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by

Christine Elizabeth Beaudry

May 2014

TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY: AN INQUIRY INTO EXPERIENCES
IN A COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION COURSE

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

In the United States, preservice teachers often go on to teach students whose backgrounds are different from their own and in communities in which they have limited lived experience (Sleeter, 2000). They often graduate from teacher education programs having never experienced educational settings beyond those they are familiar with from their own experiences as students (Catapano & Huisman, 2010). However, they enter schools with beliefs about students, their families, and their communities (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). As teachers, these beliefs inform their teaching and learning practices in ways that significantly impact the experiences and success of their students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Community-based field experiences can provide preservice teachers with opportunities to consider issues related to community, education, and diversity in ways that promote and support strong teaching for diverse learning populations (Sleeter, 2008).

This inquiry centers on how three preservice teachers interpreted their community-based field experiences as part of a university education course, focusing on how these interpretations shifted their teacher identity, stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and shaped their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of teaching and learning. It explores how incorporating community-based field experiences into teacher education can contribute to the development of knowledge and practices that are responsive to student diversity. By narratively inquiring (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000), into participants' lives, and through storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) their community-based field experiences and then student teaching experiences, I consider the ways in which preservice teachers' knowledge and identities develop as they transition into teaching. This inquiry addresses critical issues concerning the development of teacher education programs that successfully prepare teachers to work with diverse students. (Sleeter, 2008). It also responds to the call for additional research related to exploring the impact of community-based practices in teacher education on preservice teachers' teaching and learning knowledge and practices (Cooper, 2007, Sleeter, 2000).

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CHAPTER ONE: NARRATIVE BEGININGS

One of the reasons I have come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called “other” over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all of our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinction and definitions. (Greene, 1995, p. 3)

Introduction to the Inquiry through Imagined Possibilities

Maxine Greene (1995) in *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change* wrote of the importance of imagination in defining reality. She observes that it is through imagination that we have the capacity “to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets, where we live, in our schools” (p. 5). She also asserts, drawing on Sarte, that it is through our imaginations that we recognize and acknowledge the harshness of situations when compared to imagined better alternatives. It is these visions that often motivate us to work toward change, in hopes that reality may come to closer approximate what we imagine *could* and *should* be. It is through imagination that I come to this inquiry, and with imagination, this inquiry explores both what education *is* and *could* be. Let this be an invitation to come and imagine alongside me.

Approaching the Inquiry

This inquiry focused on the experiences of three preservice teachers' experiences in a community-based teacher education course in which the researcher also served as instructor. It centered on how participants, Abby, Hande, and Jackie, interpreted their community-based field experiences. Through adopting narrative understandings of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I sought to inquire into how these interpretations shaped participants' personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and shifted their identities, stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) as teachers. Following participants into their student teaching experiences provided insight into how the knowledge and understandings gained through their community-based and course experiences informed their practices as they transitioned to teaching. Through storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) experiences, I sought to provide layered and multiple perspectives on how community-based field experiences might encourage consideration of issues related to community, education, and diversity in ways that promote and support teaching for diversity.

Narrative Beginnings

Experiences as a student, teacher, and teacher educator have all shaped my knowledge and interest in issues related to community, education and diversity. My early understandings of community were shaped by my experiences growing up in a community in central Houston that was recognized for its vibrant and eclectic arts scene. My mother and I lived in a condominium in a small complex of eight units. Long-time owners occupied most of the units and this, along with a shared laundry facility and patio space, meant that we knew most of the other residents well. We also knew several of the

neighbors on our street, which was a mixture of single-family homes and small complexes like ours. Often we would see them at community events, such as on Halloween, when a group of children and parents from the neighborhood would go trick-or-treating, stopping at designated homes, or at an annual Mayfair celebration. We also interacted with neighbors in a community garden that was established in a vacant lot next to our condominium complex, and while walking in the community. These interactions contributed to my sense of community and to a feeling of connectedness to where I lived. Thinking back, there was diversity in our community, both cultural and socioeconomic, but I did not recognize it as such. I was also not aware of the ways in which my community or people who lived there, including myself, might be considered different.

