is an online course management system that offers support for online teaching and learning. Courseinfo provides a user-friendly environment and offers, "content authoring tools, an assessment engine and online grade

book, and synchronous and asynchronous collaboration tools” (Blackboard, <http://www.blackboard.com/intro.htm>).

**Discourse analysis:**

Discourse analysis is the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring spoken or written discourse . . . .It refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1)

One purpose for discourse analysis is the in-depth study of communication in action, of speech acts and speech events.

**Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing**

**(NUD\*IST):** NUD\*IST is a multi-functional software system that allows qualitative researchers to browse, categorize, and search texts such as interview transcripts and group discussion transcripts. It stores and provides access to documents for checking and editing. It also enables researchers to do sophisticated text and index searches to select relevant material and express and test assertions (Sage Publications, <http://www.sage.com/qsr.html>).

## CHAPTER II

### TEACHER EDUCATION LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Chapter Overview

The topics that inform, contextualize, and are relevant to this dissertation study are trends in teacher education and reform, teacher induction, teacher thinking and teachers' personal-practical knowledge, cyberculture, qualitative research and narrative inquiry, discourse analysis, and computer-mediated communication. In this chapter, I discuss trends in teacher education and reform from the 1950s through the early 1990s, teacher induction programs, teacher thinking and teacher's personal-practical knowledge. I conclude with a brief introduction to cyberculture and discuss its place in this dissertation study. Topics relevant to qualitative research and narrative inquiry, discourse analysis, and computer-mediated-communication are explored in Chapter III, the Methodology Literature Review.

#### Introduction

More than four decades of academic research have produced a remarkable duplication of analyses, findings, and recommendations for improving teacher education. With so much attention paid to strengthening the education of preservice teachers, why do the issues of insufficient content knowledge, poor classroom management, and teacher attrition continue to dominate the learning-to-teach landscape? Britzman (1991) suggests that the answer may lie within teacher education's adherence to the additive model, introduced in the early 1950s. Within this model, the college/university presents the theories, the practicum classroom offers a location for applying those theories, and the novice teacher—through hard work and dedication—supplies the link that integrates all

three. Research suggests, however, that this additive model sets students up for failure by implying that hard work will secure success (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Ashton, 1996).

In this literature review, I highlight factors identified in the research believed to promote quality teacher education. A common denominator discussed in the literature is the importance of collaboration and community among education and content-area faculties, administration and partnership schools, and mentor teachers and university supervisors. Successful programs are often defined as ones which produced competent, well-adjusted teachers with staying power (at least five years of classroom instruction). Less than successful programs also exhibit common denominators. Faculties are generally not integrated (and sometimes divisive), coursework is disconnected from practicum experiences, and problematic mismatches between student-teacher and practicum environment are left unresolved, possibly contributing to student-teacher attrition.

According to the Bureau for Educational Statistics (2000), the majority of teacher education programs in the United States are four-year programs. While the participants in this research study were enrolled in a fifth-year preparation program, issues related to teacher education at both levels were relevant to the literature review.

#### Trends in Teacher Education and Reform—1950 through 1990

##### *1950s reform—The fifth-year internship*

In 1955, the Conference of the National Committee on Teacher Education and Professional Standards reviewed cutting-edge practices across the United States. The approaches identified in the most successful programs fell into four major categories: rigorous and comprehensive curriculum; high-levels of organization and support for

teacher education; efficient staffing of teacher education programs; the teacher education student population, and significant post-graduate development of teacher competence. From 1950 to 1960, scholars reported another comprehensive evaluation of teacher education programs. Numerous studies were conducted at acclaimed Colleges of Education across the United States, including Emory University, Agnes Scott College, Claremont College, the University of Tennessee, Columbia Teachers College, and the state and city universities of New York. An objective of the evaluations was to find productive ways to still faculty conflicts concerning the curriculum of teacher education programs. Giesecke and Wallace (1956) summarized several common goals for cross-college success.

The goals of the teacher education program must be defined cooperatively; the program must be organized to fix responsibility properly and clearly; the program should include only those curriculums which can survive a realistic appraisal of need and institutional resources; the program should assure that the student-teacher's entire experience is supervised jointly by the subject-matter and education departments. (334)

It is significant that the researchers viewed community and collaborative supervision as essential factors for sustaining support of teacher education across colleges.

During the 1950s several of the universities mentioned above chartered studies to evaluate the effectiveness of a fifth-year preservice teacher education programs. These studies were funded by such foundations as the Fund for the Advancement of Education and the Carnegie Corporation. The foundations partnered with participating universities to provide more competent teachers, and to establish professional preparation requirements for liberal-arts graduates who pursued teaching without a formal education degree. According to Harris (1956), many of the programs introduced a traditional year

of graduate work in professional education, while others provided a year-long supervised internship in local schools, coupled with 9 to 15 hours of education coursework.

Elizabeth Boyer (1954) published a report on fifth-year programs at 42 institutions. Her study listed program strengths as:

careful selective admissions practices; a well-planned four-year sequence of general education, with major emphasis on the first two years; a pattern of required courses, plus a counseled approach to the section of electives; a divisional rather than departmental organization; a professional sequence, with first courses offered in the sophomore or junior year, methods and observation courses given prior to student teaching, and a synthesizing seminar required as a culminating experience. (196)

Though her recommendations are not clear, Boyer's evidence suggests that collaborative decision making creates a sequence of coursework which leads logically to the synthesizing experience.

#### *1970s reform—Process-product research*

Schulman (1986) describes the thrust of teacher education research in the 1970s as product-process research, which focused most specifically on the impact of teacher behavior on student learning. The process-product tradition began primarily to counter and/or confirm trends in teacher expectation research from the 1960s. Schulman explains that the controversial *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (1968), which made claims with no specific documentation of teacher behavior, sparked widespread public dissatisfaction. "The concern over test score declines, adolescent mis-behavior, and poor school discipline" in the late 1960s and early 1970s produced a panic-driven back-to-basics movement, demanding "an image of schooling in which there was less question about who was in charge and what was to be learned" (11). Based on the principles of behavioristic applied-psychology, process-product researchers studied teaching

effectiveness through classroom observation, tallying specific teacher behaviors with pre-determined observation inventories. Observable classroom events were counted and then correlated with measures of student progress (i.e. pre- and post-test results, standardized test scores). With hundreds of documented observation hours combined with correlated standardized test scores, researchers believed that they could empirically prove that teaching behaviors transcended both individual and setting.

Process-product research rapidly crossed the thresholds of Colleges of Education. The implications for teacher educators were “frequently seen as straightforward” (11). Wooed by “discrete variables that were correlated with student outcomes” teacher educators could concretely define teaching effectiveness. In hindsight, some researchers have commented that the curriculum changes during this time may have represented a “naïve misuse by policy-makers,” which opened the door to the competency-based teacher education movement.

[Process-product findings] lent themselves to list of “teacher should” statements that were handy to those who wished to prescribe or mandate specific teaching policies for the improvement of schools. Moreover, the work was tied to an indicator that both policymakers and laypersons took most seriously as a sign of how schoolchildren were doing: standardized achievement tests. (11)

When Schulman published this review, he stated that the competency-based teacher education movement flourished energetically for a few years but had declined due in large part, to the numbers of product-process researchers who actively opposed the oversimplification of their findings and premature applications of their results. Schulman predicted that “programs for beginning teachers and/or for evaluating teachers for certification, tenure, or merit increases” based solely on test scores were on the wane in Colleges of Education but could always re-emerge at the state level, where clear

implications for evaluation and policy are attractive. We may also note that efforts to sustain community and collaboration within the university are generally undermined when policy makers dictate curriculum requirements through test results.

*1980s reform—A Nation at Risk*

The wave of reform in teacher education during the 1980s emanated from the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983). According to Joanne Herbert (1998), the National Commission on Excellence in Education claimed that education in the United States was suffering from mediocrity and indifference. *A Nation at Risk* was popularized by the media and quickly became the darling of education reformers. Herbert asserts that the reform movements inspired by *A Nation at Risk* “stimulated many different and often conflicting attempts to improve both the quality of people who would be teachers and the programs meant to prepare them for work in schools” (175). Herbert divides the decade’s reforms into three categories: program entrance requirements, program processes and educational requirements, and program exit requirements. Herbert also adds that typically, critics of teacher education find their easiest marks in teacher candidates, commenting that all too often, a career in teaching has been viewed as a fallback career. Herbert asserts that this view of teaching “as a fallback position or default option, [causes] teachers and the profession itself [to suffer] an understandable lack of prestige” (176). In order to combat this image, educational reformers proposed raising the requirements for teacher education candidates, such as higher cutoffs in SAT scores and higher GPAs in general-studies coursework.

Addressing the issue of teacher education coursework requirements, reformers have made proposals in several areas. One of these areas can be seen in the attempt by

Colleges of Education to forge stronger bonds with their counterparts in Colleges of Arts and Sciences. Although the importance of collaboration has been noted since the 1950s, disagreements among education and general-studies faculties continue to exist. Professors in Arts and Sciences want to increase the required coursework in students' specific majors, arguing that teachers need a stronger foundation in their fields of expertise. Typically, these additional general-studies requirements come at the expense of field experiences—considered one of the most effective methods for teacher induction (Huling, 1998). A familiar solution to this debate entered the 1990s reform platform.

*1990s reform—The fifth-year internship*

Looking to satisfy both sides of the requirements divide, many late 1980s and early 1990s reforms appeared in the shape of lengthened teacher education certification programs—a required fifth-year of internship combined with additional education and content-area coursework. Further teacher education innovations were seen in the movement toward national College of Education accreditation. Previously, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) provided summative accreditation judgments. In answer to cries for reform, NCATE changed its focus from summative to developmental. “That is, NCATE [now] trains teams of evaluators to evaluate teacher education programs and then encourages programs that apply for accreditation to enhance their offerings [in areas of multicultural education, professional development, and instructional technology] to obtain certification” (Herbert, 1998, p. 177).

A third example of recent reform in teacher education has been in the area of exit reform. Many states initiated teacher-mentoring programs during the first two years of

professional teaching. Mentor teachers were offered career ladder incentives or merit pay for assuming the additional responsibilities of mentoring. Mentoring novice teachers also appeared to be a step toward fostering professional community. The underlying assumption in many mentoring programs was that consistent communication with a more experienced colleague may lessen the feelings of isolation and distress so often described by novice teachers. Successes in the mentoring movement have led to a more comprehensive program in many school districts: the teacher induction program.

### Teacher Induction Programs

Many of the trends in teacher education endorsed by Herbert (1998) were also noted in reviews provided by the Educational Resources Center Clearinghouse (ERIC), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. “Components of Good Teacher Induction Programs” was one such example. ERIC Digest 4 (1986) discusses laudable qualities in current teacher induction programs. The most influential research collected for the ERIC Digest provides a framework for the evaluation of teacher induction programs. This framework includes the following eight components:

1. The program explains to the inductees that the processes of their selection is based on special requirements and that induction training is crucial to their future success.
2. The induction process is divided into progressive stages of achievement.
3. The program cultivates mutual support within peer groups.
4. The training is oriented toward long-term career goals.
5. Administratively-set expectations and norms of teacher conduct are clearly articulated and disseminated.
6. Teachers must assimilate a professional vocabulary.
7. New teachers receive supervision coaching, demonstration, and assessment.
8. The responsibility for supervision should be distributed throughout the faculty in a tightly organized, consistent, and continuous program. (1)

Two highlighted characteristics of particular interest to my research study are findings which support the cultivation of community within peer groups, and exposure to

consistent supervision, coaching, demonstration, and assessment. A significant characteristic of teacher induction programs is that community is reinforced through peer groups, in addition to providing collaboration with a mentor.

The ERIC Digest 4 also highlights alternative studies from the 1980s which endorse the cultivation of community. Griffin (1985) emphasizes that quality teacher education and novice teacher induction programs provide “continuous feed back among program participants” (2). Griffin also cites the importance of program-specific objectives. All teacher induction programs have specific school standards and expected behaviors inherent in their school cultures. Therefore, when induction programs set out specific expectations, they should translate state and federal requirements into the language of the specific college/university culture. Griffin and Hukill (1983), Galvez-Hjornevik (1985), and Zimpher (1985) also published studies reviewed in Digest 4. They explain that high-quality induction programs all contain “elements of faculty and facility induction, classroom management, student discipline, professional conduct, school and school district expectations, and professional obligations” (2). These studies also assert that new teachers should be exposed to a variety of field experiences, mentor teachers, teaching styles, and student populations.

The popularity of teacher induction inspired a second ERIC Review, “Current Developments in Teacher Induction Programs” (ERIC Digest 5, 1987). According to the Digest 5, several reforms appear consistently across the United States. Generally, the induction term is intended for one to three years. Most popular among programs considered “successful” (low attrition, top scores on professional assessments, high hiring rates) are fifth-year internship programs, entry-year assistance programs, and teacher

mentor programs. Reporting on the studies conducted by Hall (1982), Griffin (1985), and McDonald (1980-83), the Digest's authors comment on the value of fifth-year induction programs as ones providing:

continuity between the closely supervised preservice experience and the assumption of full classroom responsibilities. Inexperience accounts for most of a new teacher's problems. Student teachers [those who had a practicum experience rather than an internship] have not survived a series of instructional failures, experienced class boredom, discovered a wall of learning resistance, or felt the isolated entrapment of teaching "forever." (ED# 2694061, 1987, p.1)

Huling-Austin's 1985 study was included in the ERIC Digest 5, in which Huling-Austin comments that the highest goal of induction programs is to provide "the support and assistance necessary for the successful development of beginning teachers who enter the profession with the background, ability, and personal characteristics to become acceptable [we might add exceptional] teachers" (2).

### Teacher Thinking

#### *Teacher as intellectual*

According to Connelly et al. (1997), recent inquiries into teacher knowledge and teacher thinking are part of a revolution in academic research concerning how educators think about themselves and their classroom practice. Accordingly, current research in teacher thinking has undergone a much-needed transformation. From the largely unflattering portraits of teacher preparation and practice painted by researchers in the 1960s and 1970s, which dismissed teacher practices as simple, pragmatic, and inadequate (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975), to the research produced by Elbaz (1983), Nemser and Floden (1994), and Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1997, 1999, 2000), researchers now conduct more studies which go beyond identifying *what* teachers know to describing *how* they know. These studies investigate the behaviors that help create dynamic

classroom environments (see Belenky, et al., 1986). Connelly and Clandinin (1997) further assert that in traditional teacher research, test scores were valued over the processes of teaching and learning.

Traditionally, researchers assumed that teacher characteristics (e.g. warmth, firmness, punctuality) and teaching/learning methods and processes (e.g. lecture, laboratory, seatwork, drill) were the main teaching areas of importance to student learning. In contrast to the concern for teacher characteristics and teaching/learning methods, the assumption in [current] teacher knowledge research is that the most important area is what teachers know and how that knowledge is expressed in teaching. (666)

Nemser and Floden (1986) describe the interest in validating teacher knowledge as a revolt against the prevailing view that “teachers have experience and academics have knowledge” (512). Research into teachers’ professional knowledge has lead many into a new landscape—a landscape of personal practical knowledge—which is situated in a place where one kind of knowing is not placed above another. By exploring the multi-dimensional perspectives of beliefs, insights, and practices held and carried out by teachers, Nemser and Floden believe that new insights into the value of teacher knowledge will continue to emerge.

#### *Personal practical knowledge*

Elbaz (1983) suggested categorizing teachers’ practical knowledge into five primary knowledge domains: self, teaching environment, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction (513). (For the purposes of this literature review, the work of Elbaz’s knowledge of self will be highlighted for its widespread influence on future teacher thinking research.) Elbaz (1993) is also credited with distinguishing three levels of generality within a teacher’s practical knowledge: rules of practice, practical principles, and images (514). Grossman (1995) highlights the importance of Elbaz’

findings, describing the “knowledge of self” as “teachers’ awareness of their own values, goals, philosophies, styles, personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses as they relate to teaching” (22). Individuals arriving at such levels of self-awareness have likely made special effort to reflect on and to contemplate their practice. As time management quickly becomes a distressing factor in many teachers’ lives, Colleges of Education would do well to support and model the value of reflection.

In her study of teacher knowledge, Lampert (1984) combines Elbaz’s “knowledge of self” with the additional component, “knowledge of student,” explaining that the teacher combines personal knowledge with an understanding of whom s/he is caring for—knowing students in a way that transcends paper and pencil tests. Lambert describes knowledge of students as

the teacher’s vision of what a child should become [. . .] based in what that individual teacher cares about as well as what she knows about the child. This personal knowledge is essential in accomplishing what teachers care about, what students want, and what the curriculum requires. (513)

Lampert argues that the teacher’s personal knowledge and practical applications of that knowledge are assets to the teacher as a professional. Rather than viewing personal knowledge as deficiency, Lampert argues that teachers use their personal knowledge to manage practical dilemmas, and that “expert” teachers who use their past experiences to evaluate and justify the ways in which they conduct themselves in the classroom provided valuable examples for the profession.

McAninch (1994) expands on the research of Elbaz and Lampert, promoting teacher knowledge as a form of *clinical consciousness*. McAninch compares the conditions of teaching with that of the medical practitioner; both professions depend in its practitioners’ expert performance in environments of multi-dimensionality and

immediacy (12). McAninch also argues, however, that her findings do not completely support the suitability of clinical consciousness in all areas of classroom practice. Too much dependence on intuition or subjective knowing could lead to an overabundance of subjectivity or to an over-reliance on received knowledge. Rather than depending too much on their clinical consciousness, McAninch suggests that teachers and teacher-candidates gain knowledge from studying case theory. By studying an educational philosopher's theory, Dewey, for example, teachers could then read a case study through the lens of a particular thinker, and interpret the actions taken in the case with a new inclination. McAninch posited that academic exercises such as this might encourage reflection and develop an appreciation for different perspectives (99).

There appears to be support in the educational community for exploring teacher thinking through case study discussion. Moje and Wade (1997) conducted a qualitative study involving case study discussion and reflection. The research included 40 participants (30 preservice education students and 10 practicing teachers), with data collected in the forms of transcripts of case-study discussions and debriefing sessions, field notes, group interviews, and individual interviews. Moje and Wade state that their purpose in the study was 'to understand the sociocultural and semiotic tools preservice and inservice teachers used to mediate and construct images and issues of teaching and learning' (691). This study was specifically focused on the teaching of literacy; however, the data they gathered and analyzed may also have implications for teachers' thinking in other areas.

Culling research from sociology, anthropology, and medicine, the authors discussed past arguments related to the social nature of knowledge. Case study method is

frequently utilized in other sociological fields, and Moje and Wade argue that the in-depth study of classroom cases sheds light on the knowledge situated in these contexts, giving practitioners time for discussion and reflection, and perhaps avoiding some of the problems associated with practicum experiences.

If knowledge is situated in social contexts, then learning and teaching should also be situated in sites of teaching and learning, whether classroom home, or community sites.... Thus teaching cases can be used to 'help prospective teachers understand the contingent and contextualized nature of teaching.' In addition, case methods that accompany teaching cases can be used to develop both 'habits of thought and knowledge of particular content' because teaching cases represent sites of knowledge construction. (1997, p. 692)

These researchers promoted several tools for accessing teacher thinking, ranging from the concrete (paper & pencil, reading, writing, role-play and dialogue), to the more abstract (discussing theory, discourse, and ideology).

In their findings, Moje and Wade reported surprise at the preservice teachers' application of control-oriented choices when faced with resistant students. Even though the preservice teachers had been recently exposed to theories of constructivism and multiculturalism (which advocate student-centered learning), many participants characterized the teaching cases as examples of the sample teacher's loss of control. In contrast, Moje and Wade also report that the inservice teachers' internalized the cases. For example, experienced teachers were quoted in the findings as commenting, "This hit too close to home. I saw myself doing the exact same thing" (699). Another participant stated,

I don't remember connecting with this case in light of any particular readings but more in light of my own experiences. It made sense to me because it was (and sometimes still is) me! My early years of teaching were marked with the 'pedagogy of telling' and much of this case sounded familiar. (700)

Moje and Wade conclude that while case study and reflection are valuable windows into the knowledge base and thinking of teachers at all career stages, their findings in this study lead them to believe that for the experienced teachers, “the tools of experience, emotion, and empathy allowed them to use cases to reflect on their own—sometimes painful—practice through the vehicle of another experience” (700).

Finally, Moje and Wade express concern over the preservice teachers’ emphatic (and sometimes disparaging) critiques of the teachers presented in the cases. The researchers argue that at this early point in their educational careers, “these preservice teachers found themselves in a university activity network in which, consciously or not, theorists and researchers focus on problematizing, highlighting, analyzing, or fixing teaching, learning and schooling” (703). They suggest a shift from this “fix-it” approach to an exploration approach, arguing that reflection on a classroom case study does not require a finding a solution.

### Cyberculture

Because an online digital community was created during my dissertation research, an overview of the issues pertaining to cyberspace and cyberculture studies is in order. Silver (2000) explains in his comprehensive overview of cyberculture studies that the term *cyberspace* was coined by William Gibson in his 1984 futuristic novel, *Neuromancer*. Quoting Gibson, Silver defines cyberspace as a “consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity” (Gibson qtd. in Silver, 2000, p. 3). Cyberspace takes up digital space rather than physical space. (The geography of cyberspace is generally described as the domain

of the Internet.) In his retrospective of cyberspace and cyberculture studies, Silver contextualizes the emergent field of cyberculture studies by dividing it into three stages or generations: *popular cyberculture*, *cyberculture studies*, and *critical cyberculture studies*.

The first stage, popular cyberculture, is marked by its journalistic origins and characterized by its descriptive nature, limited dualism, and use of Internet-as-frontier metaphor. The second stage . . . focuses largely on virtual communities and online identities and benefits from an influx of academic scholars. The third stage . . . expands the notion of cyberculture to include . . . online interactions, digital discourses, access and denial to the Internet, and interface design of cyberspace. (1)

Cyberculture studies gained great popularity in the early 1990s as cultural critics and journalists (both pop and mainstream) began reporting stories about the Internet, calling it the “information superhighway.” Silver notes that what began as an occasional note in a newspaper or newsmagazine’s technology section in 1990 quickly became 1993-1994 feature articles and cover stories in such newsmagazines as *Time* and *Newsweek*. With its primary “frontier” metaphor, early popular cyberculture texts were descriptive, and had the necessary burden of explaining the Internet and the “unenviable task of introducing non-technical readers to the largely technical, pre-World Wide Web version of cyberspace.” Popular cyberculture was also the victim of an unfortunate dualism which sprung from cultural critics who believed that the Internet, with its indecipherable language (Hypertext Markup Language, or HTML), would deteriorate literacy and create economic and social fragmentation. The “techno futurists”, on the other hand, refused to recognize any complications in cyberspace and “declared cyberspace a new frontier of civilization, a digital domain that could bring down big business, foster democratic participation, and end economic and social inequalities” (2-3).

To describe the second generation of cyberculture studies, Silver quotes A.R. Stone's developing definition of cyberspace as "incontrovertibly social space in which people still meet face-to-face, but under new definitions of both 'meet' and 'face' (Stone qtd. in Silver, p. 4). By the mid-1990s scholars freely problematized cyberculture and cyberspace, arguing that participation in the digital landscape involved complex individual and social negotiations, where participants interacted in multi-user domains (MUDs) and online chat rooms. Internet companies like AOL and Compuserve were quickly popularizing electronic communications like e-mail, listservs, chat rooms and news groups. With cyberculture's increased accessibility, terms like online identity and virtual community entered the digital vernacular. From its earliest days, the Internet had been utilized by academia, with scholars freely participating in scholarly inquiry and discussions. But by the middle of the decade, university administrations hopped on the bandwagon, calling for funding to wire their campuses to support national and international networking.

Silver's third generation—critical cyberculture studies—has recently emerged as a model for scholars engaged in employing and addressing issues of power as they relate to social difference—gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and ability. Acknowledging that this new era of cyberculture studies is a chaotic and complex one, Silver offers four dominant areas of interest, which intersect, contextualize, and problematize cyberculture's landscape. Taken together, these areas serve as the foundation for critical cyberculture studies.

Critical cyberculture studies [hereafter, CCS] explores the social, cultural, and economic interactions which take place online  
[CCS] unfolds and examines the stories we tell about such interactions;

[CCS] analyzes a range of social, cultural, political, and economic considerations which encourage, make possible, and/or thwart individual and group access to such interactions and, [CCS] assesses the deliberate, accidental, and alternative technological decision- and design-processes which, when implemented, form the intersections between any and all four of these focal points. (8-10)

In order to expose and contextualize the foci and interactions mentioned above, CCS scholars participate in ethnographic studies of cyberspace's individuals and communities—examining their systems, histories, characteristics, discourses, and infrastructures. Additionally, CCS examines the distinct issues of access, ethnocentrism, and hegemonic structures permeating cyberspace.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed trends in teacher education and reform from the 1950s through the early 1990s. Teacher induction programs, teacher thinking, and teacher's personal-practical knowledge were also addressed. Finally, a brief discussion of cyberculture and its place in this dissertation study was included. As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, a review of the literature pertaining to qualitative research methodologies, discourse analysis and computer-mediated-communication will be presented in Chapter III: Methodology Literature Review.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY LITERATURE REVIEW

*We see living an educated life as an ongoing process. People's lives are composed over time: stories are lived and told, retold and re-lived. . . Education is interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling our life stories.* Connelly & Clandinin (1988)

#### Chapter Overview

After discussing the research questions guiding the study, I review qualitative research methodologies and discuss the qualities and characteristics of qualitative research that apply to my topics. I also provide an overview of qualitative research possibilities, then explain why narrative inquiry was chosen for the scope of my research study. Methods involved in narrative research, such as *storying*, paradigmatic analysis, and diachronic and synchronic data collection are discussed in the narrative inquiry section of this chapter. I then provide a review of recent qualitative studies on learning to teach.

Because electronic communication methods and styles played a primary role in data collection, I also provide a brief introduction to discourse analysis, discuss relevant terminology, and present a review of recent research on electronic discourse analysis and computer-mediated communication.

#### Introduction

Inspired by a dual interest in the complexities of the transition experiences of novice teachers and in the effectiveness of community building through communication, the topic and purpose for this study was to explore the participants' teaching transitions more deeply. Additionally, I explored the impact of an intervention, namely,

participation in a peer learning community through electronic and face-to-face communication, on the transition experiences of the participants.

This study examined the perceptions, day-to-day experiences, and evolving identities of four secondary English Education interns during their first year of teaching. Throughout the study, the participants told their own transition stories, and through qualitative research methods (specifically, in-depth interview, observation, and narrative construction), I asked, listened, read, and added my own teaching stories to our electronic and face-to-face discussions.

I also employed online technologies to build and reinforce the community. Through online communication, via an electronic discussion board and group e-mail, I attempted to establish a secure place where the participants and I discussed topics of interest and shared news about our experiences in the classroom and in our daily lives.

Qualitative research was the guiding paradigm for my study, with particular emphasis on narrative inquiry. The data collected and analyzed for this study included transcripts of seven months of electronic conversations and transcripts of individual interviews and a face-to-face group meeting. Throughout their internship, the participants have engaged in group discussions, storying their experiences and describing individual and teaching identities.

### Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study. These questions were first formulated in an introductory course to qualitative research methodology.

1) What are the issues involved in the transition experiences of intern/novice teachers?

2) In what ways will participation in a peer community, through both face-to-face and electronic communication, impact that transition?

### Qualitative Research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research possesses a multiple-methods focus, all of which involve interpretive and naturalistic approaches to the subject(s) under study. Qualitative researchers seek to study persons, cultures, and phenomena in their natural settings, and attempt to make sense of what they encounter according to the participants' perspectives. In their *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000), Denzin and Lincoln compare the field of qualitative research to New York's Brooklyn Bridge: "It joins multiple interpretive communities; it stretches across different landscapes. It offers a pathway back and forth between the public and the private, between science and the sacred, between disciplined inquiry and artistic expression" (x).

To create more familiarity and to widen the knowledge base of qualitative research in the social sciences, Ambert, Adler, Adler, and Detzner (1995) define and discuss some of the commonly practiced methods and epistemologies of qualitative research. For their review, they list four of the recognized foci and goals of qualitative research.

1. [seeking] depth rather than breadth. Instead of drawing from a large sample to represent an entire population, qualitative research seeks to acquire in-depth and intimate information about a smaller group of participants;
2. [learning] how and why people behave, think, and make meaning as they do—rather than focusing on or attempting to predict behaviors on a large scale;
3. [frequently falling] within the context of discovery rather than verification qualitative research is not necessarily guided by traditional perspectives; nor is it propelled by literature-driven questions and hypotheses—The primary commitment is to the empirical world—to convey its workings in its phenomenological integrity; [and]
4. [refining] the process of theory emergence, where researchers generate conceptual images of their settings and then shape and reshape them according to

their ongoing observations, thus enhancing the validity of their developing conceptualizations. (880)

Additionally, Morse (1998) strongly stresses that quality in qualitative research depends upon the rigor of the study and the caliber of the researcher(s). Qualitative research is only as good as the investigator. It is the researcher, who, through skill, patience, and wisdom obtains the information necessary during data collection and fieldwork to produce a rich qualitative study. Good qualitative researchers must be prepared to learn and to be trusted in the setting; they must be patient and wait until they are accepted by informants; they must be flexible and resilient. Wysocki (2001) also asserts the view that depth is an essential component of qualitative research: “Qualitative research methods [are ones that] emphasize depth of understanding and the deeper meanings of the human experience and which are aimed at generating theoretically richer observations” (312).

As stated above, I was also seeking depth rather than breadth. By deeply exploring the experiences of the four participants, I hoped to become acutely aware of their perspectives, interactions, and experiences. I sought to learn how these interns created meaning and constructed images of themselves, their classrooms, and their worlds. Unlike the majority of traditional preservice teacher studies I have read, I had neither the interest nor the intention of predicting the outcomes of the preservice teachers’ experiences. Polkinghorne (1995) describes the distinction between traditional teacher education research and qualitative inquiry.

In the [traditionally received] approach to research, categories are often selected prior to the collection of data. Researchers spell out in advance the operations of measurement and observation that determine whether an event or thing is to be considered an instance of the categories of interest. . . . In contrast, qualitative

researchers emphasize the construction or discovery of concepts that give categorical identity to the particulars and items in their collected data. (10)

Similarly, I examined the data multiple times, looking for patterns and common themes. The data analysis was based in a recursive process which attempted to organize the data according to commonalities. After reading and examining the transcripts of our electronic discussions, I identified five common themes. Polkinghorne describes this type of examination and subsequent categorization paradigmatic analysis (9). The five themes identified were major and minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, and identities. Once the themes were identified, I sent them to the participants, asked for feedback, and then conducted a personal interview with each participant, using the themes as a suggested interview guide. Near the conclusion of the study, we all met together for the face-to-face group meeting. The participants referred to the five themes throughout the personal interviews and during the group meeting. An additional theme, atypical experiences, came to light after the group meeting. Once the atypical stories were introduced into the group discussion, the participants referred to them multiple times, contributing accounts of their personal atypical experiences.

#### Triangulation in Qualitative Research

For qualitative researchers, triangulation is generally used to corroborate and/or confirm information and analysis. Morse (1998) describes triangulation as an important consideration for any research study.

Different 'lenses' or perspectives result from the use of different methods, often more than one method may be used within a project so the researcher can gain a more holistic view of the setting. Two or more qualitative methods may be used sequentially or simultaneously, provided the analysis is kept separate and the methods are not muddled. (66)

Janesick (1998) explores triangulation in more detail. She describes the four primary forms of triangulation as data, investigator, theory, and methodological. The two triangulation methods I used in this study were data triangulation and methodological triangulation. According to Janesick, data triangulation involves reliance on a variety of sources; methodological triangulation involves multiple methods to research one topic. I primarily employed observation of electronic and face-to-face interactions, member checks, document analyses, and discourse analyses. The categories developed during analysis of the electronic data were flexible and open to modification and/or substitution as the need arose.

### Qualitative Research Possibilities

There were a number of qualitative methodologies appropriate for exploring the transition experience. The following section provides a brief description of several research methods considered for this study. I also provide my justifications for adopting narrative inquiry as the most appropriate method for exploring my research questions.

#### *Phenomenology*

According to Morse (1998), phenomenology is best suited to a study “if the research question concerns the meaning of a phenomena” (64). As an example, Morse asks readers to consider a hypothetical study exploring arrivals and departures as they relate to patterns of human attachment. If a researcher wanted to study this phenomenologically, s/he might ask, “What is the meaning of arriving home?” (65). The scope of a phenomenological study seeks the meaning(s) behind “the moment.” In considering my study, the transition experiences of intern teachers in relation to phenomenology, the study would need to explore a particular moment or series of

moments pertaining to a pre-selected aspect of the internship. For example, a phenomenological study related to my research might examine a “regular” day during the intern-participant’s first year, the first day of school, the last day of school, a parent-conference, or the English-teaching intern’s first experience with a class set of essays.

The above examples point to one of the most popular tenets in qualitative research texts: an emphatic stress on the importance of articulating the research question *before* choosing a methodology (Ambert, et. al., 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hones, 1999; Morse, 1998; Seale, 1999; Wolcott, 1990; Wysocki, 2001). My research questions would not have been appropriate for phenomenological inquiry because the answers to the research questions did not necessarily have clear beginnings, middles or ends. I wanted to study the participants’ transition narratives during many moments of their first year as teachers. Additionally, phenomenological research requires that the researcher bracket out her/his pre-conceived beliefs, opinions, and biases. I wanted the freedom to participate actively with the participants keeping my own perspectives and opinions intact.

### *Case Study*

Another possibility considered for my research is the case study. Stake (2000) explains that a case study may take any number of simple or complex forms: “It may be a child or a classroom of children, or an incident such as a mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition.” This definition may lead to confusion over what research topics may be best explored through a case study. Stake provides several examples to clarify his definition. “A child may be a case. A doctor may be a case—but his *doctoring* probably lacks the specificity, boundedness, to be called a case. An agency may be a

case. But the *reasons* for child neglect or the *policies* of dealing with neglectful parents will seldom be considered a case” (436).

Stake also explains that the goal of the case study researcher is to think more about specifics than generalities. “The case is a specific One” (436). Although I could have chosen to alter my research questions to construct a case study, I wanted to collect multiple perspectives on the transition experience. I also wanted to incorporate the additional component of communication and learning community into the study. Stake also describes a type of case study may be appropriate for future research: the collective case study. In a collective case study, sample cases are studied and data is collected from several individuals, maintaining that a deeper understanding of these participants will lead to a “better understanding . . . about a still larger collection of cases” (437). In contrast, I wanted to present the participants’ narratives in the most authentic manner possible. In a collective case study, the various perspectives on the interns’ transition experiences would be further filtered through my viewpoint and positions. Additionally, I was hesitant to group all of my participants into one collective case for fear of collapsing individual stories into one collective narrative. The possibility that a less conspicuous voice would be limited or overlooked by the power of a stronger one provided an additional reason for supporting the unique perspectives made through narrative inquiry.

### *Life History*

Tedlock (2000) describes life history research as one of the earliest and most popular forms of narrative-based study. He provides Zaniecki’s 1918 study of Polish peasants as an example. Life history emerged as an alternative form of ethnography, combining data gathered from interview, fieldwork, and cultural study. Tedlock explains

that life histories rely upon the rhetorical and literary device of *synecdoche*, using a part to stand in for the whole, when “a ‘representative’ individual is selected to stand for an entire culture” (459). Conducting a life history study in which a single intern teacher represented the culture of interns at a particular university might have been appropriate for my research questions. However, one of the foci of this research was to establish, participant in, and examine a peer community. I chose to pursue narrative inquiry over life history for similar reasons as those mentioned for case study, and because I wanted to explore the participants’ multiple perspectives in concert with examining the impact of participation in the learning community.

Finally, as a researcher keenly interested in studying the transition experience qualitatively, I found Ambert’s (1995) advice both helpful and motivating:

Above all, the richness of the quotes, the clarity of examples, and the depth of illustrations in a qualitative study should serve to highlight the most salient features of the data. Evaluation of what has been included in this respect should be made on the basis of how these data illuminate and give readers a sense of being there, visualizing the [group] members, feeling their conflicts and emotions, and absorbing the flavor of the . . . setting. (6)

#### Narrative Inquiry

After considering the possibilities of phenomenology, case study, and life history, I ultimately chose narrative inquiry, which enabled me to employ conversation and narrative as primary data sources. Narrative collection relies on the use of stories and storytelling to understand individuals’ lived experiences. For the purposes of this research, *story* refers to a particular type of narrative, which rejects the more traditional understanding of story as a “falsehood or misrepresentation,” instead defining stories as “narratives that combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.7). Through the telling (and hearing) of stories, we can interpret, challenge, and

re-interpret our own life experiences. Narrative inquiry makes conspicuous the personal and the particular—the storyteller as well as the story. Narrative inquiry also falls under the more comprehensive tradition of narrative and biography, including oral histories, biographies, autobiographies, and life histories.

According to Conle (2000), narrative inquiry falls securely within the qualitative tradition and advances research by using the voices of the participants when presenting the narrative data. Narrative Inquiry differs from more traditional uses of narrative in education, that is, from didactic and strategic uses of narrative. The major difference is related to its open-ended, experiential, and quest-like qualities. Narrative inquiry retains these qualities in two significant areas: research and professional development. In both areas, its use of intercultural communication has become particularly productive (50). Both biographical research and narrative inquiry fall under the larger domain of naturalistic inquiry, which assumes and embraces multiple interpretations of reality. Additionally, researchers who are working within this perspective strive to understand how individuals construct their own realities.

Conle discusses the use of narrative in research fields such as psychology and anthropology, which gained scholarly attention in the late 1970s. While teaching and researching in Toronto, Canada, Conle and her colleagues discovered that narrative was widely successful in unlocking many of the so-called secrets of teacher knowledge and professional knowledge. Their success was credited largely to the insistence of teacher/researcher collaboration in the presenting stories of teaching and schooling. By 1993, Conle explains, narrative inquiry was an acceptable mode of inquiry in the research community.

Conle also argues that an appealing aspect of narrative inquiry is that it provides a space “where data analysis and final documents did not have to relinquish their narrative quality” (51). In the early 1980s, Conle and her colleagues took an active research role in local elementary and secondary school communities and used teachers’ participation in narrative research “as an opportunity for professional development for the teachers being studied in the research projects. To become better acquainted with their own story was indeed interesting for busy teachers who had little time for reflective writing themselves” (51).

In *Narrative Inquiry* (2000) Connelly and Clandinin, two of the principal voices in the field, discuss their development as qualitative researchers and narrative inquirers as they story their research-histories. The authors describe the attempt to further the understanding of teacher thinking using narrative research. Connelly and Clandinin moved beyond traditional discussions focused on what teachers do not know, to investigating “how” teachers know and interpret practical knowledge. They explain,

We see teaching and teacher knowledge as expressions of embodied individual and social stories, and we think narratively as we enter into research relationships with teachers, create field texts, and write storied accounts of educational lives.  
(4)

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) worked to understand teachers ways of knowing, and extended their use of narrative inquiry by going beyond their own institution (their stories, their graduate students’ stories, and affiliated teacher educators’ stories), to reach out into the communities of administrators, mentor teachers, and education’s governing bodies (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) continue to expand the scope of narrative research, explaining that thinking about our world in narrative forms and telling others the stories of our lives are behaviors which come naturally to us.

We might say that if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively. For us, life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities. (17)

Using the tools of narrative inquiry for my research, I hoped to enhance my awareness of the transition experience. The participants were asked to *story* their lives during their internship year, and they participated in exercises and discussions which asked them to create metaphors describing how they understood themselves, their classrooms, and their worlds. According to the examples that Connelly, Clandinin, and other narrative inquirers have used (Conle, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1999, 2000; Hones, 1998), the participants in this study were thinking about and storying their lives through many different contexts: people, time, actions/re-actions, certainty/uncertainty, and environment.

### Narrative Cognition and Paradigmatic Analysis

The work of Donald Polkinghorne (1995) has proven most helpful in creating a framework for understanding narrative analysis. Polkinghorne drew upon the work of cognitive psychologist, Jerome Bruner. Bruner challenged the traditional division of language forms, which separated knowledge-generating language from emotive language. Polkinghorne explains Bruner's positions:

Bruner argued that narrative knowledge is more than mere emotive expression; rather, it is a legitimate form of reasoned knowing. . . .Narrative or storied discourse communicates worthwhile and thoughtful knowledge, although the form of this knowledge differs from that of the received tradition. . . . The

significance of Bruner's contribution is his expansion of ways of knowing beyond the singular mode advocated by the received tradition to include the narrative mode. (9)

Researchers employing paradigmatic cognition and analysis to their data means that they classify an instance or example according to its category, looking for similarities more earnestly than looking for differences. Polkinghorne further clarifies this point:

This kind of thinking focuses on what makes the item a member of a category. It does not focus on what makes it different from other members of the category. Thus the actual size, shade of red, or marks on the surface that make a particular item unique are not of primary concern. (10)

In this study of intern teachers, I derived the five themes (major/minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, identities) after reading and analyzing the community's electronic discussions. The personal interviews were then constructed around the themes, and our topical electronic discussions continued as they had previously. I continued to analyze the electronic and face-to-face data, adding appropriate items and examples to the five themes. As stated earlier, an additional theme, atypical experiences, was added after the face-to-face group meeting.

Because the data was collected over an extended period of time and through the telling and retelling of narratives, a brief explanation of diachronic and synchronic data may be helpful. Polkinghorne (1995) classifies temporal data into two categories: diachronic and synchronic. "Diachronic data contain temporal information about the sequential relationship of events... [describing] when events occurred and the effect events had on subsequent happenings" (12). Diachronic data generally takes the forms of autobiographical accounts and includes references to past events and to intended results. Synchronic data "lack the historical and developmental dimension . . . [and] are framed as categorical answers to questions put by an interviewer" (12).

The intern-participants in my study provided both types of data through spontaneously generated messages to the group and through stories they told during personal interviews.

### Recent Qualitative Studies in Teacher Education

Although there is research employing the multiple perspectives of novice and preservice teachers, educators would also benefit from research into specific transition experiences of novice teachers. Many in the educational community lament their inability to retain new teachers, and school districts across the United States offer incentive schemes (signing bonuses, subsidized housing) to keep teachers in schools. School districts promoting these incentives might also benefit from research focusing on the quality of the transition experience itself—that critical period when the individual is still both student and teacher, newly laboring under the responsibilities of independent and demanding roles. Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998) note the sizable presence of quantitative data on novice teachers and argue that increased qualitative research in this area deserves wide-spread attention. In the following section, I review several qualitative studies on learning to teach.

Offutt (1995) conducted a three-year qualitative study which examined the issues related to problematic versus successful student-teachers. Offutt published her findings regarding the tendencies of successful and problematic student-teachers based on an analysis of the participants' motivation, priorities, effort, self-concept, and perceived effectiveness. Offutt's study included 45 undergraduate teacher education students in a small, private university in the United States. Data included in the study were journals, anecdotal records, videotaped classroom observations, evaluations from professors and cooperating teachers, and self-report evaluations. In order to analyze the data, Offutt used

Glaser and Strauss' constant comparative method for developing and coding categories.

The five categories mentioned above were divided among successful and problematic student-teachers. Offutt concluded that teacher education programs might be able to predict success in their prospective candidates by analyzing the responses from the following five questions:

1. Why do you want to become a teacher? (What is your motivation?)
2. What important events are happening in your life at this time or in the near future? (What are your priorities?)
3. What are you prepared to do to become a teacher? (What effort are you willing to expend?)
4. Describe yourself. How would others describe your ability to teach/ (How healthy is your self concept?)
5. What impact do you think you can have on each child you teach? (How effective do you think you will be?) (292)

Offutt advises using these questions with prospective student-teachers early in their teacher education programs. The discussions surfacing from the answers to these questions might point to potential problems in the teacher education coursework or future practicum experience. Offutt does not offer any advice to ameliorate the deficiencies in problematic student-teachers.

Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, and Silins (2000) conducted a study of teacher education students' primary concerns and coping strategies. Their study combined qualitative and quantitative methods in order to identify aspects of the internship/practicum "that concern students most and least; examine students' experiences of stress in relation to gender, age, and degree status; define strategies that students report help them cope with practicum stresses; and investigate the relationship between stress and teaching performance" (19). For the quantitative portions of their study, the researchers examined two cohorts of teacher education students who provided

responses on the researchers' survey instrument: "The Perceptions of Teaching Questionnaire."

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of a survey of practicum stresses; the second portion of the questionnaire provided a section for open-ended responses to the question: "What coping strategies did you use to cope with any stress that you may have encountered during the practicum?" (22). The open-ended responses from the first cohort were narrowed to nine statements and then given to the second cohort and vice-versa. Each group was asked to rank the top five strategies (of the nine) that were most important/effective for them.

In addition to the data collected from the student-teacher participants, the supervising teachers were also asked to rate their student-teacher on a five-point satisfaction scale according to seven teaching areas: professional qualities, curriculum knowledge, planning for learning, teaching strategies, assessment of student learning, management of the learning environment, and self-evaluation of teaching performance (23-24).

The researchers then analyzed the data in the qualitative portion of the study with the qualitative data analysis software program, NUD\*IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing), to analyze the students' comments on the open-ended portion of the questionnaire. From their analysis, they identified four categories of coping strategy: Personal, Professional, Social, and Institutional. The researchers report that the most critical factor involved in the increases or decrease of stress was the relationship between the student-teacher and her/his mentor teacher(s).

The supervising teachers in our study appeared to be able to manage the dual roles of support and evaluation with little conflict. However, while students identified 'teacher support' as a prime strategy used to cope with practicum stress, with 'talking to teachers' as the most frequently cited strategy, it was also the case that the teachers' less than satisfactory assessments of students were associated with the students' concerns about the student-teacher relationship. (11)

The recommendations for further research which emerged from the two-year study focus most strongly on the factors of social isolation (where the teacher might be the only one in a placement school), and the quality of the mentor teacher (professionally and interpersonally). The authors did not collect data on the attrition rate in relationship to teacher stress and performance levels, and strongly recommend further research in this area.

Another issue related to research on the transition and early experiences of novice teachers speaks to the internal conflict teacher education programs seem to have when facing student-teacher failure. In order to expose and better understand issue that surround student-teacher failure, Sudinza and Knowles (1993) combined quantitative and qualitative methods to study two groups of preservice teachers who did not meet the final requirements for teacher certification. Their data was primarily gathered at a large-regional public university and at a mid-sized private university, and was focused specifically on the records of student-teachers who failed their student-teaching practicum assignment, or were not recommended for professional teacher certification. Data collected for their study included several case studies and all student records (both official and anecdotal). The records that were reviewed and analyzed dated from 1980 to

1990. During their study, Sudinza and Knowles created a list of factors they considered essential to understanding the “failure phenomenon” (256). The factors listed included,

personal history-based characteristics (patterns of social interactions, personality, academic history, knowledge of self as teacher); proficiency at expected teaching and professional practices (scope, content area knowledge, curriculum and planning skills, classroom management and discipline); and externally imposed factors (personal circumstances and student teaching contexts. (256)

In their conclusions, the authors identify age and undergraduate preparation as two relevant factors, citing that a majority of the failing student-teachers were “older individuals making mid-career changes” (260). Many of the students in the study also had lower overall GPAs than the majority of their cohorts. They also had low results on standardized tests (260). However, the most significant of factors identified in their study related directly to mismatches, both personal and in placement preparation. The records that the researchers analyzed suggested that many of the failing student-teachers were placed in schools in which they had had no previous exposure. The authors also reported great difficulty for the students who differed significantly from their mentor teachers in interpersonal skills. “Mismatches with school placements indicated by serious and dysfunctional difficulties and conflicts associated with cooperating teachers’ styles, methods and philosophies, proved fatal to some preservice teachers” (260).

One of the most striking differences between the large-regional university and the mid-sized private institution was that student-teachers in the smaller university who initially reported difficulties were given alternative placements. According to the record studies, the students at the large university who reported troubles early were not provided with a second placement opportunity. However, Sudinza and Knowles do not provide any

data regarding the success of students who were provided second placements. The researchers cite these mismatches as the most striking factor in their study.

Perhaps, the phenomena of student-teacher failure can be reduced to a mismatch of models among the key players and contexts, that is, between the student-teacher and previous school experiences and expectations as they influence internal images of good teaching; the teacher education program; and the cooperating teacher and school community. (260)

Nevertheless, Sudinza and Knowles do not endorse reducing the failure of any student-teacher to a single factor. Rather, these students' experiences and resulting failures might provide "emerging patterns of the antecedents of failure" (260).

Another finding from this study worthy of note (and one which frequently occurs in preservice teacher studies) is that many of the failing student-teachers "indicated that they did not know what else to do with their degrees and felt pressed to pursue teaching as the only likely avenue of employment" (257). This finding may suggest to teacher educators that they take on the factors identified in this study and consider modifying their current programs and expectations to include a stronger emphasis on multiple placement sites (within a range of urban, rural, and suburban environments) and enhance the attention paid to both student-teachers' and mentors' interpersonal skills.

#### Discourse Analysis and Dissertation Study

A majority of the data collected and analyzed for my research was electronic, including asynchronous online discussion board and e-mail conversations. Because multiple discourses played a large role in my data, I will provide a brief introduction to discourse analysis, discuss its relevant terminology to narrative, conversation, and storytelling, and present a review of recent research on discourse analysis.

### *Definitions and relevant terminology*

*Discourse analysis* is “the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring . . . spoken or written discourse. . . . It refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts” (Stubbs, 1983, p. 1). One purpose for discourse analysis is an in-depth study of communication in action—of speech acts and speech events—the study of naturally occurring language.

Stubbs (1983) explains that the ambiguities of language usage and communication, causes discourse analysis to be neither pure nor certain. He comments that language users have “a powerful urge to make sense of whatever nonsense is presented to them, and this principle has obvious relevance” to active communication (5). Discourse analysis is used to study a wide range of language functions. Stubbs includes promising, asserting, describing, impressing, intimidating, persuading, comforting, gossiping, arguing, complaining, reciting, swearing, and protesting. Discourse analysis is also described as a “system of systems” (8), where the language people use when communicating is part of a larger system of specific social expectations, contained within the specific culture(s).

When qualitative researchers speak of discourse analysis, they are typically describing the methods qualitative researchers use to analyze data gathered in the fields of education, cognitive psychology, sociology, and educational anthropology . Gee, Michaels, and O’Connor (1992) review some of the general principles involved in qualitative discourse study. They explain that

Human discourse is rule-governed and internally structured; it is produced by speakers who are ineluctably situated in a sociohistorical matrix, whose cultural,

political, economic, social, and personal realities shape the discourse; and discourse itself constitutes or embodies important aspects of that sociohistorical matrix. (228)

*Language variation* is most often used to describe relationships between linguistic forms and the factors which govern them, “such as geography, social class, ethnic group, age, sex, occupation, function, and style” (ED# 350882, 1992, p. 2). All of these factors combine to create an individual's *idiolect*. Every individual capable of language possesses a personal idiolect. When certain classifications of language are common to a group of speakers, it is said that they share a *dialect*. Dialects can be standard or idiomatic and include all of the elements common to speech; they have collective pronunciations, grammars, and social norms. Every speaker of a language possesses a dialect, idiolect, and *accent*. An accent is the nuance in pronunciations particular to a certain group or geographical area. Many sociolinguists make further dialectical distinctions based on social class, age, sex, and occupation (2-5).

*Pragmatics* explores how context impacts specific meaning. For example, “*I'm expecting a phone call*” can have any number of meanings. The understood meaning of the statement could really imply, “Don't use the phone, because *I'm expecting a phone call.*” It could also serve as an excuse for not leaving the house or office. The statement could possess a third meaning, as it could be in answer to a good news/bad news update. Commenting on the usefulness of pragmatics, Tannen (1984) adds that “hardly a sentence can be seen as having a crystalline meaning that cannot be changed by the positing of a different context for it” (7). Pragmatics holds a significant place in discourse analysis as well, since acknowledging and understanding a conversation's context has bearing on its meaning(s).

*Prosody, frames, and storytelling*

Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor (1984) discuss several terms and methodologies commonly used in discourse analysis. *Cohesion*, in both spoken and written discourse is closely related to *texture*; both are necessary for comprehension across speakers/texts.

Elements in a text must be tied to each other (or disconnected from each other) in such a way as to signal a continuously developing theme. Cohesive devices call upon a speaker's background knowledge of syntactic/semantic and socio-cultural knowledge in a process of interpretation. (5)

Cohesion allows conversants to "read between the lines." In order to demonstrate cohesion in discourse analysis, the authors introduce *prosody*. Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor explain that prosody is an essential device for cohesion in conversation. Prosody includes a speaker's intonations, stresses, and tone, and takes the place of punctuation in written discourse.

Figure 1: An introduction, provides an example of how prosody functions within a simple introduction. By the individual's raising of pitch, Tom and Julie would each know to whom the introduction is directed. However, the authors note that the understood cues in this simple introduction are culturally specific. One may not have equal ease of understanding by using this pitch change in another language. Prosody, therefore, does not provide formalized rules, such as those used in grammatical analyses, but is based on

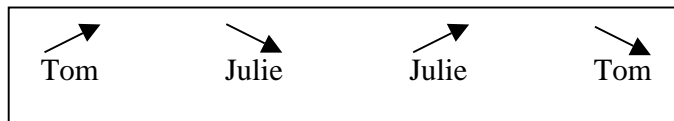


Figure 1: An introduction

prediction. Successful comprehension naturally leads to future expectation in an introduction, a joke, a story, an apology, etc.

In her discussion of discourse analysis and narrative, Tannen (1984) explains a similar prosodic convention that is used in narrative analysis. *Frames* are a larger set of expectations related to the comprehension of direction in a narrative. According to Tannen, frames are based on prior experience. For this dissertation study, familiarity with the storytelling frame will likely prove helpful. “The storytelling frame is seen when a speaker asks whether she should include certain elements in her narrative because [she doesn’t want to ruin the suspense]” (24).

Polanyi (1985) speaks specifically about the conventions of conversational storytelling, explaining that storytelling most often occurs when an individual needs a bridge to relate a past event to what is happening in current interaction.

Storytelling can be an effective and vivid way to explore in some depth a matter already under discussion. . . . A properly managed storytelling seems to emerge from the ongoing talk—to be occasioned by some point being made in conversation. (187)

Stories do not generally begin at random; the storyteller believes the story is called for, and will likely solve whatever conversational need has arisen. Interestingly, Polanyi’s definition of a conversational story is quite rigid: “Not all narratives are stories. To be a story, a recital of events and circumstances must have a point, must be told to communicate some message about the world in which the speaker and hearer actually live” (189).

### *The Five Clocks*

There are many ways to describe the different styles, or *registers*, of the languages which individuals use to communicate. Regardless of the language used,

however, all registers possess an awareness of levels of formality. Martin Joos (1961) developed a framework to describe these levels of formality in English. He asserted that there are five basic styles, or clocks, with which individuals negotiate the behaviors required for communication. “Efforts and values are never perfectly in equilibrium. That is why usages change: they are constantly being readjusted” (9). The five styles Joos created are *intimate, casual, consultative, formal, and frozen* (11).

The most informal style in Joos’ model is the intimate, a style possible only among individuals with extremely close personal relationships. According to Joos, the intimate style is personal, fragmentary, and implicit. One of the identifiers of the intimate style is the presence of “extraction.” Extraction represents the code most often used among intimates, where speakers express as little as possible (30-32). The casual style is also used in social groupings where the individuals share a great deal of background knowledge, but are not as closely connected as intimates are. The casual style is used with friends and other insiders, and is marked by ellipsis and slang (24-25). The consultative style is used with strangers, or near-strangers. We use the consultative style when we are dealing with public information—buying and selling, involved in retail transactions, or are communicating with distant co-workers. The consultative style maintains the most distance within the informal styles because the listener must signal (either verbally or with body language) that s/he comprehends the message. There is little, if any code, used in the consultative style; the speaker must spell out everything to be understood (28-29).

Joos defines the formal style as one of detachment. The formal style is most often used in speeches and lectures, and is illustrated by the listener’s lack of participation, and

by the speaker's opportunity to plan what is to be said ahead of time (37). The final clock by which we tell linguistic time is the frozen style. This style is reserved for formal written print, especially literature, and is generally identified by its elegance, precision, and permanence (39-41).

### *Silence*

Other areas related to discourse are interpretations of silence. How do we discuss silence? And, in research that combines electronic and face-to-face communication, what priority do we place on the silence of a few days, versus a 15-second pause? Tannen (1985) argues that silence remains one of the most commonly misunderstood aspects of human interaction. "The meaning of silence . . . like other features of discourse, can be understood to grow out of the two overriding goals of human communication: to be connected to other people, and to be independent, which correspond to the rapport and defensive benefits of silence" (97). Saville-Troike (1985) explains that silence is generally ignored in traditional linguistics studies. Its purpose, according to some discourse analysts, is simply to mark the beginnings and ends of utterances. To consider silence more fully, Saville-Troike offers the perspective of a "total theory of communication, [where] we can view silence as itself a valid object of investigation" (4). In many contexts, silence can be seen as consent, as a sign of guilt, as an affirmation, as a symbol of reverence (10).