Some of my earliest memories of learning about difference came from school. Early in elementary school, I remember being confused by an assignment to fill out a worksheet of my “family tree;” What do you do when you only know one-half of the tree? In my class, I was the only one asking this question, and was teased because of it later by my classmates. It seemed that my teacher had never considered that some of her students might not have a family that could be reflected by a worksheet, or at least the potentially isolating effect it could have on students whose families diverged from it. Reflecting on this, I see early ways in which I felt disconnected from school. I began, slowly, to view school as having little relation to my personal experiences and interests, and it gradually became a place I had to be rather than a place I wanted to be. During my senior year of high school, I accumulated more than a month’s equivalence of absences. When I did attend, my time, especially in high school, was spent largely sitting in the back of the class reading a book or resting with my head on my desk. I largely avoided

any repercussions or even significant inquiry into my lack of attendance or engagement because I maintained high grades, did well on standardized tests, and exhibited no behavior issues. Looking back, I see how my background as a white middle class female whose mother and maternal grandparents were all educators placed me in a position of privilege to succeed in predominately monocultural, Eurocentric, English-speaking educational settings in spite of my disinterest in the curriculum and lack of attendance. When I became a teacher, I saw my students living similar stories, although most did not occupy the privileged position as part of the dominant culture that I do. Those who were incited to skip class because they found school less relevant than their lives outside the classroom often failed and repeated their classes, while others stopped attending altogether. Those that did attend often seemed to respond to the lack of connection they encountered by largely disengaging from the educational process.

The awareness of the powerful possibilities of what education *could be* in contrast with what it so often *is* for many students partially contributed to my decision to become a teacher. Like many others I've encountered, I entered my teacher education program committed to being a better teacher than most of my own had been. Though also like other stories of coming to teaching, mine also included the presence of an educator who inspired me. My journey to teaching social studies was not straightforward. Though few classes interested me beyond English and Art, I found Social Studies especially boring. Beyond one engaging teacher I had in sixth grade, my years of socials studies education, comprised of reading from the textbook and either answering questions from it or completing worksheets, are virtually indistinguishable in my memory. In my first semester attending a local community college, I had a History professor who encouraged

me to change my perception. While we used the textbook, he also had us read primary sources as well as historical nonfiction works such as *When the Nazis Came to Skokie* (Strum, 1999) and *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (Maalouf, 1984) that addressed controversial themes from history in ways that provided multiple perspectives. These, along with introductory Government courses, captured my interest and provided me with new understandings about broader sociopolitical contexts of which I had grown increasingly aware. When I transferred to a local university, I studied political science, history, and economics as my interest in social issues grew and I sought new knowledge and understandings of the ways in which systems and institutions functioned, often to preserve dominant power structures and perpetuate inequities. As I neared graduation, I began to consider teaching as a career that would enable me to provide similar opportunities to gain insight into the influences that shaped our lives, past and present, with others. In what should have been my final semester, I decided to enroll in the university's secondary teacher certification program.

After student teaching in a high school near where I had grown-up, and where I myself had applied to as a student as an alternate to the school I attended, I applied to a large urban school district. This decision was motivated both by my personal experiences and desire to teach in an urban setting. I had attended schools in this same district and my mother had taught in one of its elementary schools for over a decade. Additionally, though I had since moved further outside the city, I still felt connected to the centrally located community in which I had grown up. Finally, I believed that urban schools were more likely to benefit from a teacher like myself that had disliked her own school experience and sought to change school for others rather than perpetuate what I viewed as