Saville-Troike also discusses attributes of silence common to mainstream American culture: "threatening silence, forbidding silence, eerie silence, thoughtful silence, smug silence, and worshipful silence." (10). Similarly, people who practice silence more often than the norm are often described as "taciturn, reserved, reticent,

secretive, [and] reverent” (10). Further, the author also points out that in several of the cultures she studied (American Amish, Inuit, and Navajo), silence as an example of social control, commenting that “silence is one of the strongest forms of punishment which may be invoked” (14). Saville-Troike strongly urges continued study of silence, and calls for “a special meta-awareness [which] is needed to attend to the range of possible silences,” so that silence may no longer be overwhelmingly viewed as the absence of thought/purpose or inaction.

#### Discourse Analysis and Computer-Mediated-Communication

As mentioned previously, computer-mediated-communication (CMC) served as a primary data source in my research. Drawing from recent research (Tornow, 1997; Davis & Brewer, 1997), Abdullah (1998) explains that CMC is redefining the “spatial and temporal parameters” which typically differentiate spoken and written discourse (1). The recent abundance of online communication in academic, business, and social environments is blurring past distinctions between talking and writing. Abdullah describes the written interactions in e-mail and online academic environments as *written talk* and *electronic discourse*, as new conventions of electronic communication are taking the place of many everyday interactions (i.e. e-mail, online commerce, electronic bulletin boards).

According to Abdullah, electronic discourse resembles conversation because it “presents a number of performance features generally characteristic of in-process . . . communicative events and behaviors, such as repetition, direct address, disfluencies, and markers of personal involvement” (1). CMC differs from spoken discourse in the sense that there are no interruptions or overlaps, quite common in conversation. Fillers (i.e.,

*hmmm, uh, er*) are generally absent in electronic discourse. Additional features of CMC of great interest to researchers (Abdullah notes Brown & Yule, 1983; Davis & Brewer, 1997; Wilkins, 1991) are the systems CMC users have developed to signal intimacy, irony, humor (punctuation, all capital letters), and a whole range of emotions—joy to disgust—signaled in live speech by intonation, speed, and volume. These *emoticons* (i.e., :), ;), :(, etc.) are considered by some as a significant indicator of the evolution of electronic discourse. Such findings may also address the notions of prosody discussed earlier by Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor (1984). As electronic communication users further develop means to show intonations, stress, and tone of voice, the distance between spoken and electronic discourse may be more easily bridged.

Researchers who analyze electronic communication, especially online academic communication note that consistent use of lowercase letters at the beginnings of sentences, sentence fragments, uncorrected spelling errors, informal diction, and word choices all point to representations of oral conversation than “written exchanges of academic ideas” (Hale, 1996 qtd. in Abdullah, 1998, p.2). As more institutions rely on CMC an alternative to (or sole means of) classroom interaction, Abdullah challenges linguists and other language researchers to become more aware of the evolution of electronic communication. Future researchers should examine “how these changing conventions may be contributing to the construction of online learning communities and the development of online academic discourse. . . . The time has come for language educators to make this effort” (3).

Griffin and Anderton-Lewis (1998) conducted an analysis of CMC communication among 138 African-American business communication students at a historically black

Unites States university. The purpose of Griffin and Anderton-Lewis' study was threefold:

1. To determine if African-American students' perceptions of online communications indicated an enthusiasm for CMC and for their active participation in the learning process;
2. To analyze students' willingness to use online communication to contact instructors;
3. To examine the content and style of e-mail messages employed by this group of students for evidence that students perceived instructors as facilitators (9).

After using both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect their data, Griffin and Anderton-Lewis performed textual analyses on the samples of electronic communication. According to their findings, CMC encouraged the students to be more active learners. They also contacted their instructors more frequently than in a traditional academic setting. (The researchers noted that, generally, when encountering difficulties or entertaining questions, students will contact peers rather than seek advice directly from the instructor. After analysis of the data, they discovered that the students in the sample benefited from the perceived distance that CMC provided, and contacted instructors directly. The authors called this a "safe-house" effect.)

The study's anecdotal evidence also suggested that electronic communication helped students view their professors as facilitators. Although many of the sample students did not use colloquial speech exclusively to speak to their professors, they did employ a hybrid academic discourse. However, Griffin and Anderton-Lewis assert that the availability of electronic communication encouraged collaboration and helped to ease the authoritarian relationship between professor and student. The researchers concluded that "e-mail fosters an informal rhetorical relationship that rewards openness and collaboration among students and instructors within the formal academic setting" (12).

Some highlights from the study's textual analyses of the electronic communication noted that the students appeared to use a style that was a step or two removed from academic discourse. "One student began all of her messages with 'Hi Doc!'" (14). Other students however, were uncomfortable with the blurred boundaries, and wrote in a formal style.

These students tended to write in the business letter format studied during the semester, beginning each message with the salutation 'Dear Dr.' and ending each with a standard closing such as 'Yours truly' or 'Sincerely.' As if to underscore their awareness of the student/instructor relationship, a few e-mailers insisted upon closing messages with 'Your student,' and one repeatedly closed with 'Your pupil.' (14)

According to their findings, Griffin and Anderton-Lewis argue that the students' relaxed electronic diction and tone signaled a freedom from conventions traditionally expected in academic discourse. They also posit that this finding supports their argument that electronic communication provides a more sheltered landscape for communication with a professor.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I provided a review of qualitative research methodologies related to this dissertation research. After discussing the qualitative methodologies that were considered for the research, I justified my decision to use narrative inquiry and explained the methodology in more detail. Because electronic communication methods and styles played a primary role in data collection, I also provided an introduction to discourse analysis, and presented a review of recent research on electronic discourse analysis and computer-mediated-communication. The methods and procedures specific to this dissertation research are discussed in Chapter IV: Methodology—Procedures and Specifics.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY—PROCEDURES AND SPECIFICS

#### Chapter Overview

The majority of the data for this study was collected through weekly asynchronous electronic discussions. The face-to-face communications were collected during personal interviews with each participant and in a two-hour group meeting. In this chapter, I discuss the step-by-step procedures which were followed for data collection and analysis. The topics discussed in this are participant selection, participant description, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, and the presentation of the five themes drawn from the community's asynchronous electronic discussions.

#### Methods and Procedures

##### *Human Subjects Approval*

Prior to beginning the study, I applied for approval to do research involving human subjects (Appendix A). In the application, I explained the objectives for the study, source of participants, methods and procedures, risks and protection measures, methods for providing informed consent, and benefits of the research. My application was accepted and I received full IRB approval on 5 September 2001. I contacted prospective participants the next week.

##### *Participant selection*

I contacted the 19 English Education interns in the cohort through a letter describing the study and inviting interested individuals to participate (Appendix B). Nine interns expressed an interest in participating in the study. Three of the interested students were ineligible because I was to be their Intern Supervisor, and they would be evaluated

by me throughout their internship year. Two interns disqualified themselves due to personal discomfort with online technology and the time commitment expected for the study. The four remaining interns were chosen to participate in the study and have been a part of the research since September 2001.

### *Research participants*

The research participants were four secondary English Education Interns chosen from the 2001-2002 cohort. The participants volunteered for the study and agreed to participate from September to April. Before entering the College of Education, and subsequent to this study, each participant had earned a Bachelor's degree in English. These participants were fifth-year Masters students and therefore, crossed several categories of preservice teacher (student, student-teacher, first-year licensed teacher, and intern teacher). Prior to the internship year, the participants had already logged at least 42 hours of direct classroom experience through an Education Minor.

### *Data collection and procedures*

The research for this project spanned both semesters of the 2001-2002 internship year, specifically from the beginning of September 2001 through the end of March 2002. The electronic communications (via e-mail and/or discussion board) occurred on a weekly basis and focused on topical issues. The first four weeks of electronic discussions took place on a private discussion board in our Blackboard Courseinfo website. Originally, this location was intended to provide a private yet easily accessible line of communication for the participants and myself. This was not the case. We abandoned the discussion board after five weeks.

During the fourth week of the study, one of the participants sent an e-mail to me discussing the week's topic. I read the e-mail and then copy-and-pasted it to the discussion board. During the third and fourth weeks, I had also noticed that the participants were responding to the discussion topic only after I sent a group e-mail with an active link to our online site. Taking my cue from the participants' habits, I asked, in a group e-mail, if they would prefer to forgo the more secure discussion board for the convenience of e-mail. They all answered that they would prefer group e-mail. I agreed and then added a reminder that we needed to be careful about allowing others to access our e-mail inboxes.

#### *The discussion board*

For readers who are unfamiliar with Courseinfo, a brief description of the steps required to reach a Courseinfo discussion board may be helpful. To enter the discussion board, the participants were required to follow several steps which included, logging on to the Blackboard website, choosing our site from the other Courseinfo course sites in which they were enrolled, reading any announcements on our site's main page, then proceeding to the discussion board to see the week's topic and logging in a personal response. These steps do not include reading and responding to the other participants' messages. (In hindsight, using group e-mail instead of the online discussion board seems obvious.) Even though there are a few ways to shorten the process—creating a bookmark, for example—this did not help Renee, who did not have a computer at home and accessed our discussions from her placement school or the local community college library.

### *Preliminary data analysis*

In December of 2001 and January of 2002, I began analyzing the data (electronic discussion transcripts). As I read and re-read the transcripts, I searched for patterns in the participants' descriptions and perceptions of their experiences. Once a group of patterns was identified, I created preliminary codes and assigned these codes to excerpts from the transcripts. Generally, coding for qualitative research means "assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56).

### *NUD\*IST*

Not surprisingly, five months of conversation transcripts created an enormous amount of raw data. In order to better manage the data, I imported the conversation transcripts into the qualitative data analysis software program, NUD\*IST. NUD\*IST assists in the analysis of qualitative research through its "tree" structure, which enabled me to transfer the data to the program and then consider and analyze it in a visual, and for me, more suitable manner.

In the e-book, *NUD\*IST 4 Classic* (2002), Bobbi Kerlin, aptly asserts the need for assistance with managing qualitative data. Spread-sheet statistical analysis software programs, such as SPSS, are standard procedure in quantitative research analysis, and with time and exposure, Kerlin believes that NUD\*IST may become as ubiquitous in qualitative studies as SPSS is in quantitative analysis. According to Kerlin, making use of programs such as NUD\*IST can enhance the thoroughness of qualitative analysis. Kerlin explains:

Computers can't crunch words as if they were numbers and NUD\*IST won't analyze your data for you. . . . NUD\*IST will help you manage your data as you

analyze documents such as interview transcripts, field notes, journal articles, papers, email archives or any other data you can save as a text file. It will also facilitate your management of other data formats such as video and audiotapes. You can search and code your data and automate many of the coding, searching and reporting tasks. You can write memos and add context-sensitive annotations to your data. As you progress through your analysis you can use NUD\*IST to document your analytic process and reflect on your role as a researcher (Kerlin, 2002, <http://kerlins.net/bobbi/research/nudist>, p.1).

### *Face-to-face data*

Additional components in the second semester of the study included a one-on-one personal interview with each participant and a face-to-face group meeting. The group meeting also served as closure for the study. Even though the data was not included in this study, the community continued to communicate through group e-mail messages after the conclusion of the study.

### *Timeline*

*August 2001*—Submitted research study for IRB approval. (IRB approval received 5 September 2001.)

*September 2001*—Distributed “Invitation to Participate” to 2001-2002 English Education Cohort (Appendix B)

*September 2001*—Selected participants from interested candidates.

*September 2001*—Distributed and collect Informed Consent (Appendix C).

*September 2001 through March 2002*—Facilitated weekly general discussion topics. Conversations were asynchronous and occurred via discussion board postings or group e-mail.

*December 2001 and January 2002*—Began preliminary data analysis. Transferred electronic discussions from online environment to word processing program.

Input discussion transcripts into NUD\*IST. Began formulating and placing initial

categories and nodes onto project tree. Preliminary categories were identified as major and minor characters, placement setting, landmark events, emerging identities, and metaphors for transition.

*January 2002*—Continued weekly asynchronous discussions. Example topics included second semester specifics, mentor teacher issues, university coursework versus classroom teaching. Asked participants to purposefully craft transition and classroom metaphors.

*February 2002*—Sent preliminary transition themes to participants. Asked participants to prepare for personal interview, using themes as a suggested interview guide.

*February and March 2002*—Conducted personal interviews. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Conducted final electronic discussions for research study.

*March 2002*—Coordinated and held final group face-to-face meeting. The group meeting was approximately two hours. Transcribed all remaining face-to-face data. Input all face-to-face data and second semester electronic discussions into NUD\*IST.

## Conclusion

To recap, the five themes identified after analysis of the electronic discussions were major and minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, and identities. Once the themes were chosen, I sent them to the participants, asked for feedback, and then conducted a personal interview with each participant, using the themes as a suggested interview guide. Near the conclusion of the study, we all met

together for the face-to-face group meeting. The participants referred to the five themes throughout the personal interviews and during the group meeting. An additional theme, atypical experiences, came to light after the group meeting.

In Chapter V: Transition Narratives, I present my research findings through the four participants' transition narratives. The narratives are organized according to the six themes and reproduce, as vividly as possible, the voices of the individual intern-participants through extended excerpts of their online and face-to-face communications.

## CHAPTER V

### TRANSITION NARRATIVES

#### Introduction

The texts of the following transition narratives are a distillation of seven months of electronic and face-to-face communication. The majority of the data was collected through weekly asynchronous electronic discussions. The face-to-face conversations were collected during a personal interview with each participant and in a two-hour group meeting. After reading and examining the transcripts of our electronic discussions I identified five common themes. Polkinghorne (1995) defines this type of examination and subsequent categorization paradigmatic analysis. The five themes that I identified were major and minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, and identities. Once the themes were identified, I sent them to the participants, asked for feedback, and then conducted a personal interview with each participant, using the themes as a suggested interview guide. Near the conclusion of the study, we all met together for the face-to-face group meeting. The participants referred to the five themes throughout the personal interviews and during the group meeting. An additional theme, atypical experiences, came to light after the group meeting

Data from electronic communication is reproduced exactly as written by the participant, and will be designated by an [OL] to signify online communication. [FTF] is used to signify face-to-face communication from both personal interviews and the group meeting. All face-to-face data was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Pauses (1-4 seconds), long pauses (5 or more seconds) and laughter were included in the transcription. For ease of comprehension, punctuation and notable changes in speed or

pitch are also included. Exclamation marks and other forms of emphasis (dashes and ellipses) are added to signify linguistic details in the recordings. All excerpts in excess of a few words from the participants' electronic or face-to-face data are italicized. Table 1: Research participants provides a brief description of each participant's name, age, and placement environment. The participants are described in more detail in this chapter's transition narratives.

#### *Brief description of intern-participants*

Raised in the southeastern United States, Mae matches the National Educational Statistics (NES) profile of the majority of new teachers entering the workforce: white, early twenties, upper middle class, and female. Mae explained that her "entire life" had prepared her to be a teacher, and that teaching English combined her interests in philosophy, communication, and young people. Mae's high school experience and environment resembled her placement school, a consolidated county high school with high county and state rankings for test scores and graduation rates. Mae's placement school tracked students into basic, college preparatory, honors, and advanced placement levels. Mae taught two college preparatory senior English courses with class sizes of 20 to 31 students. Mae's placement school was located approximately 30 miles from the university. She attended weekly teacher education classes at the university and also participated in one online teacher education course.

Lynne entered the teacher education program after a 15 year career outside of education. As a mid-career teacher education student, Lynne, 33, believed that she was significantly older than the majority of students in her English Education cohort. Lynne, a

Table 1: Research participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Placement School</b>	<b>Teaching Responsibilities</b>
Mae	23	Rural Consolidated County High School (1700 students)	12 <sup>th</sup> English—College Preparatory track (CP)
Lynne	33	Rural/Suburban High School (900 students)	12 <sup>th</sup> English—CP 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> Theater Arts/Drama
Janet	22	Urban Middle School (1200 students) Suburban High School (1600 students)	7 <sup>th</sup> Language Arts 7 <sup>th</sup> Resource 10 <sup>th</sup> English—CP
Renee	21	Rural City High School (400 students)	10 <sup>th</sup> English—Non-tracked 9 <sup>th</sup> English—Non-tracked

white female, was raised in a “rural, beyond rural” environment near the Appalachian mountains and entered the English education program “to see if being an English teacher was the right thing.” She described her socioeconomic background as middle class.

Lynne taught 12<sup>th</sup> grade college preparatory English during both semesters of her internship and added a multi-level Theater Arts class during the second semester. Lynn’s English and drama classes ranged from 19 to 30 students. Lynne believed that her life experience would be an asset in the classroom, as many of her students were planning to enter the workforce before or in lieu of college. Lynne described her placement school was a rural/suburban high school approximately 25 miles from the university, whose population was predominately white and middle class. Lynne also attended classes at the university during her internship and participated in an online course.

Janet spent the majority of her internship in a middle school Language Arts classroom teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade grammar and composition. She also participated in a pull out experience in a 10<sup>th</sup> grade English classroom. Janet’s primary placement school was

an urban middle school approximately five miles from the university with a low to middle student socioeconomic status. Janet, a 22 year-old African American female was raised in a middle class home in the southeastern United States. Janet had not planned on teaching in the middle school, but later stated that she believed her placement provided a dynamic environment where she had multiple opportunities to positively impact the lives of her students. Janet's middle school was less than one mile from her home and she explained that she often saw her students and their families outside of their school environment. Janet's classes ranged in size from 18 to 28 students. Janet also attended classes at the university and online.

Renee's internship experience was part of the university's rural teacher education program and her placement high school was approximately 70 miles from the university. Renee, a white female, relocated to her placement during the summer prior to her internship and lived in one of the area's subsidized housing communities. Renee explained that she was raised in a middle to upper middle class home in a southeastern rural community. Renee believed that her rural roots helped her to better understand her students' interests and lives. The socioeconomic status of the students at Renee's placement school was low. Renee explained that over half of the school's population received free or reduced lunch. Renee taught 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English in mixed ability level classes with class sizes ranging from 9 to 13 students. Renee's university classes were taught at her placement site. One of her courses was taught online.

Mae

*Transition Metaphor*

Mae, a 23 year old intern teacher provided a transition metaphor representing the transformative nature of her internship year.

*[OL] I would have to say my transition experience is the movie TEENWOLF. If you will follow me back to the 80s for a moment (back to the days when Michael J. Fox was the STUFF), you will remember a classic little film entitled TEENWOLF, not to be mistaken with Beowulf, please. In this film, a young man one day wakes up and finds himself with wolf-like characteristics. At first, he tries to hide these bazaar traits, but then he discovers that when he allows himself to transform from average teenager into mighty wolf, he is able to perform unbelievable tasks—things that he could never do when he was just a guy (or at least this is what he thought) For a while, life is great as the teenwolf, but then some trouble comes because some people begin expecting him to be the “average guy” all of the time, while others are expecting him to be the wolf all of the time. In the midst of all these expectations and confusions, the teenwolf begins losing his sense of identity and feels that he is only an actor playing different roles for different people. By the movie’s conclusion though, the character finds his way back to himself and perfects the art of maintaining his identity, while meeting the necessary demands of other people. I hope this comparison is obvious, but if not, the “average guy” identity equates to college student, while the “teenwolf” identity represents my identity as a teacher.*

Clearly, Mae believed that her first year of teaching was a period of profound transformation. As Mae’s narrative demonstrates, she also awakened to the confounding expectations of her new role. As a teacher, she was capable of “unbelievable tasks” and entered a new realm of responsibility. During our group meeting, Mae laughingly shared, “I never thought that I could handle 12 things at once, and do them all while I was eating lunch!” In light of her first days as an intern, Mae’s teenwolf metaphor became especially applicable as Mae transformed into Ms. Clements, 12<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher, “practically overnight.” Assuming that she would be observing, team-teaching, then taking full responsibility, Mae believed her transformation premature.

*Major and minor characters—Mentor Teacher*

Mae's major characters included her mentor teacher, her university supervisor, and a consolidated character she called, "the university." Generally, any discussion of disappointment during her transition year highlighted a difficult relationship with her mentor teacher. Though Mae never explicitly expressed dissatisfaction with their relationship, in the participants' face-to-face group meeting, Mae described her perception of her mentor's feelings toward her with the most clarity.

*[FTF] I think [Mentor] resented [my hesitancy]. I really think that she expected me to come in day one of first semester and take over. And that would have been okay, I guess, but she never told me that. No one told me that that would happen. We'd met a few times for in-service days and she never said anything about what I'd do on the first day. I felt bad and very uncomfortable, you know like a real loser for a week or so, and so finally [...] I didn't want her to think that I was lazy. So finally I was like, I just started taking over. I didn't feel like I was ready to but I did. A week and a half into the school year, I took over, and she's never been back in the classroom. [...] I feel like it turned out well, but I'm just like, my personality is one that it could turn out okay. But I kept thinking what if she did that to some other people that we go to school with, like, (pause) well I shouldn't say, but I know, I know it would not have turned out well for them.*

Several of our online conversations focused on advice the participants would give to future interns facing their transition into teaching. Mae's contributions to these topics leaned toward dispelling false expectations, most especially expectations about the mentor teacher:

*[OL] I do think there are some things an intern should know before his or her internship begins. For one, the mentor has been at the school for a long time and therefore has a routine. She sits in the same place at lunch, talks to the same people, visits the bathroom at a specific time, avoids a certain group of people, etc. I think the intern should be aware that the mentor is probably not going to "host" him or her around the school because that would disturb the "sacred" routine. Also, don't expect too much help. The mentor has resources, but he or she is not going to help you find them-- you have to dig yourself. Last but not least, let's face it, the reason teachers take interns (most of the time) is not because they are passionate about helping new teachers, but because they are ready for a break from work. This equates to leave them alone.*

Mae revealed a marked difference in her appraisal of her mentor, however, when discussing her during the personal interview. Although she did not contradict herself exactly, Mae's description of her mentor softened. Surprisingly, Mae explained that it was not their differences that caused her the most concern—it was their similarities.

[FTF] *Well, I would say that just to explain this character[mentor teacher] is probably to say that it's one problem that I didn't actually expect to have. I think that from what [the university] has said that "This is what will happen." Well, That's not what happened. And so (pause) let me think about how to word this correctly (pause) I would say that one of [...] the stumbling blocks, yeah stumbling blocks, that's a good word for it, from the beginning it was that this character's personality is very much like mine, probably we are too much alike (laughs). We are too much alike.*

*D: In what way?*

*M: In that I'm very non-intrusive, you know, kind of quiet and reserved and this person is also.*

*D: So lots of things went unspoken?*

*M: Yes, oh yes (laughs) and they still do. (laughs) Which I am perfectly comfortable with now, but in the beginning when you walk into a new school and a new place you think, "Okay, somebody tell me what to do? (laughs) So it can make you feel very vulnerable, I guess. Well it did me. It made me feel vulnerable not to know what was expected of me and then for everything to be trial and error in that relationship especially, the one that's supposed to be rather, you know, concrete, as far as the rest of the experience is concerned. But (pause)*

*D: How would you characterize that relationship now? How did you learn to communicate? Have you?*

*M: Um No, I'm just pretty much, well (pause), I work independently. But it's not because I haven't tried. It's just because I can only be responsible for myself. There's no strain, really. I think a lot of it has to do with, um with, with moodiness. (laughs) And not mine. (laughs) Do you know what I mean?*

*D: (We both laugh. )Absolutely.*

*M: But like on the other hand I have so much respect for this person. (pause)*

*D: How so? Did you gain that respect from watching her teach?*

*M: I watched for one week only! [...] And that was longer than she wanted to wait, I think. But um Again, I have so much respect for her intelligence, and for approach with children. So I have no problems there, or disagreements. I don't think I have any worries. But I also think that that has to do with who I was before I ever even came into this program. I look at my colleagues and I think, "He wouldn't have survived this, She wouldn't of survived this." (laughs) You know especially in the beginning, I was thinking that.*

*D: So what did she do, or what kinds of things did she teach you, that helped earn your respect?*

*M: Umm, that's a hard one. I'll have to think of some examples and tell you later (pause).*

Mae never provided any examples. She did reveal a competitive tendency, however, commenting that certain others in the program would not have survived those trying first weeks.

Mae's distress over the mentor relationship was consistent across online and face-to-face discussions. During the personal interview, Mae provided more detailed information to justify her perceptions and how these (mis)perceptions may have impacted her transition.

*[FTF] Honest to god, Denise, I cannot read this person. And I don't know. I think that's a gift of mine— discernment. So I don't know If, (pause) I think their may be issues, (pause) maybe medicated, I don't know, kind of covering things. I don't know. It's none of my business, so I don't know.*

Uncomfortable with her hypothesis and unable to articulate what she really wanted to say, Mae repeated “I don't know” when confessing her theory that the mentor might take anti-depressants.

#### *Major and minor characters—University Supervisor*

Mae's inner turmoil over the mentor-intern relationship lead to an additional disconnect with her university supervisor. For the participants in this study, the university supervisor was the person responsible for evaluating the intern through the state's framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth. After her mentor teacher, Mae ranked the university supervisor as the most important character in her transition year. The incident Mae used to discuss her relationship with her supervisor was also her choice as a landmark event.

*[FTF] After the first week, [University supervisor] made a visit. And he talked to her[mentor] (pause) And then he talked to me. (long pause) And this is what he*

said to me, (pause) (small laugh) um, which I really pride myself on just having a natural ability to take things in quickly and to connect with children and adults and be confident in what I do. And, you know, so he says, "Um, I've spoken with Ms. Blank," and remember this is back before I knew [him] very well either so everything is so like, What is REAL? That is really the best way I know to say it, What is real? [...] And I don't feel like I'm intimate with any of the people who are really supposed to be the ones involved in my life. So um, he says[...] "From what [Mentor teacher] has told me, you have a problem with presence in the classroom and you're too hesitant to do to—" um Well basically that's what he said in so many words. I'm trying to remember exactly the word he used (pause) It started with an S (pause) I am trying to think, um (pause)

D: Like a "you're a problem" word?

M: Not a problem word, but not at all a positive connotation (pause) Subdued! That's it subdued. So that (pause)that just crushed me. And I felt like cussing and crying and all of that, you know.

D: How did you keep your wits about you. What did you say?

M: (laughs) I just looked at him and said, "Oh, that's interesting." (laughs) And so that just crushed me. And I'm thinking, All I'm wanting to do is for somebody to tell me what I'm supposed to do, and for that to match my expectations of what the university had been telling me for a year. And then I will run with it. But I really didn't know. And not knowing another person's personality. Like you hear all of these intern horror stories about, (higher voice) "Oh, some mentoring teacher, So-and- So, will not let go of her classroom. They don't want you to step on their toes." So I was totally trying to be helpful but non-intrusive. And then, so when [University supervisor] said that, it crushed me. I know I've said that a few times (pause) but the whole way home I was just thinking and thinking and so upset I was fighting hard to concentrate to drive. And I went home and I said "Mom!" [...] So from that day forward I made up my mind, Well if I overkill, I overkill, but this year is my baby and I'm going to make it. So from that day forward I just took complete control. And I, um, I went on.

This incident appeared to be a turning point in Mae's teaching identity. Mae transforms overnight, showing up the next morning as *The Teacher*. For Mae, the drive home after hearing what her mentor teacher thought about her communicated to her—through Mae's supervisor— was simultaneously devastating and motivating. In Mae's case, the university supervisor was one of her professors. Thus, she was also concerned with gaining and sustaining his approval.

*Major and minor characters—“The university”*

From the outset of her transition year, Mae claimed feeling like she had been “set-up” by the university. When Mae repeated what the university had told or taught her, she described it as a single entity, and usually impersonated it with a higher pitch in her voice.

[FTF] *And you know, the university had talked like [higher voice, speaking slowly], “Oh the first semester—it’s team teaching—you probably won’t even stand up in front of the classroom solo until after your middle school experience.” And that is all I had heard. What a set up. So I was getting ready to observe and learn and you know—So I felt so vulnerable and insecure and, which is, I usually don’t feel that way at all (pause) ever. And um, (laughs) So I said “Well I’m sorry, my understanding from the university—” And I just had to be very point-blank and honest because that’s all I knew to be and I said, “My understanding was that—” You know, and so I told her—and she already knew my summer school situation anyway, that I was still taking my summer school classes. And all she said was, “Oh.” (long pause)*

*Additional landmark events*

In both online and face-to-face conversations, Mae revealed that maintaining her credibility with the university supervisor became a primary concern, especially since the relationship with her mentor was a tentative one. Mae’s first formal observation, then, became another landmark event in her year because it was the first time that she and her university supervisor actually discussed her teaching.

[OL] *He really had not revealed much to me about what he thought about my teaching, so the first formal became even more important.*

Mae considered the Post-observation conference to be one of the first positive strokes she received.