ineffective approaches to teaching and learning. The interview for my first teaching position took place at a campus job fair for upcoming graduates. It lasted less than five minutes and consisted of a review of my credentials and only two questions: did I know where the school was located and how did I plan to communicate with parents who predominately spoke Spanish? The vague and generic responses I gave emphasizing my beliefs in the importance of diversity and collaboration must have been satisfactory, because I was immediately introduced to the principal and offered a position for the following school year. Any reservations I may have had regarding both the brevity of the encounter and content of the questions asked were largely overshadowed by the relief and excitement that I, as a young college student on the verge of graduation, felt at having secured my first formal teaching position. Viewing the school profile on the district's website caused some increased concern; the school demographics reported a student population that was almost entirely Hispanic and that was identified as both Economically Disadvantaged and English Language Learner (ELL). Additionally, the school had met the standards for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) only once in the last three years, which meant future failures could result in restructuring. I had no experiences as either a student or a teacher in such a setting. I had never even visited a campus with similar statistics. Consciously, I reminded myself that was what they were – statistics, and that they were not indicative of either students' ability to learn or how they would behave. I also reminded myself that I was committed to meeting the challenges this position might present, and that I had wanted to teach in an urban school where I believed students were most in need of caring teachers. Interestingly, the school was located only 4 miles from where I had grown up and near the university I had attended;

yet, I was completely unfamiliar with the community in which it was located. Reflecting on these events, I view my own experiences as mirroring those of many of the preservice teachers that I now teach who are unfamiliar with the students and communities with which they go on to work (Sleeter, 2001). Teaching students with different backgrounds and experiences in an unfamiliar community reflected my own story of becoming a teacher. Like so many teachers entering the field, I too am white, female, and middle class, and, when I began, I had mostly a theoretical understanding of how those characteristics shaped my identity and experiences, as well as of the broader sociopolitical context of education. These understandings and knowledge came primarily from my history, political science, and economics courses rather than from personal lived experience.

Perhaps predictably, that first year truly was a challenge. Even now, recalling those early experiences fills me with a sense of discomfort even as it reminds me of why I continue to teach and be invested in education. Despite implementing many of the strategies and resources learned in my education courses, it was clear that students were not engaged. I felt unprepared for the reality of teaching in a school that seemed so different from those I had known as a student. In those first few days and weeks, I felt acutely how divergent my educational experiences, and in many ways my life experiences, diverged from those of my students, and I was often struck by a sense of not belonging. I reflected on these early feelings as being similar to those Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as often being experienced by researchers upon entering “in the midst” of a situation in which seemingly routine practices and occurrences appear foreign and confusing. Gradually, over the course of that first year, I slowly began the complex

process of beginning to better understand who my students were and how I could build on this in my teaching. I also saw ways in which my students shared many of the same perspectives I had at their age. By the end of that first year, I had built close personal relationships with many of my students and had developed teaching and learning practices that appeared largely engaging and enjoyable. Yet, despite the increased connections I began making within my classroom among myself, students, and content, I still struggled to significantly connect students with the outside world; our experiences and discussions remained overwhelmingly mediated by the institution of school.

The desire to continue to broaden my knowledge and improve my practices led me to pursue my masters in Social Education. Initially, social education provided me with a language and rationale to justify many of my own practices as well as the tools to further improve them. Informed by ideas related to critical pedagogy and social justice (Freire, 1970 ; Kincheloe, 2008), as well as multicultural (Banks & Banks, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), I continued to use a constructivist approach to teaching and learning and worked toward greater emphasis of criticality in my teaching. While continuing to use primary sources, I also began integrating works of historians who incorporated primary sources in their approaches to history that included multiple perspectives and often contrasted with dominant narratives (e.g. Lowen, 2007; Takaki, 1993; Zinn, 2004). Through these approaches I sought to incorporate both knowledge of my students and an increasingly critical perspective that actively recognized and validated the experiences of each student while promoting connections among them both inside and beyond the classroom.

However, I continued to find the context of classroom teaching inhibiting and challenging to move from generative towards transformative (Wink, 2010) teaching.

Contrasting this were my experiences teaching a magnet program class. Designed for students with an interest in entering the teaching profession, it was a semester long course in which students spent a portion of their time on campus investigating teaching and learning topics while the other was spent at a nearby elementary school tutoring students who were struggling readers. Conversations and reflective narrative assignments revealed that many students in the program had little interest in teaching but used the program as means to leave their zoned school for various reasons. However, almost all students showed a strong commitment and dedication to tutoring the elementary school students. Students rarely were absent on tutorial days and many would bring items such as books or treats to share with their elementary partners. When discussing interactions with the elementary students, the high school students animatedly spoke of their partners' progress or of learning that one of them had recently progressed in their reading level. Reflections on their experiences revealed that they felt positively both about themselves and about their role in contributing to the success of their elementary partners. I now recognize my students' work with the elementary students was engaging largely because it enabled them to connect their learning to experiences that meaningfully impacted themselves and others in their community.

Reflecting on these experiences has enabled me to recognize that, as a teacher, I was increasingly struck by the apparent dissonance between dominant discourse and practice in schools. Particularly, the concept of community, though often employed in educational language, was noticeably absent in practice. Though the concept and term

community frequently appeared in aspects of schooling ranging from campus-wide systems to classroom micro-practices designed to organize all involved in the process of education including administrators, teachers, campus personnel, and students and their families, this language often contrasted sharply with actual experience. The schools serving as sites for this community building, though both urban, were surrounded primarily by largely residential areas along with some commercial (both local and chain) businesses; yet, each was physically and noticeably separated from their communities by imposing fences that signaled the distinction between school property and the surrounding area. Separation extended beyond the walls of the schools as well with students often segregated into different parts of the campus according to grade, subject, and in one instance even by gender. Most troubling was that such separations extended well beyond physicality to embody the overall climate of these institutions as a pervasive sense of disconnectedness characterized by these spaces. Teachers were disconnected from students and students were disconnected both from each other and learning. Worse, the specific and deliberate ways in which community was promoted often seemed to exacerbate the exclusion of already marginalized groups and individuals through practices of tracking or superficial affirmations of diversity and multiculturalism. Opportunities that had the potential to alleviate these conditions, such as the magnet teaching course, were nominally used and available to only a small percentage of students.

An opportunity for a doctoral fellowship brought me to work at the university as an assistant facilitating a grant-funded partnership between the university and a large local school district to provide ongoing professional development to participating district social studies teachers. I carried my experiences with me and continued to explore the

ways in which knowledge of students' communities could be used to connect with them and provide responsive teaching. A year into my program, an opportunity arose to co-teach, along with another doctoral student, a social studies education course focused on current issues in education. Simultaneously, our program decided to form a partnership with a local food bank and integrate a community service component in each course. Initially, I was interested in the potential of this field experience to offer students to connect issues we discussed in class with their personal experiences serving at the food bank. For our course, we required students to serve at the food bank twice over the course of the semester, and to write a reflection that addressed their experiences in relation to course issues discussed. Prior to any scheduling of service, we dedicated a course to discussing themes related to equity and education. The intent was to encourage students to connect their experience with broader sociopolitical context of education we sought to emphasize throughout the course. Students determined when they would serve according to their schedule, with most choosing to complete the requirement by grouping with classmates. Though both my teaching partner and I also served at the food bank, we did not have the opportunity to work with the majority of students from our course. Following the submission of their reflections I was disappointed to learn how few seemed to have derived significant meaning from their experience. Those that did have positive comments seemed to primarily reflect a *savior mentality* (Boyle-Baise, 2002) or *do-gooder* (Rhoads, 1997) perspective that positioned them as helping less fortunate others. Few reflected the critical perspectives related to education and social issues that we intended the experience to foster. This experience conveyed to me the complexity of community-oriented teacher education. It also prompted me to continue to research how

community-based field experiences could be integrated into teacher education to promote consideration of issues related to community, education, and diversity that supported culturally responsive practices of knowing and being responsive to students' diverse experiences and identities. The following semester, I had the opportunity to teach a community-based education course. With the experiences of the previous course in mind, I sought to shift the emphasis away from service towards learning to use community as a resource in teaching and learning. To gain insight both into my own practice, as well as how community-based field experiences can be successfully integrated into teacher education to promote teaching for diversity, this inquiry focused on how student participants interpreted their experiences, and the ways in which these interpretations influenced their teaching and learning knowledge and practices.

Context of the Inquiry

One section of a semester-long three-credit university education course, Community-based Education, in which I served as instructor provided the context for this inquiry. The purpose of the course was to model constructivist teaching and learning by providing participants with ongoing opportunities to engage in a critical approach to examining educational issues related to community, education, and diversity. It emphasized promoting understanding and appreciation of the connection between schools and communities, as well as on teaching and learning knowledge and practices that acknowledged and affirmed students' diverse experiences, identities, and interests. Themes focused on included teaching and learning, multicultural education, school and community connections, and local to global connections. My intent was to provide students with teaching and learning opportunities that would promote and develop

cultural responsiveness that emphasized the importance of learning about students and their communities and using that knowledge in teaching and learning practices.