[FTF] *My first formal observation [...] went extremely well and you know, what I hear about [University supervisor], He’s a real critical evaluator and he didn’t have one negative thing to say. And um totally reassured me and I felt so good about it and all (pause) It made a difference.*

## *Identity*

One of the notable aspects of Mae's first weeks as an intern was that the events occurring around her caused her to doubt one of the hallmarks of her personal identity: being a hard worker.

[FTF] *I just, it was so awkward, and I begin to feel like, [loud whisper] "She thinks that I don't want to work!" Something people have never thought about me. And I didn't know my place in the classroom. I had no idea. Once um she had she had surprised me and said, "Okay, why don't you take this?"[...] And I said "Okay, (laughs) sure." And I did the best that I could do. And um, from there, went on.*

Mae's hard-worker identity had been established during her years as a successful student. When that identity was called into question on the first day of her life as an intern, Mae described feelings of incompetence and failure.

[FTF] *This summer I took 12 hours plus I worked 2 jobs[...] I was still in summer school at [the university] when I actually started this internship—and I had to work out some things with my professors, you know. And I worked it out so that I was actually there for the kids' first day, and just thought to myself, "Great, I'm really doing everything I can." And I was ready to learn and to form a relationship, and learn the ins and outs. And the first day when the kids showed up, my mentoring teacher said that morning, "Well, would you like to run over with me what you're going to teach today?(long pause) (Laughs)It's funny now (pause) well not really even now. And I said, "Excuse me?" She said, "Would you like to tell me what you're going to do with the kids today"? And Denise, I need to make something clear. Something that I cannot stand is to feel incompetent. I'm a perfectionist and I want to be the best that I can be all the time. I do not want to be caught off guard and I rarely am. So that, that (pause) it really bothered me. Now it would bother anybody, you know, but I took it to heart, like, "What's going on?" (pause) And my mind was racing, "Was I supposed to do this? What, really, is going on? Oh my gosh, I feel like a failure already on the first day!"*

Mae also discussed her identity in terms of her multiple roles as student, teacher, and outsider. In fact, Mae identified negotiating the different roles as the most difficult aspect of her transition year.

[OL] *The most difficult part of my transition has definitely been assuming the different roles of educator vs. student. Not only does this role conflict increase my responsibility and accountability, but it makes the lines of what is expected and what is not expected very ambiguous. It also creates confusion in the minds of my co-workers. Many times, my fellow teachers are not quite sure how to treat me. I can see them pondering "Do I include the intern in on this discussion?" "Should I invite the intern to the baby-shower?" "Should I invite the intern to sit at our table?" No, this is not a detrimental problem, but it does get old when people cannot act naturally around you.*

According to Mae's descriptions, her fellow teachers' behavior placed her clearly on the margins of the department. The colleague behavior Mae described may be one of the factors leading to her atypical experience. During the group meeting, Mae introduced the topic which became the atypical experiences theme, when she said, "Now I think I have a story to tell that y'all haven't heard."

#### *Atypical experience*

One of the most startling stories included in Mae's transition narrative occurred during the face-to-face group meeting when the participants began sharing what they considered to be unusual about their transition year. Mae described an ongoing situation of sexual harassment. Mae's atypical experience also provided additional insight into her placement landscape. I have included the other participants' contributions to Mae's story to demonstrate the impact they had on her story.

[FTF] *M: Now I think I have a story to tell that ya'll haven't heard. I'll go ahead and share something that I think has been abnormal about this year[...] Okay, at least I hope this is abnormal. Well Anyway, um the department that I work in is primarily female [...] they kind of have this comfort zone[...] In the lounge you know they've always sat in the same seats so they're not like my best buds or anything but that's all right and fine with me because I'm quiet anyway so I just kind of eat lunch—*

*R: (interrupting) So they don't say "Come on over and sit with us?"*

*M: Oh no. Nobody ever said that to me. [...] Well they're not very welcoming (unintelligible voices) They're not mean, but they're just not welcoming. [...] I also sat with the other man, the only man in the department which, well it's a long story, but one of the girl's went on maternity leave and this man that had retired*

*from teaching came back from retirement—make sure you hear retirement (we all laugh)—Because he is old!*

*(laughter)*

*R: Oh, Mae, look at your face!*

*M: Hang on it gets worse. Anyway, and he used to teach what I'm teaching now. And he was a basketball coach so we have all these things in common and I thought he was such a cool man when I first met him, I said what a cool man--you know, 'cause he's older than my dad I am sure! (laughter) (unintelligible) I said to myself Boy I wish he was my papaw! (laughter) Anyway uh (laughter) So anyway he's helping me and he's eating lunch with me and talking to me and I'm thinking, "Oh wow, I finally have a friend." (laughter) It's wonderful. And so I (laughter) Anyway I run after school most days and he (unintelligible)*

*J: Oh, don't tell me--he's taking up running.*

*M: Yes! And I promise y'all I was totally naive, I was happy to have a buddy to run with at the track after school. I mean my dad is a lot younger than this man and my dad would never look at a girl my age. (laughter) I'm not kidding he is much older. So I'm like yeah sure! So we talk and talk and we get this cool little friendship going. Well I'm like, one afternoon I said to him, "You know what? I'm gonna fix you up with my boyfriend's mom." (laughter) Because she's been divorced for quite a while and I just think this man is so neat. [...] He was like, "Well, Mae, um I really want to take you out. (unintelligible voices) And I was just like, "Are you kidding me?" [...] Just playing, just trying to move on. And um, so then it went on the next few days it went on, and a few days later he said, "So when are we gonna go out to eat, Mae?" [...]*

*R: Oh no!*

*M: But I was still being his friend because he was (laughter) my only friend--*

*L: Oh God, he was your only friend! You didn't want to lose the only person who ate lunch with you! Oh this is awful. Why on earth would he think that he could ask you out?*

*M: I know, I was grading papers in the teacher workroom after school. And he keeps talking to me. And he was like, "Oh, Mae, I'm serious. I'm really interested in you." And all of this stuff and this time he seriously asked me out. [...] And I said, "Well you know I've just got to say no for obvious reasons." You know y'all I didn't want to be mean So I said "obvious reasons." And he said, "I don't see any obvious reasons."*

*L: Was anybody around?*

*M: No. I was the only one in the workroom until he came in.*

*Voice: Oh God, and nobody was around to see all of this*

*M: No. So he said, "I don't see any obvious reasons" And I was thinking what does this man think? He's gonna pick me up at my house, walk me into the ball game holding my hand, and take me home at Mom and Daddy's, and kiss me on the front porch? And I said, "No I really don't think so." And he kept saying I don't see nay obvious reasons. And I said, "Yeah you do." And he said, "Are you talking about age?" And I said, "Well yes!" (laughter)*

*D: Is that all you said?*

*M: (laughing) Well I didn't think I needed to mention all of the other hundred reasons! I just thought I'd keep it simple. And he goes, "Well, Mae you know I'm real disappointed in you because I did not think that you were that shallow."*

*R: What kept you from smacking him? [...]*

*M: No, No. I stood up and I went off on him.*

*D: And there's no one around?*

*M: No. No one. It was just the two of us in the workroom. I went off on him. I said, "Shallow? Excuse me? Um this is not shallow, I am trying to be a professional and gain experience as a young teacher and you're 55 years old trying to intimidate me by saying that I'm shallow thinking 'Oh, this intelligent elder thinks I'm shallow.'" So I said, "It doesn't work that way." I said "And I am so disappointed in YOU."*

*Voices: (Cheering)[...]*

*M: Since then, he's this big poet, don't you know, and he's written me poems. And bought me a valentine.*

*J: Oh Lord, this is so inappropriate.*

*M: Well it's so weird he's like passive aggressive with me. Like he'll either be like loving up on me, and he's all the time saying these sex comments--*

*Voices: He could get in big trouble for that. You could get him fired—*

*M: But I'm not though. I'm not. I don't care I'm going to get on with my life. I feel sorry for him. But he's either that or totally will not speak to me if I walk in the room. Like if I say something he'll snort like that's the dumbest thing he ever heard. [...]* So (pause) *I don't know. But the reason it has really affected me was the he was my only friend at school and I really liked him. I really liked him a lot.*

*L: Has he ever tried to get too close (pause) physically? A kiss hello or goodbye?*

*M: Well (pause) yes. He tries to be sexy and I just think, "Lord you are wrinkled to death!" (laughter). I mean he tries to, he tries to touch me sometimes, but it's not in the areas. He like tries to get too close. He offers to grade my papers and I'm like, "No! You don't even know my students! How could you even comment on them?" But he'll be like that one day and then the very next day he'll act like he hates my guts.*

*D: Well is he at least going to be gone after this teacher comes back from maternity leave?*

*M: (pause) No. She's not coming back this year. They're going to re-hire him for the first semester of next year.*

*L: Have you thought about saying something? What about the other teachers?*

*M: I've never seen him do anything or heard them say anything. But you know they don't really talk to me. [...]*

*M: But the way that he handled it with (unintelligible) and writing all these poems and not dropping it. But he really has developed quite a crush.*

*L: I just don't think this is normal social behavior.*

*M: I brought [one of the poems] home to my mom, saying "Look at this junk, Mom." [...]* But it's all illustrated and had this "Maiden and going through the forest of life," and all this. [...]

*D: You don't see this guy bothering the other teachers? At all? How does he interact with them?*

*M: No. Not at all. It's just [...] It's like Fatal Attraction. He's really developed something for me. [unintelligible]*

*D: Honestly, Mae, hearing this makes me nervous.*

*M: No it's alright. We were close as buddies. And I was so innocent, really. (high voiced) "I have a teacher-friend. And he taught what I taught. And he's helping me." Because my mentor wasn't offering anything. You know I am finally getting a little bit of mentoring and then this happens! My God! And now it's just like, so uncomfortable. I said to him: "You know, [unintelligible]" And he says, "Every moment that I'm with you is a reminder that I can't have you!"*

*L: Oh my God! Mae, this is NOT normal. [Unintelligible] And I guarantee you even though you're saying that he's only doing this with you (pause) I guarantee you in the past—*

*M: (Interrupting) Yes, he probably has. But you know what? He is so well respected. [...] I think he may have been, no I'm sure, he was [leadership position]. And he's the type of guy who works for 30 years and was absent like two days. He's like a real over achiever, hard worker.*

*[...] I just don't know.*

While telling the story, Mae laughed often, and continued to assure us that she was in no danger. Near the conclusion of her story, however, we put quite a bit of pressure on Mae to report the harassment, citing concern for future victims. Mae was clear in her refusal, saying that she just “couldn’t take another thing on.” And that she had no interest in putting her “internship in jeopardy over a few poems.” I pressed further and asked Mae if she would consider telling her university supervisor about the friction she had experienced all year long.

*[FTF] My whole thing is this: [University supervisor] is there every other week. I'm there every day. [...] If I say something to him and he says something to [mentor] and it offends her, which it will, I deal with the fallout of that everyday. He doesn't have to deal with it he's the supervisor. [...] But it's my life for the rest of the year. And I just thought I'll tell him if there's a time to tell him. But right now I'm gonna grin and bear it.*

I later asked Mae if she thought that the alienation she experienced from her mentor and other teachers left her vulnerable to the harassment. Did she not trust her mentor enough to reveal the harassment? Unwilling to place blame, Mae did not answer the question, but

repeated that “he was really harmless.” She also repeated the perpetrator’s reputation and level of respectability at her placement school.

#### *Transition metaphor revisited*

Taking a last look at Mae’s transition metaphor, we see that the teenwolf has settled into his dual identity. [OL] *By the movie’s conclusion though, the character finds his way back to himself and perfects the art of maintaining his identity, while meeting the necessary demands of other people.* Mae had also found her way back to herself by choosing to “put it all on the back burner” once she entered the classroom and began teaching. Mae expressed a great love for working with her students and dismissed the earlier difficulties, assuring me that she was “past all of that now.” Mae was not going to allow any of the interpersonal obstacles to derail her.

*[OL] Enough complaining. The most rewarding part of my internship is definitely the students. [...] When students indicate that they have or are enjoying my class or when I see that students are actually learning, I know I am doing what I have always been called to do.*

Lynne

#### *Transition metaphor*

As a 34-year old intern teacher, Lynne’s transition year took place after a fifteen-year career outside of education. As her narrative shows, Lynne was unable to satisfactorily reconcile the realities of teaching with her scholarly and pedagogical ideals.

*[FTF] My metaphor for this transition year is, well—This year is like going from what I’ve imagined and then realizing it was a delusion. Going from a dream to reality. I even had my mother tell me, “Lynne, you’re such a dreamer,” you know, “And you’ve always been this way.” [...] She said, “If you weren’t such a dreamer, you wouldn’t be so disappointed with the reality.” And you know, Denise, I am disappointed. Just even that I would, like this has been a dream for me, and after I got off the phone with her I thought “Mothers!” [...] And then I started thinking about t what she e really meant and I thought, “What did I actually think that this was going to be like? Did I think it was going to be a 9 to 5, where I get my*

*summers off [...] and okay pay and that I'll have retirement, hopefully." Was I thinking of it like that? Or was I really thinking, This is going to be so much fun. They're going to love learning and talking about literature.[...] And I guess that was a dream that I thought—You know, I am a dreamer. So going from that dream to a reality has been so disappointing.*

#### *Major and minor characters—Students*

One of the obstacles to a satisfying transition, was Lynne's distress over the attitudes and behaviors of her students. Lynne believed that teaching would be about sharing her subject matter and that she would have opportunities to open her students up to "all of the different worlds that literature provides." Lynne grew up in a "rural, beyond rural" community and was eager to expose her students to life outside of their home communities. She believed that school might be one of the only places that her students were made aware of the possibilities outside of their community; but again, she was dismayed by the apathy her students showed toward schooling.

*[FTF] And most of my kids are worried about their jobs and their cars and having sex and they think school sucks. And they'll tell you flat out, I don't care who you are. And I do remember being 18. Being worried about my car and my boyfriend and worried that I was having a bad hair day. But I don't remember being so disrespectful, I really don't. [...] And that's another thing that I talked to the kids about. We were talking about Shakespeare and where he was from in England, and one student said, "Oh I'll never be there." And I said, "But you never know! You might go there someday." And then they all chimed in, "Ten years from now we'll all still be in little old [name of town]." And another student said, "Yeah, So-and-So's still cruising the mall parking lot and it's been like ten years." And I'm like, "But don't you think that's sad?"*

Lynne expressed her disappointment in her students' attitudes when discussing the major and minor characters in her transition narrative. Surprisingly, Lynne described the major characters as the students who made teaching more difficult.

*[FTF] In my transition this last year, my major characters have been my horrible students. Isn't that sad? It's like the good ones get so lost in the shuffle. The horrible ones you'll always remember. And they seem to change things so much. [...] My major characters are the ones that can absolutely make me or break me.*

*You know, those days when all of these bad behaviors just ruin the lesson, and then I stress about who was left out. [...] The secondary characters. Um, are just the good guys (laughs). The good kids who want to learn and aren't punishing the rest of us because they don't want to be there. Friends and family, there's more minor characters than major. They're my foundation. My mentor teacher's a minor character. She, you know I might have it wrong, but she's not major because my major ones are the ones who can just throw me for a loop. And she's part of my stability. She's there for me if I need her and when I'm okay she's happy to be in the background.*

In our online discussions, Lynne commented that she wanted to make sure her students knew that they had possibilities.

*[OL] I understand not wanting to stray from what's familiar, but please, I think it's part of my job to open them up to their possibilities. If I assume that they'll never leave [name of town]. I don't think I should make that decision for them. I remember having aspirations to at least see things and visit other places. These students don't dream of that.*

Lynne's frustration and disappointment appeared to reach a peak when the group was discussing some realities of teaching that had surprised them. Late in the conversation, Lynne responded with an honesty I had not seen thus far in our online conversations.

*[OL] Sometimes I wonder why I am going through all of this. It is not at all like what I had thought. When I tell people this, they say, Oh Lynne, you're changing the lives of children. And I'm think that is BS. I feel like I haven't changed the life of anyone.*

#### *Major and minor characters—Mentor teacher*

Generally, the participants described their mentors as the most powerful characters in their narrative. Lynne placed her mentor in a minor role. As an older intern, Lynne may have viewed her mentor differently. In several of our discussions, Lynne described her mentor as a background character and discussed the fact that she was “rarely there.” Lynne expressed no animosity toward her mentor for this absence. In fact,

she believed that her mentor left her alone because the mentor believed Lynne was doing a good job.

[OL] *I couldn't ask for a better mentoring teacher. She's the greatest ever. I am so lucky to have a mentoring teacher who I can get a long, and get along well with. I get along well with her not only as a teacher but also as a person.*

Lynne never revealed whether she ever shared her disappointment with her mentor teacher. Lynne often described herself as a woman who liked to manage her own problems; she may have not wanted to complain.

#### *Identity—Returning to college*

As an individual who made her career shift voluntarily, Lynne explained that decision to earn a degree in English and then a Master's in Education was one based largely on a desire to share her passion for learning and to prove to herself that she had the wherewithal to earn the degrees and become a teacher.

[FTF] *And plus to me this degree, in many ways was for me, because, well, being a hairstylist is kind of like being a dumb blonde, stereotypically of course. It's like a waitress. It's not even as high up on the stereotype scale as a flight attendant. We're pretty much the bottom of the barrel and I thought back then, "Man, I have missed out on so much and people know so much more than I do." And even though I'll always be self taught, there was no real discipline involved and no real discussion about what I was reading. So I thought, "I am going to go where there are people who know so much more than I do and I am going to soak it all in." And I did! And I was so happy with learning in this environment, I majored in English and minored in philosophy and religion, and I was like, "Yeah for me! I am intelligent and I am a thinker and a writer." So I'm not sure what I had to prove except mostly to myself that I am as smart as anybody else out there and that I can do it. I have even become a teacher! Now that I'm in it and have done it I could go back to doing hair because I know, I know the intelligence inside of me.*

#### *Identity—Lynne's image of Teacher*

Lynne's description of the service industry and professional hierarchies led to a revealing belief in an idealized identity of *Teacher*. Lynne said that she was compatible

with her mentor “not only as a teacher but as a person.” Throughout the study, Lynne struggled to match her personal identity with her idealization of Teacher.

[FTF] *To me teachers should fit a certain type of image. And that image is a professional one. And sometimes I have a little bit of a problem with that. Well I have a pretty big problem with that. Because—well, when I did hair, the more outrageous and interesting you were, the more money you made. Really, because clients want to know you and wanted you to know them. You could be yourself, and teachers and bankers and lawyers, they don't get to do that. That was for the less professional jobs, and it's a whole different ball game now. [...] Maybe it's me. No it's not just me. I stifle what I say. I stifle what I do. I stifle what I wear. I stifle who I am. And before you know it, I'm no longer there. It's not to that extent here, but when I go into teaching, I don't want it to be that way.*

Lynne did not appear to consistently see herself as a real teacher, commenting, “but when I go into teaching, I don't want it to be that way.” It appears that during her internship, Lynne may not have fully identified herself as a teacher because the realities of her internship differed so much from her ideal. Seeing the internship experience as a temporary one may have been another way that Lynne distanced her current reality and identity from a future teaching identity.

#### *Identity—Invisibility and erasure*

Lynne also commented on the erasure of self, which occurred when she began teaching.

[FTF] *You know what, some of them like me some of them don't, but you know what. They don't really care about me, as a fellow person. I'm this invisible being to them. I don't really exist. You know what I mean? My sister's a schoolteacher and she even said, “Lynne, really highly emotional passionate people don't need to be teachers.” Can you believe that? She said, “If you are always emotional they're going to kill your spirit.” And so that has been hard. I don't want to kill my spirit. And I really don't want to kill their spirits. So I have to say to myself, “Don't let 'em get to you. Don't get mad. Don't get upset. Don't cry. God, don't cry. Don't yell.” The only time you're allowed to be emotional is when you're talking about literature. Because of the distance. But you can't be emotional with them. But I cannot turn it on and off. I can't make myself invisible.*

Lynne did not want her students to also feel invisible, so she spoke of several methods she used in class that she believed would encourage her students to express themselves.

[OL] *I do encourage all my students to disagree with me openly anytime they want. WHAT? Yes, I do. I feel this encourages them to have a voice.*

However, what Lynne had seen as open and frank dialogue in her university classes did not translate well into the high school classroom, as several of her students saw Lynne's openness to other opinions as a weakness. For example, Lynne told the group about a student who "made it his mission in life" to disagree with her during class discussions, regardless of the topic. Unaccustomed to an open forum, this student may have abused Lynne's class discussion policy. Even with this student's disruptions, Lynne continued with her discussion policy because she believed that other students benefited from the freedom to express dissenting opinions.

Landmark event, placement landscape, and university supervisor

Though Lynne expressed disappointment in the general attitudes and behavior of her students, she also shared several stories about students who had meant a great deal to her. Unfortunately, one of the students she mentioned during our discussions was killed in a car accident. The death of this student and subsequent events highlighted several of Lynne's transition themes. In this account, Lynne disclosed some of the choices she made while negotiating power with supervisors and other authority figures, including community authority figures. Lynne also revealed some of the frustration she felt as an intern, and therefore, an outsider, unable to remedy what she believed to be a great disrespect to her student and that student's family.

[FTF] *Well, my setting is a community of families. Because the whole school has a family atmosphere. The teachers do and this is good in a way. But it's also bad in a way. Recently we had student killed on her way to school. One of mine. And the*

*sad thing about it is, well one of the many, many sad things, is that she had come so far and accomplished so much. She went from a C student to the student who asked all the questions and gave all the answers. She really began to come out of her shell. She just got so into whatever we were talking about. She was improving so much in every area of class, writing, reading and discussing things in class. [...] She was a Vietnamese girl. Her parents had to escape and had been imprisoned trying to get to America. Oh the story of her life, it was very dramatic and traumatic. Then a couple of months to go to graduate. She would be the first to graduate high school in her family, and then she was killed in a car accident. D: How did the school respond to that?*

*L: well that's my point about family and community. I'm so upset about this. They called a faculty meeting after school that day of how to be sensitive and how to handle it. And well, they also called in a local minister, your standard Baptist minister and, he says to the teachers— It starts out good, you know, he said, "Let's remember the family in prayer." So we had a moment of silent prayer, but then he said, "I know that her family was of Buddhist descent—" I was thinking what does he mean by that—"Buddhist descent." And then he said, "But my daughter played volley ball with Nguyen and a couple of summers ago they went to summer church camp together and my daughter told me that Nguyen gave her heart to the Lord, so if you all are worried about where she's going to spend eternity, she's in Heaven." Can you believe that he said that? [...]*

*Well, I told [University supervisor] about it. I was so upset and he was like "Why?" I was like Why! And he was like, "Well—" Now I don't mean to be disrespectful to [University Supervisor], but he can sometimes go on for a while. He said— I'm just going to paraphrase how I remember it. He said, "Lynne, you can't say that everyone's god is the right god. That's insulting to God. And so if you say that she's in Heaven that should be a comfort." And I was thinking, but these teachers are going to go to their students and tell them the same thing. And they think that it's okay because the minister said that Nguyen had accepted Jesus at church camp. And so she was okay. And I just don't think it's okay to disregard someone or their family's belief system because it's going to be a comfort to us and to her friends. And I said to [university supervisor]—. You know, he intimidates me sometimes and I was upset, so I'm not sure I made sense. I said, "This is not about changing God, God's God. This isn't about my beliefs as a Christian. This is about telling a room full of teachers that a Buddhist had accepted the Lord at church camp—his daughter told him so." And he was like, "Well, I think it's a comfort. The preacher was doing the right thing to try and comfort the teachers." And I said, "But what about respecting the family? And the family's beliefs? Should we cross those lines?" And [university supervisor] said, "Well in death, lines are usually crossed." And I was thinking death is when we should be even more sensitive. [...]*

*And then I said to myself, "What do I have to win in this conversation. Nothing. What do I have to lose? Who knows? So Lynne," I told myself, "Shut up. (laughs)*

*Choose your battles.”[...] And so I dropped it. What did I have to gain? [...] When we were talking, he kept waiting for me to agree with him. I grew up in this culture, so I do know, but I don't think it's good to always assume everyone you meet will think the same way you do. [...] And I was saying to myself, “Is this really a teacher, a university teacher, telling me this? Wow. Okay, Lynne, now is the time to keep your thoughts to yourself.” [...] But then, you know, he talked and talked for like 30 more minutes, and when he was through—I had dropped the subject a long time ago. And when he was through, he said, “Well, how do you feel about it now?” And I looked at him and I said, “I feel exactly the same as I did before.” And then I think he realized that he needed to drop it too. So I think that story shows that this is a close community, but they assume that it's all the same. I don't think I should be perpetuating that belief.*

Lynne was conflicted about what she perceived as the erasure of her student's religious identity. She also compared it to the invisibility she felt as a teacher. Lynne felt passionately about Nguyen's progress and was devastated by her death, but on a more global scale, Lynne believed that, as a teacher, one of her roles was to open up possibilities for her students, whether that was introducing them to Shakespeare or allowing them to express dissenting opinions. For Lynne, erasing her student's belief system in order to ease the minds of the faculty and student body was deeply troubling. Lynne later expressed that her disappointment in her supervisor stemmed from the assumption that he would agree with her. She viewed the pastor's actions as an assault against the family's beliefs and thought that her university supervisor would be like-minded. Lynne did not believe that she possessed the authority to remedy the situation and thought the her supervisor might help her address the perceived wrong. Her conflict deepened when she was forced to choose between continuing to pursue her opinion or acquiescing to the opinion of her evaluator. She resisted by revealing that she had not changed her mind at the conclusion of the lecture.

*Landmark event—“Can the earth just swallow me up?”*

Lynne’s ideal image of Teacher resurfaced as she discussed a landmark about losing her temper and saying something she regretted.

*[FTF] I was talking to some of the other interns outside of class one night, and one of them asked how we were all doing without cursing and this one said, “Yeah I’m getting better with it.” And I was like, “What do you mean better?” [...] And then I was like, Oh, Thank god I’m not the only one. [...] Well it’s been a real battle for me because I think I have acted unprofessionally with my emotions. I told a kid who was driving me nuts— We were standing out in the hall. I had already pulled him out into the hallway and I was like, “Damnit, that’s it. You’re on your way to the office.” And can you believe that all hell broke lose? Yes. Parents, teachers, threats of not getting my license. And I felt like beaten down dog. [...] And then there was a split with the teachers. Some said that I should have more control of my classroom. And some said to put it in perspective, that I didn’t do anything any of them hadn’t done, you know sticking up for me. [...] And, my God. I thought, “Can the earth just swallow me up and I’ll just disappear?” You know, I’m not proud of losing my temper. I have really worked on that. [...] But I really think it’s a mistake to take the human out of the teacher.*

*Identity—“Do I really want to do this?”*

For Lynne, the most pressing question at the conclusion of her transition year was deciding if she really wanted to continue as a high school teacher.

*[FTF] I’ll be glad when I get the degree, but then I’ll have to face the issue of do I really want to teach. Number one: I’ve got to make some money. I’ve got to get a job. I am so broke. I can’t afford to turn on my heat. I have a space heater that I live in front of. I have a bedspread rigged up in front of my living room entrance with a space heater. In the rest of my house you can see your breath (laughs)[...] I keep asking myself, “Do I really want to do this?” So for me a landmark event will be the first day of work, where I get to teach and get paid for it at the same time. A landmark to me is not getting a paper in my hand, it’s getting money in my pocket—really, it’s getting paper in my pocket! (laughs)[...] I also have a website bookmarked for teaching in London. They have programs for bringing American teachers over, but they mostly want people who have experience.*

*D: But you do have experience.*

*L: But I don’t think that this year really counts. [...] As far as the U.S. goes, I think I’d really like Portland. Or maybe something like California. The cost of living ratio is just about the same in Pasadena, California. [...] Sometimes the pressure gets to be so intense that I think maybe I should just go back to doing hair. And then I’m like, No. I’ve worked so hard and so long to achieve this goal and I’d hate to not spend some more time doing it. But I’m still disappointed, so I*

*really have a heaviness on my heart about next year.[...] That's where I am at right now. Why would I do this? I see the benefits both ways, Sometimes I think, "What was I thinking that I could do this?" I was—Here we go again, I was in my dream world. I thought I'd get to talk about literature and I love discussing it. But whatever.*

*Identity—"I really don't know who I am."*

The majority of Lynne's story focused on her negotiation of identity. In our interview, Lynne summed up her dilemma with an additional metaphor.

*[FTF] Like I said earlier about my relationship with my students, I think we are a really dysfunctional family. And in that family, I really don't know who I am. I want to be a kind of friend, but I'm not. I want to be a big sister, but I'm not. I don't want to be Mom. (laughs) I don't know who I am. You know, another metaphor is that this year has been like a really dysfunctional family. I'm lost. I don't know which role I should play. [...] I have taken a backseat to my life. I am not in control right now. You know how sometimes you feel more in control than others? Sometimes you're like, "Hear me roar!" And then there's sometimes in your life where you just have to forfeit that control. It's frustrating. I do have, for the most part, control of my classroom, but it's not the way I thought it would be. There we go with that dream again.*

Renee

*Landmark events*

Renee, a 21-year old intern teacher, experienced momentous life changes during her transition year. Renee's definitions of herself, her intelligence, and her role in the adult world all figured highly in her internship stories. As with most periods of intense emotional growth, Renee experienced alternate cycles of doubt and confidence. However, throughout our interactions, Renee spoke most often of her feelings of intellectual inadequacy.