I decided to structure the course around a series of community-based field experiences that included visiting local community organizations, collaborating with students at a local high school for an interview project, and exploring the community surrounding their school. These field components provided students with opportunities for personal experiences that related to considerations of community, education, and diversity throughout the course. Through analysis, discussion, and reflection on these experiences, I sought to encourage students to recognize and acknowledge their own perspectives in relation to course issues in ways that promoted consideration of the broader sociopolitical context of education, as well as supported the development of knowledge, skills, and commitments to culturally responsive teaching and learning practices.

My inquiry process was guided by a narrative approach informed by a critical qualitative research perspective. Abby, Hande, and Jackie, three preservice teachers who completed the course, were the participants in this study. Using their autobiographical and reflective narratives composed during the course, as well as a series of individual interviews focused on their experiences with community, education, and diversity, community-based field and course experiences, and student teaching experiences, I inquired into how interpretations of their experiences informed their teacher knowledge and identity.

Justifications for the Inquiry

Personal justification. My personal experiences as a student, teacher, and teacher educator with community, education, and diversity have provided me with an understanding of the importance of connecting teaching and learning with students' lived experiences in ways that acknowledge and affirm their diverse backgrounds, identities, and interests. This has led me to inquire into the ways in which community-based field experiences can promote these considerations in ways that develop and support teaching for diversity.

Practical justification. As the fourth largest city in the U.S., Houston's position as the nation's most culturally and ethnically diverse urban metropolis ensures a similarly diverse student population (Emerson et al, 2012). Houston is served by numerous public and charter districts, including the nation's seventh largest public district, which serves more than 200,000 students from a broad range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. This makes my university an ideal location for research into how to better prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse students and communities. In contrast to the overall level of diversity, Houston is also more segregated than any other area of the metropolitan region (Emerson, et al, 2012). Many students entering teacher education programs at the university come from the Greater Houston Area, and have little experience with the communities, schools, and students where they will soon teach. Thus, in an effort to provide opportunities to interact with these local communities in order to promote and facilitate greater understanding of the diverse contexts in which student live and learn, I integrated community-based field experiences into a teacher education course that I taught. As a teacher educator situated in a major city with an increasingly diverse

student population, I am committed to approaches to teacher education that successfully prepare preservice teachers to work in diverse settings. I view this inquiry as a way to improve my practice, as well as share my experiences with others working in similar capacities in ways that promote continued dialogue and reflection.

Social justification. Teachers often work with students and communities whose background and lived experiences differs from their own (Sleeter, 2008c). Culturally responsive teaching provides an approach to teaching and learning that has been advocated as a way to address the needs of all learners that acknowledges, affirms, and builds on their diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive teaching requires more than content knowledge. Knowledge of the communities in which they will go on to teach in is obviously an important element in the success of preservice teachers (Wadell, 2013). However, there is little research regarding the importance of community in the education of teachers (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Community-based learning has been advocated as a potentially powerful way to teach preservice teachers about community, education, and diversity by providing opportunities for personal experiences related to these issues (Boyle-Baise, 2005; Murrell, 2001, Sleeter, 2000). However, research is limited as to how these experiences are interpreted by preservice teachers in relation to the goals of their teacher education programs (Catapano & Huisman, 2010). This inquiry aimed to add to the small but growing body of research that investigates how community-based field experiences may be integrated into teacher education in ways to promote and support responsive teaching and learning practices.

Purpose of the Inquiry

Adopting narrative understandings of experience, identity, and knowledge, this inquiry focused on understanding how three preservice teachers interpreted their community-based field experiences, and how these interpretations shaped their knowledge and shifted their identities as teachers. By following participants into their student teaching, it also sought to gain insight into how these interpretations influenced their practices as they transitioned to teaching. This inquiry also considered what implications these understandings hold for integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education in ways that can prepare responsive teachers for diverse students and communities. The following wonderings served to focus this inquiry:

- How do preservice teachers interpret their community-based field experiences as part of a university teacher education course?
- How do these interpretations shift their identities as teachers and shape their teacher knowledge?
- Based on these considerations, what are implications for integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education?

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review provides insights into considerations related to this inquiry regarding how preservice teachers interpreted their community-based field experiences in a university education course, how those interpretations shaped their teacher identity and knowledge, and what implications this holds for integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education. It explores literature related to teaching and teacher education in relation to diversity, community-based learning in teacher education, and teacher identity and knowledge to better understand the ways in which community-based teacher education can prepare preservice teachers to successfully work with students in ways that understand and acknowledge their diverse identities and experiences in order to develop caring relationships, build on their funds of knowledge, and support their academic and personal growth. It is based on my understandings that current educational systems and policies are not meeting the needs of all students, and that teacher education can and should better prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse students and their communities.

Teaching for Diversity

Takaki (1993) begins his chronicle of multicultural history of the United States by telling a story of his riding in a taxi from the airport on the way to his hotel in anticipation of attending an educational conference on multiculturalism. He recalls his driver asking him how long he had been in the country, initiating an awkward exchange as Takaki explained that his grandfather moved to the United States from Japan in the 1880s, and his family had lived in the country for over a hundred years. Thinking on the

exchange and the passing scenery of the East Coast, he is reminded of the early interactions between the English and Powhatan, and he observes:

Questions like the one my taxi driver asked me are always jarring, but I can understand why he could not see me as American. He had a narrow but widely shared sense of the past – a history that has viewed America as European in ancestry...But America has been racially diverse since our very beginning on the Virginia shore, and this reality is becoming increasingly visible. (p. 2)

This story resonates with me as both a teacher and a teacher educator. As a secondary social studies teacher, I used the work of Takaki and other historians (e.g. Zinn, 2004; Lowen, 2007) to provide multiple perspectives of history, and to offer alternative narratives to those often found in social studies classrooms that emphasize American exceptionalism and present its history as primarily monocultural, Eurocentric, and English-speaking (Nieto & Bode, 2011). My understandings of diversity and education recognize that while shifting demographics may indicate growing diversity in the U.S., this is not new, but is imbedded in our history. This informs my approach as a teacher educator in encouraging my students to consider diversity as inherent in schools, as well as the larger sociopolitical context of education, which often functions to suppress diversity rather than support it. I focused on community-based teacher education because of the potential I see in it to promote considerations and understandings regarding community, education, and diversity that recognize the value and necessity of embracing pluralist societies. Through incorporating community-

based field experiences into my course, I sought to provide students with opportunities to consider the importance of students' lived experiences, and to foster responsive practices that incorporated this knowledge in ways that validate and support all learners.

Student Demographics and Achievement

Much of the research and literature related to education and diversity references shifting demographics as a basis for advocating multicultural and culturally responsive teaching that embraces diversity and uses it as a resource to support the personal and academic growth and achievement of all students. According to a report issued by the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), from 1990 through 2010, the number of White students in U.S. public schools decreased while enrollment of non-White students increased, with urban schools experiencing the highest growth of non-white students. Further, White students made up 50 percent or less of school enrollment in 12 states, including Texas, as well as the District of Columbia. In 2011, the Texas Education Agency reported that of the nearly 5 million students enrolled in Texas public schools, approximately 70 percent were non-White, with 50 percent of students being Hispanic. Additionally, nearly 60 percent of students were classified as Economically Disadvantaged (ED), and more than 30 percent were classified as participating in either Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or Bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Isolated, the meaning and relevance of these figures remains unclear. Certainly they may hint at broader national demographic and socioeconomic patterns and shifts, but they convey less regarding implications for education in our state and across our nation. But when coupled with figures representing academic achievement,

graduation, and discipline rates, all of which indicate that students of color achieve at lower rates than their White peers but are disciplined more frequently, a startling picture of our educational system begins to emerge (Nieto & Bode, 2011).