*[FTF] Okay, I was trying to think of some teaching landmarks, and it was getting through those first three or four weeks when I felt so stupid. Just getting through that helped me so much. You know I'd go home I'd feel so stupid. It was like, "Ugh!" But it's like the words that make up depression are "press on," so I'd say, "Okay, girl, press on! It's gonna get better it just takes practice Nobody's*

*expecting you to be perfect in your first dang year.” And I just had to keep saying that and even though I felt so stupid I knew it would get better.*

Renee’s feelings of intellectual insecurity appeared to be directly related to a believed lack of content knowledge. In comparing her own educational experiences to others, Renee appeared to rate others’ educational backgrounds higher than her own.

*[FTF] I did Julius Caesar, which I felt stupid the whole way through. And even now when I remember it, I still feel stupid just because it was so—I hadn’t read it, ever. And I hated when they’d ask questions and I didn’t know the answer. [...] That happened to me with Julius Caesar with the sophomores I had. It’s just the same thing, I hadn’t had a chance to read the whole thing and they were asking questions and I was like, “Oh yeah, please ask questions.” They’d ask things I didn’t know yet and I’d say, “Well we’ll just have to wait and see what happens in the next Act!” (Laughs) It was really obvious that I hadn’t read it, I’m afraid.*

*Major and minor characters—Mentor teacher*

Additionally, Renee’s definition of “smart” appeared to be based on the acquisition of discrete facts, and in this case, facts about Shakespeare. Renee’s description of her mentor provided a glimpse of this belief system:

*[FTF] He’s 24 years old. He is really young, but don’t be fooled because he is really, really smart. Really smart.*

*D: What makes you say that?*

*R: He knows his Shakespeare. I mean he can get up there and talk about it. He doesn’t have to look at his notes at all, or at least not much. He’s been teaching for three years and I can’t say enough about what a good teacher he is.*

Renee commented that even though her mentor teacher never left the classroom (he sat in the back of the room grading or doing paperwork while Renee taught), he gave her ample curricular freedom. Unfortunately, Renee was reluctant to seek her mentor’s advice or draw on his classroom experience.

*[FTF] D: So you had lots of freedom? But if you needed help with something, did you feel comfortable going to him?*

*R: Yes. I hated to though. Because I didn’t want him to think I was stupid.*

Earlier in the year, Renee dismissed her concerns over her mentor's constant presence in the classroom, claiming that he was occupied by his own grading and paperwork. She admitted that it made her nervous, but she was reluctant to ask him to leave. Renee commented "since all of his things were there," she didn't think it was appropriate to ask him to leave his own classroom. By the end of her transition year, her mentor's presence in the room appeared to evoke a new sentiment.

*[OL] I am so thrilled, though, to LEAVE and get my own job somewhere (else) and be a professional BY MYSELF! It is Super-yucky after awhile to still be sharing a classroom and really have no power since everything you (I) do is still 'in his (my mentor's) name'....I can see, lately, how he's trying to maintain his power/his control over the classes--that they are still HIS--as he gets a paper about a meeting and does not share it with me when the student in question (at the meeting) is MINE....I hope you ladies are well. WE WILL MAKE IT--WE'RE ALMOST THERE!!!!*

Renee's feelings had plainly changed. However, she did not ask her mentor to give her more time alone with the students. In the above excerpt, she also spoke of her future as a professional teacher. Similar to the another participant in this study, Lynne, Renee did not appear to count the internship year as a "real" first year.

Regardless of her frustrations, Renee frequently shared her appreciation for her mentor and the particular bond she felt with him. Renee described the intricacies of the mentor-intern relationship in an online discussion that focused on "what works."

*[OL] What works well: A mentor-intern relationship works well when the mentor allows the intern freedom to try new things and figure out her 'teacher character' (how she is and wants to be as an educator). The relationship is good when the mentor gives advice at appropriate times and in a kind manner--not yelling at the intern about her bad idea while the intern teaches. (My good mentor has, thankfully, never done this.) A good relationship exists, also, as the mentor respects the intern and does not think of her as an aggravation who is just there to steal the classroom and students (though it is understandable that a teacher would feel protective and then defensive of someone else coming in).*

*Factors that contribute to the mentor-intern relationship NOT working well include: If the mentoring teacher has been FORCED to house, support, and train an intern (he will not feel too happy toward the naive intern). If the mentor stays completely out of the picture and does not provide any support at all (so that the intern feels that she is merely a hassle). If the mentor just tries to USE the intern to so he will have no classes he'll need to teach AKA LAZY) (so that the intern is overworked).*

*Identity—Renee ONLINE*

Though Renee spoke candidly about feeling “stupid” during our face-to-face interactions, she adopted a different vocabulary for discussing this issue online. In her e-mails, Renee did not discuss feeling stupid; instead she talked about her inadequacy by making a distinction between her status as a novice teacher and professional teachers at her school.

*[OL] The most challenging aspect of my internship has been feeling smart enough to be a good teacher. As I watch my mentor and hear about the other PROFESSIONAL teachers and the way(s) that they teach, I feel so horribly inadequate! But, then I realize that it is OK that I am NOT PERFECT during my very FIRST YEAR of teaching....I have such a problem with that. My mentor is good, though. He tells me, "Renee, I didn't start out knowing how to do all this." I cannot wait, though, to be a PRO!!*

We can also see Renee’s online efforts to clarify the differences between the way she was treated by her “fellow teachers” and the way she viewed herself, appearing to connect her status as a teacher to her status as an adult. Renee apparently linked her increasing professional status as a rite of passage into the adult world. As long as she viewed herself as a student-teacher, she has not earned the right to be an acknowledged adult.

*[OL] Mentally: I know that I am still a pupil, myself. [...] My "fellow teachers" at my high school placement treat me with respect so I feel important. The school staff's attitude, I think plays a vital role in a young teacher's experience. I am gaining more confidence as a teacher and as an ADULT because the staff treats me like an adult AND my UT professors seem to also treat me like an adult (FINALLY!) :)*

*I see myself as a young, inexperienced teacher who hopes to 'change the world' and help some teenagers feel smart(er) and good about themselves. I think the students see me as a UT college intern and as someone that they must/are supposed to listen to. I don't know much more beyond this right now.*

*My mentoring teacher is SO NICE to me! He treats me as an intelligent, eager intern. Other teachers, as I have said, treat me with respect and are happy to help in any way that they can. What a blessing these people are!! As I teach more, I hope I will feel even more confident in my abilities to teach. I think my family and others will treat me more AS AN ADULT (a big deal to me) as they get used to me being an ACTUAL TEACHER, too.*

Renee believed that her friends and family did not yet view her as an adult. It is unclear, however, if she connected the importance of her own self definition to the image that friends and family had of her. Wanting to “help some teenagers feel smart(er) and good about themselves” also indicated the importance Renee placed on improving students’ self esteem. Knowing about Renee’s own struggle with “feeling stupid,” the value she placed on making her students feel smart(er) was particularly significant.

#### *Transition metaphor*

Renee felt uncertain about her transition metaphor, and in retrospect, it was an unsatisfying exercise for her. She commented that it was difficult to condense her transition into a single metaphor. However, Renee’s transition metaphor supports other descriptions of becoming a teacher as transformational.

*[OL] As a (new) teacher, I am a bag of microwave popcorn. I begin as kernels full of potential for being good and tasty. Give me some time and all these ideas POP! from my brain. The ideas are put into action--worksheets are made, activities are sketched, essay topics emerge--and the students are the ones who taste the 'fruit' (are involved with the ideas). Once one bag is empty, I am waiting to emerge from another bag. The kernels that do not POP! are those that are just not fully developed to be of use at the time/for the particular unit.*

It is important to note that Renee also spoke of teaching successes. The unit that Renee reported as a confidence-builder for both herself and her students was a writing

unit. Unfortunately, she did not say if the lessons involved literature interpretation, an area where she felt much less confident.

[OL] *The most rewarding part of my internship has been realizing that I CAN TEACH!!!! My students and I began the Writing Unit a few weeks ago. I thought it would be very hard to teach writing, but I am having FUN with it! I have come up with cool ways (WooHoo!) for the students to learn, and I actually KNOW what I'm doing/what I'm talking about!! So, I feel more prepared when I get up to teach my classes each day. The students are responding.*

We explored this topic again in the group chat, which took place near the end of the interns' second semester. We discussed what the interns believed were commonalities across the internship. Renee shared her feelings of inadequacy, assuming that her peers would agree.

[FTF] *R: For me I think typical is that I would worry that they'd ask me questions and I wouldn't know the answers, I know everybody has that one a lot.*

*D: Did that happen—that they'd ask a question you couldn't answer?*

*R: (pause) Oh yes. Well, sometimes. Like with Julius Caesar, cause I hadn't ever read it. So they're asking me things and I'm having to pretend like I know and say, [higher voice] "Oh you'll find that out when we read the next act." You know, wait and see! (laughter) And I guess this is typical I just I just felt so stupid at the beginning—Was this typical for you girls?*

*Voices—No. No, well yes, but not stupid really. I wouldn't say stupid—*

*D: I remember being worried about being found out, but not stupid, really, just like I was faking it sometimes—faking confidence*

*L: Yes that's it exactly.*

*R: Not for me—I wasn't faking anything. I really felt stupid!*

#### *Landmark event and identity*

Another example of Renee's self definition occurred in a spontaneous e-mail she sent to the group. Renee was the only participant who sent out spontaneous discussion topics to the community, including the one below.

[OL] *What do you think about this: WHY do the students actually DO what we tell them to do?!?? I just don't understand why they respect us interns as their teachers. They SHOULD respect us, but it seems unfair to them to have us and not the teacher they started out with. We get to have 'the power' and control what the students do. They sit back and wait until we tell them what will get them their*

*grade, and that's it. I don't understand why they don't resent school and/or us (which, of course, I'm sure they hate it/us when we are not around to hear their opinions, but....).*

*I know that when I was in high school, I knew I had to do WHATEVER in order to get through school--something I HAD to do before I could do anything (else) with my life, BUT I just feel miserable that our students outright OBEY. What's up?!? Do you think I'm just weird for wondering this (feel free to say YES)?? :)*

Uncomfortable with the automatic respect she received in her position as teacher, Renee may have seen this respect as unearned and, therefore, undeserved. One could even interpret this account as a call for resistance, as she was miserable over her students' willingness to do as they were told without question: "I just feel miserable that our students outright OBEY." Renee also recognized the enormous power held by teachers, and her questioning may indicate a desire to wield her own power with care. Another interesting issue suggested by this message was Renee's assertion that students are in a condition of stasis, biding their time in school before they are able to do "anything (else)" with their lives. Again, Renee may have been questioning her abilities, as she doubts the "fairness" of placing herself in the position as teacher. Her students seemed to give no indication that they were dissatisfied with having an intern teach the class. In fact, Renee ranked her students' respectfulness as one of the most surprising aspects of the internship year.

*[FTF] It's weird. Because I don't think they should be listening to me. I'm just an intern, you know? I just expected them to give me problems the whole time. But they didn't, not at all. I was so surprised that they showed so much respect. But it's like I can see when some people get a big power trip out of this life and I hope I do not do that.*

### *Placement landscape*

Renee's commentaries regarding her students also helped to form a picture of her placement environment. The high school where Renee interned was rural, with a

population of approximately 400 students. Because her placement was more than 70 miles from the university, located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, Renee and three other secondary interns lived in the area in subsidized housing. They also attended university classes at their placement taught by the professor who led the rural internship program. The students at Renee's placement were primarily from farming families, coal mining families, and factory workers' families. Renee also grew up in a rural community and she felt that this common attribute helped her better understand her students. Renee's interactions with Joe, a sophomore in her English class, provided one example.

[FTF] *So there's been one student who's been like that. He doesn't do a lot of work he makes bad grades. He doesn't study. It's really his own fault, but it just kills me, you know? I can't do everything for him and I have to give him a lecture sometimes about this. [...] But he's interested in heavy machinery and stuff and my brother-in-law does that stuff. [...] So I feel a connection to Joe through his outside interests and I've tried to get through to him through our common interests. And I think I can just see what he's feeling. Well we had a meeting on him because he's failing so many of his classes. And his mom was there and she's not yucky—I mean she's not abusing him or anything like that. And the meeting was very informative because I was able to see a better picture of him and his life [...] So it's like I just understand him, and as I learned more about him at that meeting, that he was into heavy machinery, it made me think that I am so glad that I have brothers and a sister who have other interests so I can learn from them about things that might help me connect with my students, relate to my students. I just love that. We met in January and he seems happier now—for one thing he looks up more. I have more chances to make eye contact with him and that's a really new thing. Like I will go to him and say, "All right, Joe. (laughs) Um, you need to get started." And usually he would just grunt, but the other day he answered me! He said, "Not today," but he still answered me!*

Though Renee openly shared self critiques throughout her transition, it was not until the end of our time together that she criticized her mentor's reluctance to relinquish the classroom. In Renee's discussion of her situation, we can also see indications of her growing confidence.

[OL] *I'm having a good internship year and a good internship experience overall, BUT I really can't wait to BE ON MY OWN as a teacher!!!! I just want to do this without someone looking over my shoulder and, in a way, acting as a babysitter of/for me. Do y'all know what I mean?? (I LOVE my mentoring teacher, and I'm sure he doesn't mean to be affecting me in this way--and I don't feel comfortable telling him that--but I really wish I had the classes to myself....I just have more confidence in myself and my abilities when I know he isn't watching and listening to everything I'm doing.).*

#### *Additional landmark events*

Renee had several life-changing events occur during her transition year—the death of her mother from cancer and the wedding of her younger sister, which took place a few months after their mother's death. When discussing the death of her mother and the impact the loss had on her transition year, Renee commented that this was another example of her mentor's supportive nature.

[FTF] *She had been in the hospital for a week. [...] She had gone in and she was saying her good-byes that night. You know for the whole week she just kind of went down hill but she was on morphine to keep her out of pain. [...] We knew that this was it and I called my mentor teacher and I was crying saying, "My mom's gonna die tonight," and he was like, "I am so sorry. I am just so sorry." This is just another example of how nice he is and how much easier his understanding made this time for me. She made it though the night, and the next day she died, and it was really so sad. And, let's see, he had my classes make me cards and they were all so sweet about it and so understanding. I will never forget him for that. Maybe that's one of the things he has taught me the most—that teachers need to be the kind of people who can go beyond the curriculum and you know, be there to help their students through whatever is going on with them. No matter what. Sometimes, we're the only people around for them. He showed me that.*

Our conversation about her mother's death was cut short when I told her how much I appreciated her willingness to talk about such a difficult subject. With that, Renee decided she had said enough. She said that she thought the conversation was too difficult for me, as I had also lost my mother that year.

### *Atypical experiences*

When the group began discussing their atypical experiences, Renee admitted that she was reluctant to share her own example. Renee was also concerned about “saying too much.” She did not want to be perceived as a complainer, or to scare potential teachers away from the internship.

[FTF] *I really don't want to talk about the downsides because I want people to still go into teaching! (laughs)*

Renee eventually said that she thought the most abnormal event of her year was the fact that one of the administrators at her school cancelled a meeting to stay and talk with a distraught intern.

[FTF] *Atypical for me? Well, the administration at my school (pause) they're sort of well (pause) sort of politically focused, you know, the principal is a good old boy who will back up the parents before the teachers. Now this didn't happen to me, but it happened to one of the other interns at my school. Something happened and she was just so upset and there's one lady vice principal that's really been good to us. If we ever have a problem we can go to her. We can definitely go to her. Well, the intern went in to talk to Mrs. Blank and she had some big meeting and the intern was so upset about the situation that had happened that [administrator] just stayed with her and missed her meeting and let the intern talk it all out. [...] Isn't that sad when we're shocked when someone's nice to us?*

Renee also added that being a part of the study had been an atypical experience for her. Even though she had connected with two other secondary interns at her placement, she often felt far removed from the experiences of other English interns, and participating in the “e-mail group” lessened her loneliness. Renee said that participating in the study had helped her stay connected with her university peers. She “really needed the e-mail discussions” because she often felt isolated, so far removed from the English Education students with whom she had taken her previous coursework. She also thought that it made her more able to support the interns at her school. She and the other secondary interns at her placement had developed a small community of their own, but

Renee was reluctant to use their time together for talking about herself, and preferred to listen to her placement colleagues' stories.

*[FTF] The e-mail group gave me a place for talking things out and for hearing about what the other girls were doing and going through. I had a place to go that my friends [at the placement] didn't, so I could listen to them and help them and go to y'all [the electronic community] with my own troubles! (laughs)*

### Janet

#### *Transition metaphor*

Janet, a 22-year old intern placed in a middle school Language Arts classroom, provided a transition narrative closely associated with the lives of her middle school students.

*[OL] My transition year metaphor, get ready, is this: PUBERTY (don't laugh). I have grown physically (unfortunately!) and mentally, become more aware of myself, and all of those other things that kids go through when they hit puberty. [FTF] Just like going through all of the physical and emotional changes of puberty, I have been changed by this year. Though I'm still the same person in many ways, I'm also different. Like puberty, I'll come through this with a new set of eyes, more mature, hopefully more wise, definitely inspired.*

#### *Major and Minor characters—Mentor teacher*

When Janet discussed many of the major and minor characters in her story, she often spoke of them in family roles. Janet described her mentor teacher as a grandmother. Janet's mentor was a seasoned veteran, and although her mentor was at first reluctant to turn her classroom over to a novice, Janet spoke with pride of about her mentor's final appraisal of her.

*[FTF] My first main character of course is my mentor teacher. Um, we will call her Betty. I think our relationship has been one of a power struggle. I had had some teaching experience before my internship and she was a little reluctant to hand her students over to me and I was really anxious to get up and go and so we had a bit of a different timetable there and even when she did let me you know move into taking over a class she wanted to make the lesson plan and have me hop*

*up and teach what she would teach and teaching in the way that she would be teaching and um I, I handled it I didn't even have a plan but apparently I handled it well enough to where she doesn't do that anymore and we've moved I would definitely say that we've moved to the level of colleagues and I feel really it makes me proud she's been teaching for I think about 35 years now and the fact that someone who has so much experience especially in the middle school—where I walked in completely lost—would consider me a colleague. [OL] It's like I'm the mother she's the grandmother. Everything's just fitting together. It's just amazing.*

#### *Major and Minor characters—College of Education Advisor*

Another major character in Janet's story was her College of Education advisor, Angela. Janet explained that Angela was like an older sister, and that she was a trusted advisor and friend.

*[FTF] I'm gong to skip past my university supervisor for a minute and go to the last person I have listed, and that's my advisor over at the College of Education. And I listed her as a main character because she's been my advisor since freshman year. [...] This is—We will call her Angela. I absolutely love her and I tell her all the time that I could not have made it throughout this without her. Um and I mean it, because she's always been there pulling for me. It's really a struggle for an African American female, especially one like myself, who's not afraid to say what's on her mind. And who's not willing to assimilate but just wants to be myself. Knoxville, and particularly [university], is really a hard place to be to be black and be the type of person I am. And I could not have done this without Angela. Um, this year was especially difficult with my supervisor and I'll get to that in a second, but I've been— There's just been some times where I've just been like—Oh, I am so tired. I am just so tired.*

*It was just Tuesday of this week I called her and told her and said, "I should have just gone ahead and transferred at the beginning of the academic year like I planned." You see, the actual internship itself is going wonderfully but I'm having such a difficult time with my supervisor. And I do realize that African Americans have to accept that there's prejudice out there and do extra. You're going to have to work a little bit harder and have to prove yourself, but honestly, I'm tired. I told all of this to Angela. And she just always has the right things to say. [...] And you know I just called her to share how I was feeling, you know, just to have someone who I know could understand. I needed to talk to someone who is always encouraging, to talk to. [...] And just, she just reminds me of the things that I've gone through and how I'm so close to the end of it. That there's no reason to give up now. And I don't have a give up personality anyway so I am going to survive the difficulties I am having with my supervisor and move on. [...] So Angela is a major character in this story because she's been an inspiration to me, and a sister who I could go to and share my burdens, you know?*

*Major and minor characters—University supervisor*

Two dominant aspects of Janet's online and face-to-face conversations were the impact of a strained relationship with her university supervisor, Kathy, and the benefits of motivating relationships with her students. Our personal interview was the first time Janet discussed her university supervisor in detail. When I asked why she hadn't mentioned anything about their relationship in our online discussions, she commented that it was just too much to go into in writing.

*[FTF] I've not received anything but negative feedback, from my supervisor. All of my evaluations haven't been negative. I've not heard wow that was really great yet. I've not heard that I—I don't plan to put any of my evaluations in my portfolio. They're horrible and I think and I hate to spend this much time talking about the negative but I want this in print and they'll know that I'm African American, yes? [...] Well I think it's important. I think that UT needs to spend a little more time or just the college of ed I guess need to spend a little more time training their supervisors to be more culturally sensitive. I feel like pat and I cannot communicate and it might be because we're different culturally, but you and I are different culturally and we communicate great, so I don't know. Our relationship took a wrong turn way back in September when I had been out of school for 4 days with the flu. [...]*

*So I told her that the way my grandmother raised me was if you're sick you don't go anywhere. You stay in the house and you rest until you get better, and especially if you deal with kids you don't take your sickness around the kids. And she didn't like that she thought that I was being smart with her. And she told me, "I can't believe that you would say anything like that to me." [...] I told her I didn't mean anything rude by it. And she was like, "Well the way that you were raised was no different from anybody else and I don't need to hear about any cultural differences you think you had. That's not important. What you need to know is that you can only miss 10 days." I mean she was, she was, she was troubled by what I'd said and I didn't mean it like that at all. And so and this was just like our first 6 weeks meeting. I hadn't had any formal evaluations yet.*

Janet commented that the rough start with her university supervisor extended into the first formal evaluation. Though Janet said that she had several positive landmarks to share,

this was a painful one, so she wanted to get it out there and then move on to happier circumstances.

*Landmark event—First formal evaluation*

A primary component in the evaluation framework under which the participants' worked was a series of three formal evaluations. Generally, the participants placed great emphasis on these formal observations, as they will be featured in the interns' licensure portfolio. The formal observation cycles begin with a pre-observation conference, a scripted observation of the lesson, and a post-observation conference. Both Janet and Mae also included the first formal observation as a landmark event.

*[FTF] So I had my first evaluation and [University supervisor] comes in and I thought class went pretty well. I made sure that it was stellar because I knew that, you know, this is going to be a highlighted one and on paper so everything needs to look exceptional. Well, she came back for the second meeting where she had to talk about what do you think, how did it go, what would you change, etc. And um, she made her notes and then she said, "Well you don't really need to pay attention to these because I just wrote really general comments. And these are just all pretty vague" I was so disappointed. If I deserved criticism, go ahead and give it. But her evaluation could have been for any intern at the College of Education. There were no specifics. And I called my advisor, Angela. This was the first time that my advisor came in to this part of my story because I am not general or a vague type of teacher. [...]*

*And that's not what I expected or wanted. And what gets me is with Kathy is that I do want criticism. I need it to grow. But I can't tell you anything positive that she's told me. She's come in you know for those little surprise informals and she'll sit down and she'll say, "You should do things this way or that way." But never, "I really liked such and such." And I work really hard to make sure that those kids who are in special ed and in my class are involved. And I feel like, Okay I'm doing all this and I wish she would recognize it. and if she does recognize it, to please tell me. I need it. But it's okay because I'll be the better person at the end. My mentor teacher told me that it's okay because she sees what I'm doing and is proud of me. Um, Its just a total lack of communication between Kathy and myself.*

Janet finished up her discussion of the university supervisor with a story about her second formal evaluation. Janet explained that they had met in the library before the

lesson and instead of going over the lesson (the standard procedure for the pre-observation conference), the supervisor wanted to discuss Janet's absences, which Janet had already agreed to make arrangements to make up in summer school, if instructed to do so.

*[FTF] I was evaluated this Tuesday and I know that it went bad because I cried right before it. [...] she got completely loud with me she went off we were in the library it was closed at the time there were no students in there, just the librarians and they were having a conversation up front. And Kathy started in on my absences and I asked if we could talk about the lesson since class was about to start. But then she got loud with me they [the librarians] stopped and looked over like—like—*

*D: Like who's yelling?*

*J: Yes. And I felt like I was being reprimanded like a child and so I excused myself from the table and I went to the bathroom and I cried and that's when I thought how much more can I take of this? And this is too much and I was so upset this is 10 minutes before the class started. And my evaluation went bad.*

*She didn't give me my scripting notes when I left and so I called her and I asked her for them so I could do my RIR [reflecting Information record, a required observation reflection]. [...] Well she said that it was a most unusual request. That she would give them to me when she came back but that she wouldn't give them to me yet. So I did my RIR without any scripting notes, which was difficult because I taught 3 classes after the one she observed. [...] It's just been difficult. And the hardest part is that every time I leave her, I cry. From frustration, from feeling bad, from wishing she could see the great job that I'm doing.*

After this story, Janet said that she wanted to switch to more positive subjects because she had stories to tell that were much more representative of her time teaching.

#### *Placement landscape*

*[FTF] The setting of course is the middle school. [...] They say that it's an inner city school. The minority population is small but it's the smallest it can be to be considered inner city and they told me that before I went and they said one of the reasons they were sending me there was that they want to have more minorities in inner city schools. And when I got there I've realized that we face stereotypically inner city problems.*

Janet provided a description of her teaching schedule in an online discussion about differences between realistic mentors and idealistic new teachers. Janet's middle

school schedule followed a more traditional teaching period, with 45-50 minute periods instead of the high school's typical 90-minute block. Janet had mentioned in an earlier discussion that she had volunteered to take over an enrichment class, which was designed to provide students with enrichment activities outside of basic academic coursework.

*[OL] I teach 5 Language Arts classes, two of which are "the special ed classes." My mentoring teacher applies pressure for me to teach all of the classes at the same pace (i.e., work from the same pages in the book, assign the same homework assignments on the same night, etc.), but because of the homogenous grouping of the two "special ed" classes, I ignore the pressure. I am more concerned with making sure that EVERY student gets the same opportunity, and I don't see how I can do so if I worry about checking the homework on the same night, or giving the test on the same day. I end up making at least 3 different lesson plans per day, and my mentoring teacher finds this ridiculous. Maybe I am just too much of a "baby" in the profession to see things from the perspective of a veteran.*

*Anyhow, I love the kids, and have developed some great relationships with quite a few. The enrichment class is going well (although a few of the students have decided to go to other teachers' rooms during this class time because I am the only teacher who won't allow them to play Uno or Spades or arm wrestling or any other unproductive thing for that matter. [...]) All in all, I am feeling pretty good about the whole thing.*

#### *Landmark events—Ben and DeDe*

One of Janet's landmark events concerned her involvement in a situation with a troubled student, Ben, and his terrorizing behaviors toward a girl in one of Janet's classes, DeDe. Ben had a history of discipline problems, but one of the stipulations in his IEP (Individualized Education Plan, a legally binding document) was that he had to be in school for coursework and counseling. For the majority of the school day, Ben attended non-mainstreamed special education classes. However, he was mainstreamed for homeroom.

*[FTF] There are some girls in his homeroom who he has been terrorizing lately. A few weeks ago he grabbed a girl's crotch. [...] Yesterday, he upset one of these girls so much that she called her parents in the middle of the day and asked to go home from school because he had knocked her over in the hallway and got on top*

*of her and did things that you shouldn't do, writhing around on top of her. And her parents had already written a letter two weeks ago saying, "Who is this kid and why is he not being suspended? Why is my daughter saying that everyday she comes to school and he's still there?" The don't realize that because he's in special ed, he can't be suspended. It's the law or an arrangement that the schools have—I don't know. But he is in special ed, and his IEP says that he cannot be suspended. And that's hard to explain to parents who are upset and rightly upset, about this boy their daughter is terrified of. [...] Well, there's another girl, who is friends with the first little girl, who was terrified to go into her 6<sup>th</sup> period class. I mean she was absolutely terrified because she knew he would be in there and she had heard about what happened. And he knocked the other little girl over during third period, so of course she heard about it and was very upset.*

*She came to me because she said that she felt like I was the only one who would understand and would do something about it. She came to me crying and said, "He's still here!" She was another one of the girls he bothered. [...] This child was shaking she was sobbing, so I asked the girl, "Is it okay if I get [mentor teacher] because she'll know exactly what we need to do next." And so I went to get my mentoring teacher and she and I had her write down exactly how she felt and why she would not go into her 6<sup>th</sup> period class. [...]*

*She told us that she would get a class cut and serve a day of ISS rather than go to that class. So [mentor teacher] marches down to the office. She is ticked. And it just so happens in the office that day is [the county's special education supervisor] [...] So we explained to him what was going on. [...] He talked to the girls and talked to the girl who was going home. He talked to her parents who were there to get their daughter, and they were so angry they were like, "Why is this child still here this is the same child we wrote a letter about a few weeks ago and he is still here and what are you going to do about it?" Well they get the Special Ed principal out there and she explains that there's no room for him at [Alternative school] and Mr. Pinkston told her, "You go ahead right now and call them up and tell them that I said that he's a security risk and if I need to talk to them right now I will." [...] And now he's at the alternative school. I don't know why it had to take all of that but it was just lucky that [Special Education Supervisor] was there. Well today, DeDe came up to me first period and I don't have her in class until 4<sup>th</sup> period. This is the girl who was terrified to go to class and [...] she hands me a card, and so it says—I've got it right here—"Thank you teacher for a fun time at school for a fun year." And here is her message. "I wanted to let you know how much getting to know you has changed my life. Sometimes when people meet you they judge you by what they see. You don't do that and you also relate your own experiences to the ones at school. Thank you so much—DeDe " [...] And she gave me a little ceramic bear and I just hugged her and cried. [...] And I told her, "DeDe, it wasn't just me because I don't have that type of power. All of your teachers helped make this happen. I'm just glad you came to me and told us.". And she said, "Oh I know." And then don't you know she comes in at lunch with a card for every teacher!*

*D: It's interesting to me that you became the Angela in her life.*

*J: Wow. Thank you so much. I hadn't thought of that.*

*D: You let her know when she thought that she had nowhere to go—terrified of this boy—you made all the difference for her.*

*J: It made me feel really good. After today when she gave me that card, there was nothing that could make this a bad day for me. It's stuff like this that confirms that I need to be a teacher. It makes it worth it. That was a landmark.*

#### *Landmark events—Black History Month*

Janet's final landmark event revolved around Black history month. She designed a nonfiction unit in which her students created biography kits for themselves and for the teachers and administrators at Janet's school.

*[FTF] Another landmark I want to talk about—I did Black history kits for the first week of Black History Month. It was going so well and I wanted my supervisor to come and see it. So that she could see what we were doing. But she never responded to my e-mail and never called me back. I left messages and told her exactly why I wanted to see her, but she never called me back. So she missed out but that didn't even matter. Because every kid in my homeroom can tell you who started Black History Month, the year that it started and whose birthday it celebrates. And that makes me happy because I didn't know anything about that until I was 19 or 20.*

*We have one kid named Nick, who in language arts struggles, and because it's hard, he hardly does anything and he has some serious motivation problems. And I didn't know that it was motivation until we did these Negro History Week kits. And what I did for the kits was I broke the kids off into groups and I [...] gave them a list of people who they'd probably never heard of before. Um, people who were different from Martin Luther King, Benjamin Banniker or Harriet Tubman—all those people who are always talked about. We looked at some very important not-so-famous black Americans. Nick's person was a woman named Asada Shakur [...] and he was so intrigued by this woman. I had the Encyclopedia of the African American Experience that I used as their main resource for this. Well, Nick was at his computer at home bringing me stuff to read about her. And he was like, "Miss Green did you know that she wrote a letter to the Pope? Here it is. I thought you'd want to see it." [...] Nick learned about her life and about where she is now. And I was like, this kid is learning about justice and injustice through history. And I helped to bring that about! (laughs) Before, he never did anything in language arts and since then, since we did that, he does a little more. I think he got to see me as a person who was just not trying to force grammar down his throat. [...]*

*Part of the reason that I did this Negro History project was what we did with the kits. After they got all the information about their person and found a picture, the*

*groups came together and made kits that we passed out to all the students in our suite and we gave one to every teacher and every principal in our school. And I wanted to show the students that if one teacher and 30 kids we could produce something this big, that we could produce something even bigger and better if everybody got involved. [...] My kids have told me that they've gotten compliments from their art teacher and that they went into the music room and they saw one of the people from their kits up n the bulletin board. And it makes them really proud. [...]*

*I still hear about it and I've seen the kids in my suite trading their kits, saying that every kid will have a chance to learn about the people if they switch them in and out. And I just said, "Ya'll make me happy." (laughs) And it really did. I must admit that it hurts me that there's no observation of that. After the first day when I saw that this was going to be the thing that they really really liked and I contacted her and never got a response from her—that really hurt my feelings. And my mentoring teacher said, "Janet, I saw it. I know that it was wonderful. I will write it down." And they put it in the school newsletter. So I put it in my portfolio.*

#### *Atypical experience*

Janet also shared an atypical experience at the face-to-face group meeting. The experience occurred during a required six-week pull out experience at a local high school. She told the story as our meeting was ending and I had turned off the cassette recorder. I am therefore paraphrasing Janet's story from memory.

On one of the first days of Janet's high school experience, she wore a blue outfit with a matching headwrap, explaining that headwraps are one of her common fashion accessories. Later in the day, one of the school's resource officers came up to Janet and said that there had been a report that morning that someone in a "blue turban" was walking around the school. Janet admitted that she did not make the connection until the officer asked if she would take off her "hat," as hats were a dress code violation. Surprised, Janet said she really couldn't because she had not done her hair that day, and therefore needed to keep it on her head. The officer then asked if she wore her "turban" for religious reasons. She said of course not, and told us that she was starting to catch on

to the officer's message. The officer asked Janet to remove the wrap twice more and Janet continued to refuse, finally promising that she would not wear a head wrap to school again. When Janet told her mentor teacher about the incident, there were several other teachers present. Her mentor teacher apologized, but another teacher in the room said that Janet shouldn't be so upset because, "You can't be too careful these days."

Janet's story created a minor uprising during our group meeting and I continue to chastise myself for forgetting to re-activate the recorder. The participants asked several rhetorical questions: "Would Janet have been asked to remove a wig?" and "Would the officer would have asked Toni Morrison to remove her "turban"? and, finally, "Would a white woman wearing a wrap to cover her chemotherapy hair loss have been treated the same way?"

Though Janet said she was embarrassed by the incident, she was more upset by the cultural insensitivity of it all, and then remembered to add that the resource officer was African American. Janet's story ended with request from Lynne that I make sure the story went into my research, which was when I remembered that I had turned off the recorder. After the group meeting, I wrote a paraphrased version of Janet's story.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Chapter Overview

In this study, I explored the local experiences of four preservice teachers and, through online and face-to-face communication, established a peer community where the participants candidly discussed their individual transitions into teaching. In this chapter I review the purposes of the study, methods used to collect data, and discuss the five transition themes identified from the participants' online discussions. Notable distinctions between online and face-to-face communication are also addressed. Based on the participants comments and on perceived benefits of online and face-to-face community participation, I make several recommendations for formation and support of peer learning communities. Though the percentages may vary, a combination of online and face-to-face communication methods appeared to be the most accessible and least intrusive approach for providing community support. Teacher education programs interested in offering purposeful, consistent, and candid dialogue through peer communities may need to thoroughly consider issues of confidentiality, comfort with electronic communication, administration of community support, dedication to candid discussion, and implications for requiring community participation.

#### Introduction

Through creating, nurturing, and participating in this transition community, I sought to acknowledge the complexities of the internship year, while also providing the intern-participants with extended opportunities for anecdotal dialogue. Though the participants' experiences occurred in vastly different environments, the peer community

offered a location for purposeful, supportive, and candid communication (via online technologies), which was reinforced in the face-to-face interviews and group meeting. The dual emphases in this study were an exploration of the participants' transition experiences and an investigation into the impact of weekly dialogues with a peer community. The research questions guiding this study asked first, about the issues involved in the participants' transition experiences, and second, how participation in a peer community, through electronic and face-to-face communication, influenced their transition. The answers to these questions took several forms, including the presentation and discussion of the study's five primary themes, and in the extended responses provided by the participants regarding their perceptions of community membership and participation.

This study involved in-depth examinations of the perceptions, day-to-day experiences, and evolving identities of secondary English Education interns. Throughout the study, the participants met weekly and told their own transition stories. Through qualitative research methods (specifically, in-depth interview, observation, and narrative construction), I asked, listened, read, and added my own teaching stories to our electronic and face-to-face discussions.

I primarily employed online technologies to build and reinforce the community. Through online communication, via an electronic discussion board and group e-mail, I attempted to establish a secure place where the participants and I discussed topics of interest and shared news about our experiences in the classroom and in our daily lives. Subjects which informed and contextualized this study included teacher education programs and reform, teacher thinking and practical knowledge, preservice, novice, and

intern teachers, and the increased use of computer-mediated communication for interaction and community participation.

#### Online and Face-to-Face Communication

Both electronic and face-to-face communication were integral to creating and sustaining our community. It is important that I voice my opposition to privileging one mode of communication over the other, as the relationships created within the community took precedence over the medium through which we communicated. My goal was to establish opportunities for consistent dialogue through whatever methods were most convenient and least intrusive for the participants. Online technologies had already been integrated into the participants' teacher education program; therefore, the intern-participants were comfortable with electronic communication and had all been using e-mail and electronic discussion boards for at least two years prior to the study.

#### Computer-Mediated Communication and Cybercommunity

Through the sustained interaction of seven months of computer-mediated communication (CMC), our community developed communication habits comparable to those described by other researchers exploring the impact of community in cyberspace (Abdullah, 1998; Griffin & Anderton-Lewis, 1998). Griffin and Anderton-Lewis (1998) describe the sheltered landscape provided by electronic communication as a safe-house, and argue that the benefits for students provided by increased online communication justify further research into cybercommunities and computer-mediated communication in academic environments. The participants in this transition community also described our electronic discussions as a setting where they felt secure, free to candidly discuss their internship experiences. In an online discussion immediately following the September

terrorist attacks on the United States, Renee commented that she was grateful to have a place where she could talk to other new teachers about the anxiety she felt over her students' desire to have her "explain it all."

*[OL] As the teacher being watched, I tried to maintain the attitude that this WAS a VERY SERIOUS thing to have happened (following the example of my mentoring teacher). I couldn't fully realize the horror of the moment right away, myself. That came later....They wanted me to explain it all to them when I didn't understand it myself!*

*Did any of you girls have the same experience? I need to talk about this with people who can understand where I'm coming from. I will be praying for ya'll as you go to your classrooms tomorrow.*

Even though the September attacks occurred early in our community's existence, Renee still communicated feelings of vulnerability and expressed her compassion for the community's members. Perhaps the direct accessibility of online communication with the community provided Renee with a secure location to share her reactions, when face-to-face communication with peers was not as accessible during the days immediately following the attacks.

Analysis of our community's electronic communications also invite exploration into the issues of critical cyberculture studies discussed by Silver (2000), where matters of power as they relate to social difference can be examined within the landscape of the Internet. The composition of future transition communities should involve consideration of diversity among community members as well as an openness the multiple perspectives of social and cultural online interactions.

#### Discussion of Electronic and Face-to-Face Discourses

As stated previously, the data gathered during this study was produced in both online and face-to-face environments, communicated most often in narrative forms. Labov (1972) divides basic narrative structure into six organizational levels: abstract,

orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result/resolution, and coda. In naturally occurring conversation, these levels do not necessarily follow a linear chain and can be distributed throughout the entire narrative. Levels may overlap, repeat, or be left out, depending upon the context of the story. Though I will provide a brief explanation of each of the categories, orientation, evaluation and coda are of particular interest in the participants' online and face-to-face narrative styles. (For the purposes of this study, *speaker* applies to both oral and written communication.)

Labov (1972) explains that a speaker generally uses the abstract level to summarize the complete story and to answer the question, "What is this story about?" Depending upon the amount of interaction among speaker and listener(s), narrative summaries may be found at various locations within the story to reaffirm the necessity of the story. The orientation contextualizes the story and generally answers, "Who, what, when, and where?" Examples of orientation are also distributed throughout the narrative. The sequence of events in the story are contained in the complicating action, and answer, "What happened?" The evaluation level is used to add emphasis to the narrative and may occur any number of times during the narrative, to prevent the question, "So what?" Evaluation is generally a reiteration of "the point" of the story and is used to justify the speaker's reason(s) for presenting the narrative. Gestures, repetition, and emphatic pitch or stress may be used in evaluation. Resolution signals the completion of the of the narrative, but may be repeated or extended due to interruptions, requests for clarification, and emphasis. Finally, codas bridge the gap between the present reality and the story reality, and often contain information about the effects of events in the story on the

speaker. Codas can be provided by the speaker or the audience, and may also further connect the speaker and/or story to the audience.

In comparing the conventions of our community's electronic and face-to-face narratives, the participants (Renee, in particular) attempted to translate essential elements of their personal storytelling styles into their online narratives. Gumperz, Kaltman, and O'Connor's (1984) notions of *cohesion*, *texture*, and *prosody* also apply to the participants' expressions of their online and face-to-face identities (see Chapter III: Discourse Analysis and Dissertation Study). This tendency appears to be closely related to the transition theme of identity. Several examples from Renee's narratives illustrate this tendency toward a personal online style.

Renee was the most active intern-participant in the online community. A conspicuous aspect of Renee's electronic communication was her consistent use of textual inflection and expression (multiple exclamation marks, words in all caps, emoticons). Considering Labov's narrative categories, Renee's online peculiarities may represent examples of her evaluation techniques. (Face-to-face examples of personal style might include gestures, repetition, and emphatic pitch or stress.) Renee's online style is presented in the following four excerpts and was consistent throughout the study. Her style did not appear to be affected by her growing confidence in the classroom or evolving teaching identity.

[OL] *As I watch my mentor and hear about the other PROFESSIONAL teachers and the way(s) that they teach, I feel so horribly inadequate! But, then I realize that it is OK that I am NOT PERFECT during my very FIRST YEAR of teaching....I have such a problem with that. My mentor is good, though. He tells me, "Renee, I didn't start out knowing how to do all this." I cannot wait, though, to be a PRO!!*

[OL] *What do you think about this: WHY do the students actually DO what we tell them to do?!?? I just don't understand why they respect us interns as their teachers. They SHOULD respect us, but it seems unfair to them to have us and not the teacher they started out with. [...] I know that when I was in high school, I knew I had to do WHATEVER in order to get through school--something I HAD to do before I could do anything (else) with my life, BUT I just feel miserable that our students outright OBEY. What's up?!? Do you think I'm just weird for wondering this (feel free to say YES)?? :)*

[OL] *I am gaining more confidence as a teacher and as an ADULT because the staff treats me like an adult AND my [university] professors seem to also treat me like an adult (FINALLY!) :)*

[OL] *I am so thrilled, though, to LEAVE and get my own job somewhere (else) and be a professional BY MYSELF! [...] [Mentor teacher is] trying to maintain his power/his control over the classes--that they are still HIS--as he gets a paper about a meeting and does not share it with me when the student in question (at the meeting) is MINE....I hope you ladies are well. WE WILL MAKE IT--WE'RE ALMOST THERE!!!!*

Renee was an emphatic speaker and clearly infused this trait into her online identity. Renee's voice, however, was more present online. During the face-to-face group meeting, Renee spoke sporadically, usually to agree with another participant or to answer questions directly addressed to her. Once she had the floor, Renee spoke candidly, but rarely interrupted others to add her opinion or offer correlating examples. It is possible that Renee's physical distance from the university and her absence from on-campus classes caused her to infuse more character into her online messages.

Mae, Janet, and Lynne's online style appears more clearly related to Condon and Cech's (1996) description of high-level user computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Greater effort and attentional demands of computer mediated communication suggest that users ... find more efficient ways of communicating. . . . Participants in electronic communications compensate for decreased efficiency by adopting management strategies that pack more information into fewer utterances, i.e., by relying heavily on implicit knowledge of a shared schema. (Condon & Cech, 1996, p.1)

Condon and Cech compare Tannen's (1984) conversational *frames* (assumptions regarding shared knowledge) to computer-mediated *discourse management*. In high-level CMC users, the participants in my research study, for example, "the effort required to type messages will result in an inevitable delay of communication, requiring further sustained attention to the emerging structure and content." Therefore, electronic communication is made more efficient through the medium of *compression* (Condon & Cech, p.3). Compression requires that computer-mediated communicators combine traits of face-to-face storytelling in their texts. Labov's categories of narrative orientation, evaluation, and coda can be seen in the participants' online narratives by providing context, anticipating questions, repeating "the point," and bridging the gaps between story reality and present reality.

#### Discussion of Transition Themes

##### *Transition Metaphors*

Even though the participants' transition metaphors were presented through different images, they all shared the common feature of transformation. In Mae's teenwolf metaphor she, like her supernatural counterpart, awoke to a startling transformation. Though there were more than a few difficult days, Mae reported that she had grown into her new identity and was pleased with the result. Lynne's metaphor also included an awakening; however, Lynne's awakening from the ideal to her reality may have been too vast a gap to satisfactorily bridge. She revealed that these disparate realities will likely keep her from a career in high school teaching.

By comparing new teachers to a bag of microwave popcorn, Renee may have been further corroborating her belief in an all-or-nothing framework. For Renee, there

appeared to be little room for gray area—while she spent much of the first semester feeling “stupid,” her mentor teacher (a three-year veteran) was a Shakespearean scholar. The bag of kernels was fairly useless until its transformation.

Janet’s puberty metaphor also evoked an image of transformation. By recalling the numerous physical and emotional changes particular to that dynamic period, Janet expressed how her physical and spiritual selves had been altered during the transition year.

Bullough (1992) suggests that personal teaching metaphors may point toward specific areas of frustration and growth in beginning teachers. Asserting that traditional educational researchers are narrowly focused on instructional behaviors and outcomes, Bullough argues that traditional teacher research cannot identify problems quickly enough to provide satisfactory support. In his study the teachers’ metaphors assisted researchers in identifying four types of knowledge difficulties. In Bullough’s study researchers did not attempt to remedy these identified difficulties. However, placing increased emphasis on teaching metaphors could help teacher educators identify problem areas while there may still be time to remedy a difficult situation. Encouraging novice teachers to communicate their experiences through metaphor could create possibilities for personal and professional insights.

#### *Major and minor characters*

In recent years, numerous studies have discussed the mentor teacher’s central role in the student-teaching experience (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Kauffman, 1992). Advocating an ecological systems approach for studying novice teachers, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) invite researchers to cast a wider net

and address the ways that other individuals invested in the lives of novice teachers (their students, supervisors, family, and friends) “affect the landscape and process of learning to teach” (169). As previously discussed in Chapter I, a systems thinking approach recognizes the interconnected nature of teachers’ social and cultural contexts (their ecosystems) to their training, attitudes and classroom experiences. Systems thinking was an especially helpful model for addressing the ecosystems of Mae, Lynne, Renee, and Janet, as their characters (mentors, students, supervisors, friends, family), landscapes (home, placement, university), and personal identities were interconnected throughout our discussions.

A remarkable aspect of the participants’ descriptions of their major and minor characters was the power (genuine or perceived) that these individuals maintained over the interns’ transition experiences. The relationships that were revealed in the participants’ narratives support Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon’s argument for more carefully examining the roles played by supervisors, students, family, and friends. At the very least, the information provided in the narratives points to the need for further investigation into the influence that these individuals have on the learning to teach landscape.

Might a less stressful or more open relationship with Mae’s mentor have prevented her vulnerability to the older male’s advances? Even though the episodes began in January, Mae waited until we were together in person to share her story, and ultimately benefited from her peers’ sympathetic responses. The participants passionately acknowledged that what happened to Mae was neither appropriate nor her fault. Similarly, Janet benefited from the community’s collective empathy regarding her

difficult intern-supervisor relationship, and although Janet expressed gratitude for Angela's advice, the peer community easily identified with the pressure of teaching during the high-stakes evaluations/performances.

### *Placement landscape*

The placement landscape appeared to have the most dramatic effect on Renee and Lynne's transitions. When Lynne revealed to the group that she might not pursue secondary teaching, both Janet and Renee attempted to dissuade her. They asserted that Lynne should look for a more diverse environment, a charter school for example, and I suggested that Lynne consider community college teaching. Janet shared that a teacher with Lynne's passion and willingness "to be real" might make all the difference in a student's life.

*[FTF] J: Having a teacher like you could make all the difference for someone. I think the way that things are going for this generation, they need teachers who are willing to see them, really see them.. And also any job where you're going to be involved with a large group of people, with a large population like teaching, you're going to have to find your fit. Sometimes it won't be the first one. Please don't give up on us. You're someone who I'd love to have teach my kids.*

Lynne said that she had not considered teaching in a charter school and would look into it. Whether or not Lynne pursues a career in teaching seems less significant than the feedback she received from the community.

With Renee's placement over 70 miles from the university, she shared that her feelings of isolation and disconnection were lessened by her connection to the community.

*[FTF] People have a tendency to get stuck up here, and sometimes it feels like I'm living in a hole—I know that sounds horrible, but it's just so isolated up here. I love it, please don't get me wrong, but everybody's got their limits. I have my girls [fellow interns at placement], of course, but I never get to see the people I came up*

*through the program with, so I just loved hearing how y'all were doing. The e-mails were for me like another place I could go.*

Janet appeared to acclimate quickly to her primary placement and discussed her school, faculty, and students with a faculty member's perspective. Because Janet's middle school placement was not the norm in the university's secondary program, she participated in two pull-out experiences in local high schools. Janet's atypical experience (being asked to remove her headwrap) occurred during her first days at the second high school placement. Janet also discussed her middle school's urban setting as an incentive to continue teaching, as she felt that she had a great influence in the lives of her students.

#### *Landmark events*

The events that the participants chose as landmarks provided valuable insights into their first-year experiences. It is interesting that Mae, Renee, and Lynne's landmark events addressed events acting upon them, while Janet's examples point out events acting upon her students. Mae's landmark explained that the impact that her mentor's portrayal of her as "subdued" (communicated to her by the university supervisor) was the moment she decided to take control of her transition year. As Mae recounted the story, the devastation she felt on that day was vividly expressed.

*[FTF] And then, so when [University supervisor] said that, it crushed me. I know I've said that a few times (pause) but the whole way home I was just thinking and thinking and so upset I was fighting hard to concentrate to drive. And I went home and I said "Mom!" [...] So from that day forward I made up my mind, Well if I overkill, I overkill, but this year is my baby and I'm going to make it. So from that day forward I just took complete control.*

Because the event had been simultaneously devastating and motivating, I asked Mae if she could appreciate the results.

*[FTF] No, not really. It felt horrible to be misrepresented like that and not feel like I could tell him [university supervisor] what was really going on. There had to be*

*a better way to handle it, to tell me. I haven't talked about it since I told my mom and if I hadn't had my mom to help me through it, to tell me that I wasn't subdued at all, it could have been a lot worse.*

Mae lived with her parents and brother throughout her internship year, and was able to find reassurance in her home community. For first-year teachers away from their families or home communities, perhaps an approachable peer community could provide needed support.

Lynne's landmark event recalled the tragic death of a student, and as she described the powerlessness she felt during the pastor's description of Nguyens's supposed conversion to Christianity, Lynne's outrage was still close to the surface. In the group meeting, Lynne shared the story again and described the value of talking about it with someone who seemed to understand her.

*[FTF] Honestly I just needed to know if I was off-base or not by being so upset about it. It had all happened that same week that we talked [for the study's personal interview]. Denise, do you remember how upset I was about it all? [...] I think I just needed to hear that I wasn't crazy for feeling like I did.*

When Lynne and I discussed the death of Nguyen and subsequent conversation with her university supervisor, I provided little more than a sympathetic audience for her story. We talked about Lynne's desire to contact Nguyen's family, though she was not sure if she could meet them face-to-face. I suggested that sending a note to them might bring her some closure and also comfort the grieving parents.

Renee's first landmark was closely tied to her issues of identity and self-definition. She described her first experiences teaching *Julius Caesar* and how she "just felt so stupid the entire time." I asked Renee if she had overcome some of her feelings of inadequacy, and she responded that she thought she had, but still believed that she "had a

long way to go” before feeling like she could teach Shakespeare “right off the top of [her] head.”

[FTF] *That’s going to take some time. I’ve had teachers who know every single thing about everything in the plays. When I taught Julius Caesar I hadn’t even finished it yet. Isn’t that awful?*

Even though she was near the end of her internship, Renee still placed “real” teachers in a separate category from herself. During the group meeting, Janet shared her thoughts on the differences between being inexperienced and being “stupid.”

[FTF] *J: I don’t think anybody expects us to know everything about everything. We’re new and we’re learning. I think we’re right on track.  
R: My teacher did tell me that too, but I wish I had heard that from y’all. It sure would have made me feel better.*

Janet’s landmark events were also tied to her identity. Janet’s examples, however, revolved around the impact she had as a teacher, and how getting involved in DeDe’s crisis confirmed for Janet that she was supposed to be in the classroom.

[FTF] *What if my issues with Kathy [university supervisor] had driven me away from the internship? I’m so glad that I don’t have a quitter’s personality. DeDe might have just skipped class that day and Ben would have continued to torment those girls. I’m so glad I was there. It made me proud. Helping her made those days when talking to Kathy sent me home crying less important. They just didn’t matter as much.*

Janet commented further about her relationship with the university supervisor, saying that she was sure there was a reason for Kathy in her life, even if she had not yet identified it.

### *Identity*

The community’s electronic and face-to-face discussions about identity and self definition were some of the most compelling of the study. Concerns over misrepresentations, poor first impressions (Mae), idealized images of teachers, erasure (Lynne), lack of diversity in teacher supervision (Janet), and intense feelings of

intellectual inadequacy (Renee), suggest abundant topics for further research.

Additionally, the differing identities represented in Renee's online and face-to-face communications strongly suggest the need for further analysis.

*Additional theme—Atypical experiences*

When the face-to-face group meeting took place in late March, the participants and I had been communicating online since September. The participants had conversed one-on-one with me in the personal interviews, but we were finally meeting as a group. To show my appreciation for their participation, I invited the interns to my home for dinner and for our face-to-face meeting. In addition to gathering final data, I believed that we needed to bring closure to the study and to our time together. An indication of the high level of confidence created in the community may be represented by the participants' willingness to share highly privileged information. When I expressed my surprise at the topics being discussed, I was told that it was a relief to finally talk about some of the "wild things" that had happened during the year.

[FTF] *D: Who knew we'd be talking about stuff like this? I feel like I'm in the middle of a fireworks show!*

*L: Oh, we're all family here. We're just telling it like it is.*

The participants' willingness to candidly discuss these surprising and highly personal topics may also demonstrate how they trusted the community. Though they did not share the sensitive stories online, they were eager to share them in person, even when the incident was an embarrassing one. I asked the participants why no one had had discussed these experiences in our e-mail discussions and was told that it would have been too much to write. I also suspect that the interns still wanted face-to-face contact in order to gauge how much information they should reveal. They also explained that they

were not sure what I would have done with such sensitive information. I admitted that they were probably wise to refrain. (I was also not sure what I would have done with such distressing information.) I continue to feel conflicted about the harassment Mae endured, and am concerned that it remains unreported. I feel a similar conflict regarding Janet's university supervisor. Knowing the responsibilities and obligations of a university supervisor, I am uneasy about the possibility of her supervisor's behavior negatively affecting future interns.

### Transition Themes and Teacher Education

The transition themes identified within this research study speak to related research on personal practical knowledge, teacher thinking, and teacher induction (Elbaz, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1997; Griffin, 1985). The transition themes identified in this study (major/minor characters, placement landscape, landmark events, transition metaphors, identity, and atypical experiences) may further clarify Elbaz's (1993) domains of teacher knowledge (self, teaching environment, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction). Within the community's communications are clear examples of the interns' perceptions of self, their diverse teaching environments, their perceptions of teaching complex varieties of reading, writing, listening, and speaking to multiple age and ability levels, their understanding of curriculum, and illustrations of their evolving instructional styles. Elbaz comments that self-awareness is an essential tool for promoting teacher thinking and reflective practice. The awareness of self and others promoted by consistent communication with a transition community provides abundant opportunities toward reaching these goals.

The interaction of our community also addresses components of successful teacher induction described by Griffin (1985). Griffin's review of successful teacher induction programs highlights the necessity of continuous feedback among faculty, mentors, and program participants. The success of peer transition communities could motivate other groups in teacher education to participate in face-to-face and cybercommunities, thus making available more opportunities for communication and feedback.

### Perceptions of the Community

Following the community's face-to-face group meeting, I e-mailed the participants and asked if they would talk about their participation in our community and how it had affected them. I also asked how they would feel if participating in the community had been a course or program requirement. Though Lynne was in favor of small group participation, she was opposed to making participation a requirement. For Lynne, the freedom to be candid would be severely limited by a possible loss of anonymity.

[OL: Lynne] *The idea of small groups are wonderful, but if you would not have said that our comments were anonymous, then I would have never expressed myself so freely. In other words, if group discussions are graded, then you may not have the willingness to respond like you had with us.*

Janet spoke more specifically about the community's impact on her transition experience, but also voiced objections to requiring community participation.

[OL: Janet] *It has been extremely helpful being in this small group, with it's wonderful dynamics. The group served as a sounding board, and made easier some difficult times. I am grateful to have been a part of it. I am hesitant to say create small groups next year for all students, only because it seems that when group participation is mandatory it is no longer fun! I remember being set up in small groups in one of [Professor's] class and absolutely HATING it! In his class, the group was set up very much like ours in that we met only online, but my participation in it felt too much like an unnecessary burden and an extra unwanted responsibility. It's interesting that I*

*have enjoyed our experience so much, when I abhorred the other group experience, but I know that the fact that I had a choice was a big factor in the difference between the experiences. (I hope that's not too jumbled up!!!)*

My original message was sent as a group e-mail, and Mae included a message to the entire group in her response.

*[OL: Mae] I, like Janet, think that small discussion groups are great when they are voluntary. It is sad to say, but something in human nature makes us less willing to do things we are made to do. I have very much enjoyed our discussion group, and I would like to thank you for all of your encouragement. You have been much needed friends in the whole intern experience. I can't believe it, but I am really going to miss the University!*

Renee, whose placement was located over 70 miles from the university, and who had little to no contact with English interns outside of our community, expressed great enthusiasm for her inclusion in the study. Of the four participants, Renee was the only intern who supported the idea of required participation in a peer community. Renee did, however, address to the need for careful community organization.

*[OL: Renee] Being a part of community this year was really good!! I LOVED having FRIENDS with whom I could talk and share things that have happened during my internship. The best part was that I could TRUST everyone!! It was better that the group was small, also, because a lot of people is hard to keep in mind as one writes and unloads her concerns. I think it would a FABULOUS idea to create small groups with pre-professional teachers. I think that as long as the members of each group like each other well enough, they will communicate openly and will then gain SO MUCH from the communication! They will be able to see that they have MANY of the same experiences and will be able to lean on each other during 'yucky' times. I think that one of the most important parts of the internship year is the NEED to be with one's 'own kind'—an intern/student teacher and a 30-year experienced teacher cannot relate like two interns/student teachers can. Ladies, take care of yourselves!! I am thinking about ALL of you!*

The interns in this study credited the community for providing much needed support, a sounding board for questions, frustrations, and new ideas, and companionship through

difficult times. Their perceptions also highlight the need for careful consideration of issues of confidentiality, compatibility and mandatory participation.

### Discussion of Dissertation Study

With an awareness of the complex, paradoxical, and emotionally charged nature of first-year teaching, I used my dissertation research to explore the impact of a peer community on the transition experience. An important consideration in establishing the community was providing ample opportunities for consistent and candid communication. In designing the study, I wanted to provide a framework for highly accessible, yet non-intrusive channels for weekly discussions. Online technologies were an established component of this university's teacher education program, thus providing the perfect environment for using electronic communication as the primary means for cultivating a year-long study of teacher transition and community.

Though, recent educational researchers have consciously incorporated teachers' voices and perspectives into their studies (Britzman, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1995, 1997, 2000; Johnston, 1994), the community provided by the dialogue was generally limited to the participant and the researcher(s). Within my dissertation research, I sought to incorporate teachers' voices and expand the community network to include communication with the researcher and with the other research participants.

Connelly et. al. (1997) argue that to better understand teachers and to produce research that possesses strongly authentic, accurate descriptions of teachers' perspectives, educational researchers must organize collaborative studies inviting teachers to help define research purposes, suggest data interpretations, and comment on final results. Teachers open to exploring and improving their practice must be invited by educational

researchers to co-author studies, thus making conspicuous the voices of teachers in educational policy and reform. My dissertation study was a personal first step toward presenting such authentic descriptions of the transition year. Though this study was limited by the university's dissertation constraints, such as single authorship, involving future participants in co-research and co-authorship seems to be a logical next step. Such a step would support Connelly and his colleagues' call for genuine community in educational research. Exposing teachers to the advantages of peer community early in their careers may create more interest in co-research participation, perhaps making genuine local control over education reform more probable.

In my study I attempted to make plain the benefits of purposeful communication and community for first-year teachers. Teachers experiencing the complexities and contradictions of learning to teach who are also intimately involved with like-minded peers may navigate the transition into teaching more successfully, thus increasing the possibilities of continued commitment to the profession and more informed teaching practice. In their review of recent research on learning to teach Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998) ask researchers to eschew the allure of statistical generalizability, and instead pursue local qualitative investigations. Rather than striving for exact reproduction, the authors suggest conducting companion studies, which can incorporate the uniqueness of individuals and individual environments into educational research. At the very least, the benefits reported by the four intern teachers in this community warrant companion studies, which may corroborate our community's findings, or send community research in additional directions.

Since many first-year teachers appear to experience transition difficulties, why not meet their need for communication and support in a way that has their best interests at heart? Though certainly not in every case, providing opportunities for communication through as many channels as possible, teacher educators may decrease incidents of new teacher attrition caused by isolation, frustration, and disillusionment. The participants all reported benefiting from their involvement in the community and expressed gratitude for its availability and support during their transition year. (Lynne's ambivalence over pursuing a career in secondary education may have been an inevitable outcome of her transition year. However, the benefits she reported from community support and from the opportunity to engage in sincere and honest dialogue may transcend her ultimate career decisions.)

#### Qualitative Inquiry and Intern Teachers' Transitions

The benefits of exploring the participants' transition experiences qualitatively can be seen in many areas of this research. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe qualitative researchers' quests to study persons, cultures, and phenomena in their natural settings, and their attempts to make sense of what they encounter according to participants' perspectives as opportunities to gain richer understandings of the complex nature of human interaction. By exploring the experiences of the participants qualitatively, I hoped to become acutely aware of their perspectives, interactions, and experiences. I sought to learn how these interns created meaning and constructed images of themselves, their classrooms, and their worlds.

By further focusing this research on the participants' communication styles, anecdotes and narratives, I attempted to follow Ambert's (1995) advice:

Above all, the richness of the quotes, the clarity of examples, and the depth of illustrations in a qualitative study should serve to highlight the most salient features of the data. Evaluation of what has been included in this respect should be made on the basis of how these data illuminate and give readers a sense of being there, visualizing the [group] members, feeling their conflicts and emotions, and absorbing the flavor of the . . . setting. (6)

## Conclusions

Generalized conclusions to a population outside of this outside of our community were not an intention within this research. However, this study's findings and participant narratives can speak to central trends, offer recommendations for future transition communities, recommend suggestions for the participants' local teacher education program, and suggest areas for further research. Therefore, four conclusions based on this study's findings are provided below.

- A peer community was formed during this study and remained intact for the duration of the participants' transition year. (Additionally, the participants continued to send community e-mails about employment opportunities, job offers, and personal good news after the official conclusions of the study and their teaching year.)
- Both electronic and face-to-face interactions were integral to sustaining our community relationships.
- The community's electronic and face-to-face interactions provided insight into the daily experiences of the participants' transition year through weekly discussions, distinctive experiences, and personal narratives. Five transition themes identified through the community's discussions were major and minor characters, placement landscapes, landmark events, transition metaphors, and

identity. The additional theme of atypical experiences was added after the face-to-face group meeting.

- The community facilitator's lack of evaluative power and the assurance of confidentiality promoted candid discussion among the community participants.

#### Recommendations for Future Transition Communities

The community created by this research study represents one model for establishing and supporting a transition community. In this model, the community was first established online with the face-to-face components occurring later in the year. Future transition communities could experiment with additional face-to-face interactions, especially during the establishment of the communities, to determine if increased face-to-face contact improves community cohesion. For research purposes, our community was limited to four members plus a facilitator. However, teacher educators interested in creating transition communities within their own programs could experiment with larger communities, depending on class and/or cohort size. Community creation and support could be offered first on a voluntary basis and then more widely supported if student interest increased. Teacher educators interested in community need to also consider issues of diversity in gender, race, age, and subject matter when forming communities.

Based on the participants comments and on the perceived benefits of online and face-to-face community participation, this study's findings support the formation of peer learning communities. Though the percentages will vary according to teacher education program, a combination of online and face-to-face communication methods appeared to be most accessible and least intrusive for participants during the busy internship year. Teacher education programs interested in providing purposeful, consistent, and candid

dialogue through peer communities need to carefully consider issues of confidentiality, comfort with electronic communication, dedication to community support, and implications of requiring participation. Considering Janet, Mae, and Lynne's powerful opposition to requiring community participation (even though they acknowledged its positive impact), interested teacher education programs may need to locally establish benefits before instituting transition communities.

Great attention went into providing support for the community ranging from suggesting weekly topics and participating in community discussions to offering personal transition and teaching anecdotes. I expended a great deal of energy (especially in the early stages of the community) engaging participants, establishing the community website, responding to questions, offering suggestions, and providing support. Not surprisingly, I developed a deep affinity for the individuals in the community and was heavily invested in their well being. Though personal emotional investment is not a requirement for facilitating a transition community, a commitment to the nurturing and support of novice teachers is imperative. Administrative commitment to the support of community must also be evident in staffing and protection of candid, self-directed discussions.

The community members in this study often asked for advice from their peers as well as from me, based on my experience as a secondary English teacher. Therefore, suggestions for community facilitators include several categories of individuals: in-service teachers interested in mentoring and supporting novice educators; advanced graduate students in teacher education, administration and supervision, educational psychology, counseling, and other interested College of Education support staff, such as

advisors or placement coordinators. Compensation (either financial or through release-time) for facilitating and supporting a community may need to be addressed. Due to the participants' concerns over confidentiality, negative repercussions, and reactionary grading, I strongly advise against assigning university supervisors, teacher education professors, or anyone with evaluative authority over the participants as community facilitators.

*Recommendations for the university's teacher education program*

Several factors related to the participants' mentoring and supervision difficulties during their transition year might be addressed by modifications within university policy. The university's office of School-Based Experiences, which manages the internship year, provides established policies for mentoring and supervision. University supervisors are required to attend a one-time Framework for Evaluation and Growth orientation before beginning supervision. The framework currently in use was instituted approximately four years ago; "refresher" meetings to address changes in the guidelines are not required. Guidelines for the internship experience are presented in the *Handbook for the Professional Internship Year*. Expectations for interns, mentors, and university supervisors are addressed in the handbook. Though all three parties are advised to read the handbook, there are no safeguards in place for assuring that this is done. Instituting an annual *mandatory* meeting for interns, mentor teachers, and university supervisors, where the university's policies are made explicit, might have prevented several of the misunderstandings that were reported by the participants. Even though there might be multiple objections to such a requirement, it may be likely that the problems uncovered in this study are not unique.

### Suggestions for Further Research

It is clear that there are ample opportunities for further research into the local experiences of novice teachers and into the influences of community involvement on the transition year. Companion studies seeking to establish communities in other fifth-year teacher education programs could provide additional insight into the local experiences of intern teachers. However, the majority of teacher education programs in the United States are four-year certification programs, where coursework may have been completed prior to the student-teaching experience. These programs may provide even fewer opportunities for peer contact and support. Therefore, research into communities of novice teachers licensed by undergraduate programs may offer compelling evidence related to areas of teacher preparation. Long term studies exploring the impact of multi-year teacher communities may also provide insights into the lives of educators beyond their transition year.

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## APPENDICES

**FORM B**  
**Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects**

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**I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT**

1. Primary Investigator: Denise Ousley
2. Project Classification: Research Project
3. Perceptions and Communication Styles among Secondary English Interns
4. Starting Date: 5 September 2001
5. Estimated Completion Date: 1 April 2002
6. External Funding: None

**II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this research project is to explore and identify existing perceptions toward the transition experience from student to teacher among secondary English Education Interns. This project will involve two in-depth interviews throughout the participants' first semester of internship. It will also include identifying communication styles particular to various methods of communication among the interns in the study (face-to-face and electronic).

**III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

The participants in this project will be three to five secondary English Education Interns. They will be chosen from the cohort of English Education interns who will begin their internships in the 2001-2002 academic year. They will participate on a voluntary basis.

**IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

The research project will include two in-depth interviews throughout the course of the first semester of internship. There will be no more than two 30-45 minute interviews per participant. One interview will be held at the beginning of the semester and the other at the end of the semester. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon location. The research project will also include a study of the participants' communication styles using examples from both face-to-face and electronic communication. There will be two group meetings among the participants, which will last approximately 30 minutes each. One group meeting will be held at the beginning of the study in September, and the second will be at the end of the first semester in December. The opening question for the group meetings will be: "In what way has our communication throughout this study impacted your internship and transition experiences?" (The first group meeting will begin with the participants' predictions of the impact.) The remainder of the group meetings will be generated by the participants' responses to the opening question. The electronic communications (e-mail and or secure discussion board) will be generated by the participants' lived experiences. They are provided to offer an open and easily accessible line of communication among the participants and the primary investigator.

The interviews and group meetings will be audio taped and transcribed. The participants will be aware of and consent to the primary investigator's request to audio tape and

transcribe the interviews and group meetings. Once the audio tapes are transcribed, they will be destroyed. Once copies of electronic communications are transcribed, they will also be destroyed.

## V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

Measures to mitigate risks to participants:

**Identity**—Participants’ identities will remain confidential to all but the primary investigator and fellow participants, to the best of the primary investigator’s ability. Due to the nature of the face-to-face group meetings and electronic communications, the primary investigator cannot guarantee confidentiality in the group meetings or on e-mail. The primary investigator and participants’ primary advisor will not have access to the participants’ identities at any time before, during, or after the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link the participants to the study. All references to the participants on transcripts and in the study will be replaced with pseudonyms.

**Primary Investigator/Participant Relationships**—No intern who is under the supervision of the primary investigator will be eligible to participate in the study. The interns are in no way required by their supervising professors or the primary investigator to participate in the study. Further, the primary investigator will not share any information regarding the identity of the participants or data provided by them with any intern supervisors or supervisory professors. The participants are in no way required by their supervising professors or the primary investigator to participate in the study.

**Data Storage**—The signed consent forms will be stored securely on university property. The primary investigator will be the only person with access to the interview tapes, transcripts, notes, and samples of electronic communications. Once the audio tapes are transcribed, they will be destroyed. Once copies of electronic communications are transcribed, they will also be destroyed.

## VI. BENEFITS

Teacher educators are eager to understand how to improve the transition experiences of intern and first-year teachers. This research project will attempt to illuminate significant areas of concern among the participants during their first semester of internship and share how the particular issues described were or were not solved. Although the information collected and analyzed will not be directly generalized, this study’s discoveries may further the educational research in the study of pre-service teachers and intern teachers. The study participants will benefit from their involvement in a unique learning community. Novice teachers often speak of feelings of isolation during the transition from student to teacher; perhaps being included in the membership of this community will alleviate some of the difficulties in the transition experience. Participants will also receive a summary of the study’s findings in order to examine their own participation and experiences.

## VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING “INFORMED CONSENT”

The study participants will take part in this study voluntarily. They will be given an informed consent form. The informed consent form will be based on the university’s Office of Research/Research Compliance Services sample form. Once the potential participants (2001-2002 Eng Education interns) have read information sheet, interested

parties are invited to contact the primary investigator via e-mail. The participants will then meet with the primary investigator to discuss the study further and to sign the consent form.

#### VII. QUALIFICATIONS OF INVESTIGATOR TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The principal investigator for this research project is a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Ph.D. student in the College of Education She has been an English teacher for seven years and is familiar with many of the interns' upcoming responsibilities. The Primary Investigator has successfully completed courses in qualitative and quantitative research in both Education and Sociology. She has previously conducted in-depth interviews and has analyzed and formally presented findings. The Faculty advisor has reviewed and approved the study's Interview Guide.

#### IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. The data will be securely stored on university property. Once the audio tapes are transcribed, they will be destroyed.

#### X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of this university, the principal investigator subscribes to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of this university. The principal Investigator further agrees that:

Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to the Compliances Section. Annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

## Appendix B: Participant Information Letter

5 September 2001

Dear English Education Intern:

This letter contains information regarding a research study I would like to conduct in the fall of 2001. If you are interested, you are invited to participate in the project. The purpose of this research project is to explore perceptions toward the transition experience from student to teacher among secondary English Education Interns. This project will involve two in-depth interviews throughout your first semester of internship—one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end of the semester. The interviews will not take more than 45 minutes. The study will also include identifying communication styles particular to various methods of communication among the interns in the study (face-to-face and electronic).

Teacher educators are eager to understand how to improve the transition experiences of intern and first-year teachers. This research project will attempt to illuminate significant areas of concern among you and your fellow participants during your internship and explore how the issues identified were or were not resolved.

I will incorporate measures to mediate any risks to the participants who volunteer for the study. They are as follows:

**Identity**—Your identity will remain confidential to all but the primary investigator and fellow participants, to the best of my ability. Due to the nature of the face-to-face group meetings and electronic communications, I cannot guarantee confidentiality in the group meetings or on e-mail. None of the intern supervisors or supervisory professors will have access to your identity at any time before, during, or after the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. All references to you on transcripts and in the study will be replaced with a pseudonym.

**Primary Investigator/Participant Relationship**—No intern who is under my direct supervision will be eligible to participate in the study. You are in no way required by your supervising professors or me to participate in the study. Further, I will not share any information regarding your identity or data provided by you with any intern supervisors or supervisory professors

Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. You may decline to participate without any penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before the data collection is completed, your information will be returned to you or destroyed.

This study will attempt to create a learning community among the participants and myself. We will be communicating in person and electronically and, ideally, you will view your participation in this community-through personal narrative, questions, advice, and support-as beneficial to your own transition experience.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me at the e-mail address below. We can then meet to discuss the study in more detail. I will also provide you with a consent form, with further information regarding the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Denise M. Ousley

## Appendix C: Informed Consent

### **Informed Consent**

#### **Perceptions and Communication Styles among Secondary English Interns**

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You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify and explore existing attitudes and communication styles among English Education Interns. This project will involve two in-depth interviews throughout your first semester of internship. This project will also include an analysis of various communication styles in both face-to-face and electronic contexts.

#### **Information**

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##### **Procedures:**

With your permission, E-mailing other participants on a voluntary basis

Periodically posting your opinions/experiences on a Discussion Board

Two in-depth interviews with the primary investigator

Two face-to-face group meetings with the other participants and the primary investigator

Each of the two interviews with the primary investigator will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Discussion Board postings and or e-mails will be written at your leisure and should not take more than 15 minutes to comment.

The two face-to-face group meetings will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

There will be three to five participants in this study.

The interviews and group meetings will be audiotaped.

#### **Risks**

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In this study several measures will be taken to mediate risk. They are as follows:

Identity— Your identity will remain confidential to all but the primary investigator and fellow participants, to the best of the primary investigator's ability. Due to the nature of the face-to-face group meetings and electronic communications, the primary investigator cannot guarantee confidentiality in the group meetings or on e-mail. The primary investigator and participants' primary advisor will not have access to your identity at any time before, during, or after the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. All references to you on transcripts and in the study will be replaced with a pseudonym.

Primary Investigator/Participant Relationships— No intern who is under the supervision of the primary investigator will be eligible to participate in the study. You are in no way required by your supervising professors or the primary investigator to participate in the study. Further, the primary investigator will not share any information regarding your identity or data provided by you with any intern supervisors or supervisory professors. You are in no way required by your supervising professors or the primary investigator to participate in the study.

Data Storage— All data included in this study will be stored securely on university property. The primary investigator will be the only person with access to the interview tapes, transcripts, notes, and samples of electronic communications. Once the audio tapes are transcribed, they will be destroyed. Once copies of electronic communications are transcribed, they will also be destroyed. Your signed consent form will be stored securely for three years; after this time, it will also be destroyed.

#### **Benefits**

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Your participation in this study will augment the current research in the field of pre-service and first-year teachers. Teacher educators are eager to understand how to improve the transition experiences of intern and first-year teachers. This research project will attempt to illuminate significant areas of success and areas of concern among the participants during their first semester

of internship. Your participation may also help teacher educators better understand effective communication across face-to-face-and electronic mediums.

As a study participant, you will benefit from your involvement in a unique learning community. Novice teachers often speak of feelings of isolation during the transition from student to teacher; perhaps being included in the membership of this community will alleviate some of the difficulties in the transition experience. You will also receive a summary of the study's findings in order to examine your personal participation and contributions to the project.

### **Confidentiality**

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Your participation in this study will be kept confidential, to the best of the primary investigator's ability. As mentioned earlier, due to the nature of the face-to-face group meetings and electronic communications, the primary investigator cannot guarantee confidentiality in the group meetings or on e-mail. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the primary investigator. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. All references to you on transcripts and in the study will be replaced with a pseudonym. The signed consent forms will be stored securely on university property. The primary investigator will be the only person with access to the interview tapes, transcripts, notes, and samples of electronic communications. Once the audio tapes are transcribed, they will be destroyed, Once copies of electronic communications are transcribed, they will also be destroyed. You are also asked to keep confidentiality for the duration of the study.

### **Contact**

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If you have questions at any time about this study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Denise Ousley. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Research Compliance Services section at the Office of Research.

### **Participation**

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Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

### **Consent**

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I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's name (Please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Sample E-mail Discussion

\*E-mail discussion  
\*Mentor relationships  
\*R, M, J, L

R

### Mentor and Intern Relationship Thoughts

What works well: A mentor-intern relationship works well when the mentor allows the intern freedom to try new things and figure out her 'teacher character' (how she is and wants to be as an educator). The relationship is good when the mentor gives advice at appropriate times and in a kind manner--not yelling at the intern about her bad idea while the intern teaches. (My good mentor has, thankfully, never done this.)

A good relationship exists, also, as the mentor respects the intern and does not think of her as an aggravation who is just there to steal the classroom and students (though it is understandable that a teacher would feel protective and then defensive of someone else coming in).

Factors that contribute to the mentor-intern relationship NOT working well include: If the mentoring teacher has been FORCED to house, support, and train an intern (he will not feel too happy toward the naive intern). If the mentor stays completely out of the picture and does not provide any support at all (so that the intern feels that she is merely a hassle). If the mentor just tries to USE the intern to so he will have no classes he'll need to teach AKA LAZY (so that the intern is overworked).

M

I honestly don't know what makes or breaks the relationship between an intern and a mentor; however, I do think there are some things a intern should know before his or internship begins. For one, the mentor has been at the school for a long time and therefore has a routine. She sits in the same place at lunch, talks to the same people, visits the bathroom at a specific time, avoids a certain group of people, etc. I think the intern should be aware that the mentor is probably not going to "host" him or her around the school because that would disturb the "sacred" routine. Also, don't expect too much help. The mentor has resources, but he or she is not going to help you find them--you have to dig yourself. Last but not least, let's face it, the reason teachers take interns (most of the time) is not because they are passionate about helping new teachers, but because they are ready for a break from work. This equates to leave them alone.

J

I agree with Mae. I am not sure what it takes for the mentor/intern relationship to work. I think it is hard to pigeonhole because every situation is so different. Some teachers want an intern because they need/want a break, and some teachers actually want to share the wisdom that has come to them through years of experience. I think "be ready for any and everything" is what needs to be understood and passed down to teacher educators, future mentors, and interns.

L

I feel that the mentoring teacher should be like a parent in that they give you roots and wings. Roots will be the example they give you on how to have an exciting class with good classroom management, just giving you the worst class they have and saying "have at it." Wings would be letting feel like this IS your class, not her baby.

Appendix E: Mae Interview Excerpt

\*Interview excerpt

\*Mae

\*3/8/02

D: How would you compare the start of last semester to the start of this semester?

M: Oh--Well I knew--(pause) I was already in the ball game--I mean it was just (pause) continued with the same (pause) you know just continued with the same. This semester I feel like I've been teaching for a couple of years already!

D: I bet. Would you like to talk about more landmark events?

M: Yes. By the time that I had my first formal evaluation, which ----- did. And now ---- and I are pretty close. He's extremely professional. And I feel also like we're alike in a lot of ways. We just click well. So I'm so happy that I'm placed with him and not (pause) I'm happy.

We get along great. Now it's not that I don't feel like I can talk to him about things. But I usually don't talk to anybody here anyways.

D: It sounds like you have a pretty strong support outside of school?

M: Definitely. Right. First Formal comes along--and if you want to know something really funny--The night before my first formal observation, my longtime boyfriend and I broke up (laughs)

D: (laughing) Oh dear!

M: (laughing) So I was crying at 2:00 in the morning before my first formal observation

D: What bad timing!

M: Yeah. But really, even when it was going on, I could almost laugh at it, almost. (laughing)

It's like nothing can surprise me after this year. But um--So anyway, it was 2 am and I thought I don't have any of my lesson plans typed out, I don't have my PIR (pause) You know

And I thought, Well let me cry all I am tonight and wake up tomorrow and it will be a new day. So I cried myself to sleep and set my alarm extremely early and got about two hours of sleep and got up and I was a woman on a mission the next day. Because I knew what I had to do and so (pause)

So I had my first formal observation and it went, it went extremely well and you know, what I hear about -----? He's a real critical evaluator and he didn't have one negative thing to say. And um totally reassured me and I felt so good about it and all (pause)

M: Um (long pause) Let's see. I guess I can talk now about minor characters. I guess I can talk about two students who were failing the entire term just because they simply would not do any work. And (pause) that was a challenge because they're seniors. I didn't want them to fail. But the way that resulted is that one boy, basically--he quit coming to school so there was nothing I could do at that point. And he ended up--Well the other one he came to school and I just chewed him out on a daily basis

D: Chewed him out?

M: Individually. And I hated doing it because that's not me at all, but I thought This kid's gonna hate me--and that really bothered me. I know it doesn't bother some people, but it does me. It doesn't bother me if people don't like me but it really bothers me if my

students don't . Because I feel that umm I can't be effective--(pause)Well I know that I don't learn anything form people I don't like (laughs). Because I put up a wall. And so that's why it really bothers me because I feel like I can't do my job the way I need to do it if they don't like me.

D: Okay. (pause) How did the student who stayed in school How did he respond to the attention you were giving him?

M: And um--At first--he was like at first--(deep voice)"Oh yeah--I'll bring it all in tomorrow, I promise." And he wouldn't. But then one day he kind of disrespected me in class in front of the other students. And again, I handled that individually. And I really came down on him. And after that day it was like I had a new student.

D: Wow. Do you remember what you said?

M: I basically told him--I told him that everything he has he's been given and he's just lucky to--Oh I just went on and on and on (laughs) And he (pause)

He well actually it's a success story because at the end of the term he wrote me this letter that was like, "You are one of the two best teachers that I've ever had in my life. And I've learned more in this. (pause) and on and on and on (pause)And I was just, I couldn't believe it for one thing because I thought This is a guy that's going to hate me for sure.

D: Isn't it funny how that happens sometimes?

M: oh yeah. It was amazing such a big surprise. And um--So (pause) I don't know, it it turned out beautifully, and I think that I'll use that experience in the future, when I'm reluctant to be hard on somebody because I'll be thinking--No I'm gonna build a wall here... because sometimes it it actually sometimes that's what some people need...A military drill sergeant...But um

And then let me think here (pause) One more landmark even was that one of my students was in a car accident over fall break--he was in a car accident with his mother and his (pause) his mother passed away.

D: Oh, God. I'm so sorry.

M: And um--At the time, the guy he was like the class clown and he's not a good student (laughs)he's a good person, a great person, but he's not a good student. And so his average was about 76...and so it really worried me and I thought, "Oh, no. I cannot fail this boy." (laughs)And I knew that he hadn't turned in all of his work. (pause) But then I got the phone call and I went to the funeral And Um--I think that just by me showing up at the funeral (pause)You know some kids from our class were there and they were like "Hey, Miss Russell's here, Miss Russell's here" And it was kind of a big deal for them and for him that I came. I think it showed him and them that I truly do care about them and their lives.

D: You probably became a person to them that night.

M: yeah and um--That experience it (pause)It really brought about change in our classroom. I mean because we cam e back from break and everybody knew what had happened and I think that that certain group of students that were close to him and of course, he felt closer to me and wanted to please me more. I think he almost felt obligated to do well.

D: How is he doing now? Do you have much contact?

M: Oh yeah, he comes by all the time--A lot of them come by and say hi--and see me.

D: That's a good sign.

M: He's doing great. He's doing unbelievable. And I cannot believe how I was so impressed with all of the support--and how mature the support was that his peers gave him. You know I've learned a lot from that experience  
Um and then I'll move onto second semester.

D: Okay

M: I became extremely close to my class last term. And um--knew I was going to miss them and I thought Oh--I don't want new classes I want my old class back. (laugh) I loved them so much. So when I came back second semester I didn't really know what to expect as far as students. I knew what I was going to do but not them. When I came back my first class has 31 which is large, and my second class has 25--And anyway they are great students, great students. I was telling somebody--My class first semester was kind of a middle of the road class They were all about C's I had two really bright kids in there and everybody else was on the slacking end of college prep. And this semester (pause) I have geniuses (laughs) Like the honors dropouts. Laughs. And then about two or three who probably don't belong in college prep and then my second class is more like last semester, but I have a lot more kids who are planning on going to college this term. Last semester a lot of my kids were in CP but I only had about I don't know--5 or 6 who were serious about going to college. And that made a big difference. Because you know when you're in a cp class you'll say Oh you'll need this for college and every time they'll say (really fast)"We're not going to college!" Okay Well--new approach!

But something interesting about my first block is that I have two girls who are mentally ill. (pause)And who are on medication. And one actually was committed all last semester. And so that's put a whole new spin on it. Because all of the sudden I feel like I really need some training in psychology. But Um--There again, you just handle it (pause) naturally (pause). But I think again that I've done well with both of them. Each one of them has had one major blow up in the classroom. One is um--actually--one has to do with anger management and the other one is bi-polar. And was suicidal.

D: Wow. Did you know that right away? Or was that shared with you by the guidance counselor?

M: Actually that was shared with me by her parents--both of them. So when I --I tried to make my first parent contacts before the semester started And I found that out through parent contact.

And I'll tell you something that just shows you how communication in this particular school is My second or the one of them missed 5 days of school and so I called home because I thought oh no--maybe she's sick and um--The woman answers the phone and says (quick and mean)"Yeah?" And I said "Hi" (laughs)I said hi This is Ms. --- so and so's English teacher and she launches into this rant and she said--Well I'm mad at you all at --- --. And I said OK well and I just ignored her comment and said well I'm calling because blank has missed this many days and I just wanted to make sure that she's ok. Well come to find out--she had had some kind of issue over the weekend and on school Monday said that her parents were abusing her.

D: Oh

M: Um and the school which--the parents weren't, it ended up but--the school called -- somebody at the school called--I still cannot get to the bottom of the story--but called the runaway shelter and the runaway shelter picked her up here at school. And she was there

a week and nobody ever notified me. So I called to check about what I think is a sick student and I get all of this in my face. Which by the end of the conversation, I had moved things over and everything was fine--But still it was just like I'm so glad that communication lines are so open here! (laughs) I wish. (laughs)

That was kind of another you know glitch. (laughs) (we both laugh). But seriously, all in all, I have had a blast. I cannot believe that next year I'm gonna get paid for this. (laughs)

D: This might be a good time to talk about the setting of your school

M: It's a rural like rural communities feed into it--so you got a lot of little cities like Friendsville, and Greenback, and a lot of tiny little communities all coming together here. And there are about 1600 students here, and um, you have your honors and AP, but I would say that the college prep here is (pause) is behind the college prep in --- city schools or um I don't know a lot about ----, but, By and large,

D: You attended ---- schools?

M: No, but my sister did.

M: By and large if you are in Honors and AP you will be extremely prepared for college end you will do well, But ironically a lot of the kids here who are in college prep high school courses have to take remedial courses when they get to college. Um and a lot of it has to do with the parents of the kids who go to county schools usually aren't college grads so I think it's a whole attitude thing. A whole culture thing. It's nothing to do with intelligence But I think it does add to the apathy.

D: Would you say you have a good bit of parent involvement?

M: Oh no. I have no parent involvement. Zilch. Out of three classes of parent conference nights, I've met one parent. And that's with me calling them and asking them to come. That's me calling and saying "hey, would you like to...." And they just say, "Can't we handle it by phone?" (laughs) So yeah.

D: What strengths do you think that you bring to the classroom?

M: Um I would say confidence, stability, um, and energy. (pause)

D: OK--What areas do you think that you have struggled the most as a teacher?

M: Oh um, Well all the busy work of absences and make up work, those things frustrate me. I would like to handle things like that in a more efficient way. It's taking up too much of my time in class and outside of class, too. The I almost feel like I'm not teaching because a student will miss 3 or 4 days and I'll give him all of these worksheets--well maybe not worksheet, But here is what you're responsible for and um you know I don't feel like we're learning because they're just completing the surface area of what we covered. They're not getting to hear and be a part of the class discussions and all, so that's something I'd like to improve.

D: What brought you to teaching

M: Um I'd just have to say my entire life. I feel called to teach. I don't think that if I were in any other occupation except for some sort of ministry or mission work I do not feel like I would be at home--well I don't feel like I would be fulfilling the purpose that I have on earth. I've always wanted to be a teacher. When I first started college I explored the medical field. I was going to be --or thinking about becoming a doctor and you know um I just I wanted to come back to teaching. I love I just love the future. Whether they're teenagers or whatever. I feel like I connect more with teenagers. I don't think I'd be the best elementary school teacher, but (laughs) I want to be the best high school teacher (laughs)

D: Right

M: So Things at church working with the youth group and what not--for me it always comes back to teaching

D: Why language Arts?

M: Because you can teach anything by teaching English. You can teach self expression, and I like there's not a subject I don't like and think that English is all encompassing and plus I'm a big philosophy buff. Almost everything I teach is thematic in some way. (laughs)Which means that we can get off on lots of tangents (laughs)

D: How would you describe your identity as a teacher?

M: UmWhat do you mean by that?

D: Um Like how would you describe yourself?

M: Gosh that's a hard question (pause) Um I would say that my identity I am very compassionate teacher. And that has surprised me because looking into my teaching career--before I started I was like "How am I going to do this? And will I be able to do that? And I bet I'll be like this...." And from the moment that I stepped in front of that class and looked at those students and saw individual souls, it became all about them and you know had nothing to do with me. It was just amazing, and I know this sounds (pause) But I love every single one of my students. You know I feel their pains and I really can't believe that because you that I'm not a big social extrinsic--social--I'm very intrinsic person--But I just feel so responsible for them and for their futures and for their minds and for their motivations and I do feel almost like a parent I really do.

D: I have just one more question--and thank you so much for this hour of your time.

What--d you think prepared you best for teaching? What prepared you best for this year?

M: Um--Gosh (pause)I think Dr. ---- class was most helpful.

D: The adolescent lit? Or something else?

M: No, the secondary schools class. Primarily because he made it so less threatening. Everybody else is so "Well you're going to be expected to... you know... they make it sound so threatening...And --- like enjoy it! You're going to make mistakes, be willing to laugh at yourself. You don't have to mark every .... He made it so much less threatening and so much more personal and about the relationships. And I think if it hadn't been for him... You know I think that I'm a hard teacher now (laughs) But I would have been (laughs) way over..I think I' would have been a nightmare! And he lightened me up. You know because I was so serious about English and grammar and all. I cannot imagine what I had been like if I had been in his class.

D: This will be my last question, I promise! (laughs) How do you think you've changed? How has this transition impacted your life?

M: First of all I think that it's made me a better person Just because it's so easy as humans just to judge each other and based on appearance and whatever else, attitude personality differences, and when you know you can't do that to your students you're not allowed to and personally, I'm not tempted to because they're my students, they're mine To where I might still walk into university and still be that way with my colleagues, but I'm not that way with my students and I think that it's teaching me to be more that way with people in general. You know to realize that every person is a needy individual who needs love and needs to love and they might have a thousand annoying things about them but if you can impact their lives in some way that's positive. Just get over those things and get on with doing good.

And you know answering this question to you, I know you know what I mean because you know me. I'm so quiet and critical and you know (laughs)

D: I didn't know about the critical (laughs) I know about the quiet. I know that you've never been like "Me, me, me! Notice me!" I figured that you didn't need that.

M: Yeah---I'm just kind of like (laughs) Leave me alone and let me figure things out on my own. You don't have to say to explain every little thing and you also don't have to say anything that comes into your head because you're the professor. So I think it's made me more loving and sensitive and all those things that I need to be. Um I also think that it's make me realize--it's humbled me in some ways and at the same time it's made me more confident in some ways. I have some strengths that I didn't know were there and I have some weaknesses that I dint know were there. So um I'm thankful for both ends.

And I think that--oh gosh--I think that it's changed the broadness of my perspective. Like I don't just care about coming to school and doing a good job teaching my students every day, I care about the direction education is going and how I am going to impact that. I've become more politically involved and um I'm I'm burdened I really am burdened and I never knew I would be this way I guess I realized I've been a selfish person saying, Well OK if every thing's okay in my life then that's fine and now I am burdened not only for my kids individually, but for this county and not only for this county but for this state and for this country and for education. I am taking on the responsibilities of issues beyond myself.

## Appendix F: Face-to-Face Chat Excerpt

\*Face to face chat

\*Sunday, 3/24/02

\*J, D, M, R, L

J: Well I'll start. Um I have two mentor teachers now the one at the middle school is the one that I've been with through most of this year. She's um, She's we get along well now, we really do, She--there was a bit of a power struggle at the beginning--"Oh, I can't give these babies up to you, not yet, I need some time." Bu she knew her stuff and I really liked and respected that about her. YOU know she's been teaching for 40 years, so I'm just like a sponge

D: 40 years, what a career she must have had

J: Oh yes--Like I said I decided that I would be a sponge and just soak up all she had to teach me. But she's a really good teacher, she really is. We do have very different beliefs about students and philosophies of education. I am sure if they were written down on paper would be absolutely different. And rightly so, we are coming from very different places. She'll take up 40 papers in class and give them back before the bell rings.

L: How does she do that? Does she make any comments or corrections?

J: Well actually this is where my idea for the action research came from. I did my action research project on students' attitudes toward receiving teacher feedback

M: Oh, I'd like to see that

D: Me too I'd love to know what they said about feedback

J: And I can't wait to show the results to my teacher and we can talk about their reactions to feedback and maybe

L: Do you really think she'll listen?

J: She'll listen yes, She probably won't change, but at least we had a chance to discuss it.

D: Well I'd say that what action research is for. It's not just for new teachers it's for all teachers new and old to look at their you know to look at their practice in the classroom.

L: Yeah, you're right

J: But anyway we had a hard time at first just because I was really anxious to get in there and go

M: Yes

J: I think she felt like she needed to show me the ropes first--and she meant all of the ropes!

(laughter)

D: Boy Mae, you and Janet needed to trade

M: Oh yes

J: Is yours the one who was never even in the room?

M: Yeah.

R: I wish mine was never in the room

L: Mines never been in my room either

R: Really?

(laughter)

M: Well my mentor, you know I was finishing up summer school at the university--finishing up my Bachelor's degree. And I left my class went to the high school and said you know Hi, here I am on the first day--because I really wanted to be there on the first

day. She said--OK, Do you want to run over with me what you're gonna do first day of class

(laughter)

M: And I was like "uh What?" (laughter)

J: Do you think like you did a good job--are you happy with the way it turned out

M: I feel like it turned out well, but I'm just like I'm like my personality is one that it could turn out ok. But I kept thinking what if she did that to some other people that we go to school with, like, (pause) well I shouldn't say, but I know, I know it would not have turned out well for them.

J: Yeah

M: But yes I think My mentor she's a good person I respect her but I think that she's just (pause) I think she's just got some real communication issues not just with me but with everybody in general. She can't really look you in the eye when she talks and she doesn't really like to talk to people

Laughter

R: She's a teacher and she doesn't like to talk to people?

M: I think she sees teaching and communicating differently. She's from a time where teachers talked at their students not to them.

(unintelligible--everyone commenting at once)(OK, that's seems strange to me)

R: How long has she been teaching?

M: Uh she's probably in her late 30s so....maybe 7 or 10 years

J: yeah --- is --you know I don't even know how old my mentor teacher is. She tells the kids that she's 38 (laughter) but she's been teaching for 40 years (laughter) You can look at her and see that she's old (laughter) I don't know how old she is because she told me on during the first week or so--if they ask you you say that I'm 38, so I do! You bet I do (laughter)

She's been in the classroom for a long time and I've learned so many things from her but the bad thing about our relationship though is I think because I was so anxious to get in there and do you know and now that I've taken over I was told "You're going to Bearden" for 6 weeks so she calls me that weekend before I was supposed to go and she was like I want you to write daily lesson plans for the 6 weeks that you'll be gone and I didn't like saying it, but I told her that that was just too much.

L: Yes--oh my that this too much

J: And she was like the kids have been really enjoying what you've been doing" and all but I told her that I couldn't do that. I was going to be teaching two high school classes. So I think I might have been a little too enthusiastic about the whole thing because it felt awful to say no

M: Yeah it felt awful even to say no to something that we all no was an unreasonable request.

J: The mentor I have just met at Bearden it's going to be a great experience--we are dead on alike. I know I've heard that that's not always a good thing but it's been great so far....(unintelligible) She's real open with the kids which I'm not really used to but the good side is that I've really been able to experience a wide variety of teachers She's cool, she'd given me responsibilities right off the bat.

D: Lynne what do you take in your coffee?

L:I take anything you've got! Milk, Cream, sugar, I take it all!

D: Well I've got all of that (Laughter)

[D, M, L in kitchen getting coffee/tea. J& R remain in living room]

R: My mentor is a man and I'd heard before that he was like sexist and stuff and I was like Oh um Oh no, but apparently the intern who told me this was like whatever (pause) I don't know. But her is super nice. He is not sexist at all. I was worried you know like he's a man and I'm a girl you know that there might be some kind of sexual tension or whatever but it has not been that way at all he's a good Christian man he's married. He's not like at all so I'm like yeah. And like if he wasn't married, I might feel differently about it, but it's been great. Here's an example of how he is---When my mother died, which was early on in the first semester October and he came to the funeral home and to the funeral and that meant so much to me

(Unintelligible)

[Group returns from kitchen]

D: What were you all talking about?

R: We were talking about my mentor. Just that he's been so good to me

D: When this all started I remember you being nervous about him and had heard that he might be awful. How has that turned out?

R: Another intern had told me that he was sexist and had done something he shouldn't have

L: Like what? Touched when he shouldn't?

R: No!No! nothing like that. We have one teacher had our school that is yucky like that.

(Group of voices--What? Oh no. Has he bothered you?)

M: I've got a sexual thing to share.

L: You are kidding me What?

(Unintelligible)

M: Let Renee finish and then I'll go

R: Well he was just so nice and let me share whatever I wanted to share and the thing that this girls had told me let's see was that she was supposed to do tutoring and she does it with her mentor and he had somehow worked it so that the intern did his work as well as her own, but I don't want that to get out that it is him or anything or anything

D: It won't, Renee, we don't even know his name

R: So I don't know but he has just been super nice and lets me do whatever I want to do. (pause)the only thing is that her says in there all the time. I think it's just because it's his room and he's got work to do and his room is where all of his stuff is

L: But couldn't he move his stuff to another room? I'd rather he go.

R: I guess not and I would too because I could be tougher cause I started out too nice because he was in there So I would have been a little tougher if it was just me

J: Was he like--has he ever like corrected you or said anything in your lesson?

R: Oh no (pause) he pretty much spaces out and does his work. Which is good! (laughs)

M: (unintelligible) rather be by myself

D: That's quite a difference between Lynne's experience. She doesn't enjoy being observed at all

L: I would have come unglued if my teacher never left the room.

M: Now I think I have a story to tell that ya'll haven't heard. I'll go ahead and share something that I think has been abnormal about this year. Okay, at least I hope this is

abnormal. Well Anyway Uh the department that I work in is primarily female and as we were talking about females earlier they kind of have this comfort zone

L: What do you mean?

M: In the lounge you know they've always sat in the same seats so they're not like my best buds or anything but that's alright and fine with me because I'm quiet anyway so I just kind of eat lunch with the other intern

R: So they don't say "Come on over and sit with us?"

M: Oh no nobody ever said that to me. And like I said that's fine with me b/c I'm quiet anyway

R: That's awful

M: Well they're not very welcoming (unintelligible--group talking) They're not mean. But they're just nor welcoming. So I usually sit with the other intern But then I also sat with the other man the only man in the department which --well it's a long story--but one of the girl's went on maternity leave and this man that had retired from teaching came back from retirement--make sure you hear retirement (we all laugh)--Because he old! (laughter)

R: Oh Mae, look at your face!

R: Hang on it gets worse. Anyway and he used to teach what I'm teaching now. And he was a basketball coach so we have all these things in common and I thought he was such a cool guy when I first met him--I said what a cool man--you know cause he's older than my dad I am sure! (laughter) (unintelligible) I said to myself Boy I wish he was my papaw (laughter for at least 15 seconds) Anyway uh (laughter) So anyway he's helping me and he's eating lunch with me and talking to me and I'm thinking "oh wow, I finally have a friend" (laughter)It's wonderful. And so I (more laughter) Anyway I run after school most days and he (unintelligible)

J: Oh, don't tell me--he's taking up running.

M: Yes! And I promise y'all I was totally naive, I was happy to have a buddy to run with at the track after school. I mean my dad is a lot younger than this man and my dad would never look at a girl my age. (laughter) I'm not kidding he is much older. So I'm like yeas sure! So we talk and talk and we get this cool little friendship going. Well I'm like one afternoon I said to him. "You know what? I'm gonna fix you up with my boyfriend's mom" (laughter) cause she's been divorced for quite a while and I just think this man is so neat. OK I said that cause I thought he was a great guy and he was like "Well, Mae um I really want to take you out (unintelligible voices laughter, oh no!).And I was just like "Are you kidding me?" Yeah I just said What chu talkin bout, Willis?" Just playing just trying to move on. And um so then it went on the next few days it went on and a few days later he said, "So when are we gonna go out to eat, Mae?" and on and on and on

R: Oh no

M: But I was still being his friend because he was (laughter) my only friend

L: Oh God he was your only friend! You didn't want to lose he only person who ate lunch with you! Oh this is awful. Why on earth would he think that he could ask you out?

M: So anyway he stayed after school one day

J: Oh, Lord

M: I know, I was grading papers in my room after school And he keeps talking to me And he was like "Oh, Mae I'm serious I'm really interested in you" and all of this stuff and this time he seriously asked me out

VOICES--I just can't believe this -- Oh --Oh--Uh oh

M: He asked me out. And I said "Well you know I've just got to say no for obvious reasons." You know y'all I didn't want to be mean So I said obvious reasons. And he said "I don't see any obvious reasons."

L: Was anybody around?

M: No I was the only one in the workroom until he came in. (voice--oh god and nobody was around to see all of this!) No. So he said, "I don't see any obvious reasons" And I was thinking what does this man think? He's gonna pick me up at my house, walk me into the ball game holding my hand, and take me home at Mom and Daddy's, and kiss me on the front porch? And I said, No I really don't think so. And he kept saying I don't see nay obvious reasons. And I said" yeah you do." And he said, "Are you talking about age?" And I said well yes. (laughter)

D: Is that all you said? (laughter)

M: (laughing)Well I didn't think I needed to mention all of the other hundred reasons! I just thought I'd keep it simple. And he goes, "Well, Mae you know I'm real disappointed in you because I did not think that you were that shallow."

R: What kept you from smacking him?

(Assenting voices)

M: No, No I stood up and I went off. On him

D: And there's no one around?

M: No No one it was just the two of us in the workroom. I went off on him--I said Shallow? Excuse me? Um this is not shallow, I am trying to be a professional and gain experience as a young teacher and you're 55 years old trying to intimidate me by saying that I'm shallow thinking Oh, this intelligent elder thinks I'm shallow. So I said It doesn't work that way. I said And I am so disappointed in YOU.

(cheering)

D: When did this happen?

M: I don't know but since then, he's this big poet, don't you know, and he written me poems. And bought me a Valentine!

J: Oh Lord, this is so inappropriate.

M: Well it's so weird he's like passive aggressive with me, Like he'll either be like loving up on me and he's all the time saying these sex comments

(several voices)He could get in big trouble for that. You could get him fired,

M: But I'm not though. I'm not. I don't care I'm going to get on with my life. I feel sorry for him. But he's either that or totally will not speak to me if I walk in the room. Like if I say something he'll snort like that's the dumbest thing I ever heard.

L: This sounds like *Boston Public*

D: I was just about to say that! (laughter)

M: Laughter--Well I told my mom about it.

D: Did your mom come unglued?

M: No she came down there and ate lunch with me and she gave him mean looks the whole time (laughter) you know Don't mess with my baby. So (pause) I don't know. But the reason it ahs really affected me was the he was my only friend at school and I really liked him I really liked him a lot.

L: Has he ever tired to get too close (pause) physically? A kiss hello or goodbye?

M: Well yes--he tries to be sexy and I just think Lord you are wrinkled to death (laughter). I mean he tries to , he tries to touch me sometimes, but it's not in the areas. He likes tries to get too close. He offers to grade my papers and I'm like No! you don't; even know my students! How could you ever comment on them! But he'll be like that one day and then the very next day he'll act like the hates my guts.

D: Well is he at least going to be gone after this teacher comes back form maternity leave?

M: (pause) No, she's not coming back this year. They're going to re-hire him for the first semester of next year.

L: Have you thought about saying something? What about the other teachers?

M: I've never seen him do anything or heard them say anything, but you know they don't really talk to me

(Unintelligible)

L: It sound like he has some real social problems. I mean not the age difference but the-- It's not just that older people can't fall in love with younger people but bit not to be mature enough at that age to say--"Oh I am so sorry--my bad--I took our friendship totally the wrong way." And then stop. Completely.

(Unintelligible)

M: And that would not have bothered me at all. If he had been attracted to me. That's fine. But the way that he handled it with (unintelligible) and writing all these poems and not dropping it. But he really had developed quite a crush

L:I just don't think this is normal social behavior.

M: You should read (pause) Do you want me to bring the poems?

(Unintelligible) yes!

M: If I can find it I will. I brought it home to my mom, saying "Look at this junk, Mom." But yeah, But it's all illustrated and had this maiden and going through the forest of life, and all this.

R: What does David (Mae's boyfriend) think about this. Have you told him?

M: Um (pause) Well I don't know (pause)

J: Did you tell him?

M: (pause)[drawn out]yeah (pause) sort of (laughter) Yeah. Well (pause)

L: Are you afraid he'd come to school and say something?

M: (pause)If he ever did anything like that to jeopardize my internship. I'd kick his butt! (laughter) I'm in charge. And this guy at school is really harmless.

D: You don't see this guy bothering the other teachers? At all? How does he interact with them?

M: No Not at all. He' s like (pause) It's like Fatal Attraction (laughter) he's really developed something for me. (unintelligible)

D: Honestly, Mae hearing this makes me nervous

M: No it's all right. We were close as buddies. And I was so innocent really. (high voiced) I have a teacher-friend. And he taught what I taught and he's helping me be cause my mentor wasn't offering anything. You know I am finally getting a little bit of mentoring and then this happens! My God! And now it's just like--so uncomfortable. I said to him--You know (unintelligible) And he says "Every moment that I'm with you is a reminder that I can't have you"

L: Oh my God! Mae, this is NOT normal. (other voices) And I guarantee you even though you're saying that he's only doing this with you (pause) I guarantee you in the past

M: (Interrupting) yes he probably has. But you know what? He is so well respected (Groans all around)

D: They always are! Until their real selves are revealed

M: I think he may have been, no I'm sure, he was dept head. And he's the type of guy who works for 30 years and was absent like two days. He's like a real over achiever, hard worker.

J: Overachiever is right!

D: What about relationships with students?

M: He's mean to students. His reputation is that he's the hard teacher. Everybody's like "Don't take his class; he's hard"

J: But maybe that's not really why they're saying that.

M: I don't know.

R: You know we haven't talked about Lynne's mentor

L: Oh yeah (pause) Um Uh--My mentor um She's she's a hard person to describe. She's also known as the hard teacher in our department. She was vice principal last year and she kicked butt and took manes and she was doing it because there was some kind of unexpected shifts in positions. And she didn't even get paid extra for sing it. And then when the position came open for real the next year, she wasn't even considered. So she's a little bitter and I imagine they gave her an intern as kind of a break from work--give her a year off, you know to kind of pay her back.

D: No! That's not the spirit behind being a mentor. It's actually supposed to be more work.

(laughter)

L: Not in my case! I walked in and she walked out!

(laughter)

L: But she's been the mean teacher, the tough teacher, but then again The kids say if you make an A in her class--you know wow. But she (pause)she um (pause) Hmm how do I put this. She is intimidating not only to her students but to all the other teachers. And so (pause)

R: Was she intimidating to you? Did you feel it?

L: Oh I was (pause) I with her I don't I don't I have never had a disagreement with her.

D: On purpose?

L: No, just (laughs) She's never around to disagree with! She just left me with it. But I stay away. I don't go tot he lunch room. You know I take a walk at lunch. If I can't walk, I've got my own room, my drama room downstairs and I'll go hide (laughs) in there you know because I see how other people kind of cater to her. It's just that I don't want to be a I mean to (pause) Anyway oh yeah I had been there like a week and she said, So are you ready to teach today? And I said Um "Sure!" You know what are you going to say? Thinking that I really needed to be confident and show that I could take on the responsibility. So I took it over and she never came in again.

D: I have a question about that? Did you feel like that was something you need to tell someone at [university]--Dr. ---- maybe? Because I remember one of Mae's e-mails when she said that [university] was completely deluded if they think that what they tell the interns is what really happens.

M: That is so true  
D: Would you ever tell anyone?  
L: Oh no--I didn't want her in there. OK  
M: My whole thing is this: Dr ---- is there every other week. I'm there everyday  
L: That's right  
M: And I'm if, you know if I say something to him and he says something to her and it offends her, which it will, I deal with the fallout of that everyday. He doesn't have to deal with it he's the supervisor. He's got other things to worry about  
L: That's right he just drops in and then leaves  
M: But it's my life for the rest of the year. And I just thought I'll tell him if there's a time to tell him. But right now I'm gonna grin and bear it because she cold make my life miserable.  
Like I said before, she's not accountable to anybody, so if I tick her off, which I like her and I know now that none of this would have happened, I think (laughter) But at that time if I tick her off she can do anything she wants and not be accountable.  
D: Renee wasn't here yet when you were talking about accountability, would you talk about that again?  
M: Sure, I said that the biggest problem with the internship is that the intern is accountable to about 5 people, which is fine--we're the student, the learner in this, but all the people that are in charge of the intern aren't accountable to anybody. At least that's how it appears to me and it's been almost the whole year. The mentoring teacher is not accountable, the university supervisor is not accountable to colleagues or anybody except the state and that's all paperwork and anybody can do paper work,  
D: This is so disappointing to me! I take my supervision so seriously. And you know I would get in trouble. If I didn't go see my interns and Dr. ----- found out, I would have someone to answer to.  
M: It's because you're not a professor or tenured or anything. Once the professors get in they're in.  
M: I don't know if this happens at your schools, but my school knows the days that Dr. - ---- is coming and when he walks in all the sudden everybody's my best friend  
R: Mae that is just awful!  
L: Oh my God!  
M: They'll say Oh Mae your kids did so good on that project..." And they don't have the faintest idea what I'm doing in my class! They have no idea. They act like I'm the most popular girls on campus, so Dr. ----- would look at me like I was crazy if I said it wasn't that way.  
L: And what could you really say? They won't talk to me at lunch? (laughter) Oh Mae I'm so sorry  
M: I know!  
J: And maybe some interns would like that, but I think that we're all so real. We're the type that wants to keep it real (interrupting) ...  
R: I want my person to see what it really looks like  
J: That's right  
M: Especially because he's one of the few people who does have the power to make changes. I'm gonna tell him (pause) But only after. And it's not that the schools a bad place It's not. I love the school and there are a couple of the English teachers who I love

and who love me, but they're not the ones working with me, so (pause) part of the problem is that it's a young department so there aren't a lot of teachers who are ready to step out of their comfort zone and take on an intern.

R: Talking about accountability, my school is so small that if anything weird is going on everybody's gonna know it and Dr. ----, he's always coming up and seeing how things are and checking on us. So if we have a problem, he'll help us. We can tell him anything and he will get it straightened out. It's just that the principals the man and he's a jerk (pause) sometimes. But he's a down home country boy and he's kind of funny and nice you know but when this situation occurred, not with me, but with another teacher, it's not even an intern it was a teacher, you know. He didn't support the teacher.

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End of excerpt

## VITA

Denise Ousley is a Ph.D. candidate in English, Foreign language and ESL Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and will receive her degree in August 2002. Prior to coming to Knoxville, Ms. Ousley was an English teacher at H.B. Plant High School in Tampa, Florida. In 1995 she earned a Master of Arts in English/Rhetoric and Composition from the University of South Florida, Tampa, and in 1992 a Bachelor of Arts in English from Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida. From 1999 to 2002 Ms. Ousley was a graduate teaching associate at the University of Tennessee where she supervised secondary English and Foreign Language interns and taught language education and teacher education courses.

In April 2002, Ms. Ousley accepted an appointment at the University of Central Florida as an assistant professor of English Education. She will continue her teaching and research in Orlando, Florida.