Attention to shifting student demographics is often accompanied by acknowledging that students of color score lower on standardized measures of academic achievement than their White peers (Nieto & Bode, 2011; Gay, 2010). This discrepancy is often termed an *achievement gap*. Nieto and Bode (2011) assert that, while there can be no denying that the disparities this term seeks to convey are real, the term itself is problematic. They observe:

The problem with the term achievement gap is that it suggests that students alone are responsible for their learning, as if school and societal conditions and contexts did not exist. The result is that the problem is defined as a “minority” problem rather than a problem of unequal schooling. (p. 13)

Ravitch (2013) further complicates our understanding of this issue by observing that academic achievement, as measured by standardized testing, has not stood still. While significant gains have been made by students of color, achievement of White students has also continued to improve. Framing the discussion of achievement solely in terms of race is also problematic in that it obscures broader sociopolitical influences. Gaps in scores among racial and ethnic groups have narrowed, and are now smaller than those between the poorest and most affluent students (Reardon, 2011).

Focusing on academic achievement primarily based on standardized scores and related to race and ethnicity can redirect attention away from more pervasive issues of

poverty and inequality (Berliner, 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2011). This approach has been used by the corporate reform movement to further neoliberal policies in education (Ravitch, 2013). Discussions about student achievement should include broader considerations related to high school and college graduation, as well as acknowledge discrepancies in student discipline rates (Alexander, 2012; Gay, 2010). Further, these discussions should consider sociopolitical complexities, recognizing the link between poverty and students of color as a result of historical systems and institutions of discrimination and oppression. While I recognize and share concerns regarding discrepancies related to increasingly diverse student populations being taught primarily by White, middle class, female teachers and disparities in achievement among different demographics of students, I view these as signifying deeper and more troubling social inequities. The reality of shifting demographics, particularly when combined with evidence that growing numbers of students may receive inequitable educational opportunities and experiences, presents an urgent need for imagining improved alternatives to current practices. I am interested in educational approaches, such as multicultural and culturally responsive teaching, that recognize and seek to address these inequities in ways that improve education for all students, as well as how teacher education can promote and support these approaches. I understand community-based teacher education as a pathway to integrating considerations of community, education, and diversity into teacher education in ways that enable the development of teachers who can effectively address the needs of all students in ways that value their individual identities, experiences, and interests and promote their personal and academic growth.

Approaches to Teaching for Diversity

Education remains a contested landscape in which opposing perspectives, purposes, and approaches often conflict with one another. These ideals differ and inform education differently. Papastephanou (2003) observes that this occurs in myriad ways, “since they draw from a wide spectrum of cultural and interpretive material. Differences in accounts of what a subject is, what constitutes a collectivity, and what the aims of education might be generate diverse and often opposing educational models” (p. 395). Standardization, testing, accountability, and an emphasis on global and economic competitiveness currently dominate discourse on education. Yet, this often conflicts with an overwhelming and urgent need for teaching that effectively addresses increasingly diverse learning populations in ways that embrace and validate individual identities and cultures. These tensions reflect the growing isolation of schools from community and society, and the subsequent disconnect between education and experience. Such critical concerns, though warranted, are not new; nor, have they, been absent from educational discourse. Rather, many of those engaged in the theory and practice of teaching and learning, both past and present, have continually expressed similar sentiments and a desire to strengthen connections between society and school, school and education, education and learning, and learning and doing. Banks (2009) affirms the importance of such connections and asserts educators must validate the identities of students from diverse groups through teaching that must,

speak to and address experiences, personal identities, hopes struggles, dreams and possibilities....In other words, for students to internalize the concept....they must have experiences in the school, as well as in the

larger society, that validate them as human beings; affirm their ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic identities; and empower them as citizens in the school and in the larger society. (p.101)

Growing research and literature suggests that multicultural and culturally responsive teaching provide approaches to teaching and learning that support diversity and equity while also using education as a basis for transformative social change. My interest as a teacher educator is in how to promote and support multicultural and culturally responsive teaching practices that reconnect students with schools and schools with communities. I see community-based teacher education as an approach that refocuses teaching and learning on these connections and emphasizes the importance of using knowledge of students and their communities as a basis for multicultural and culturally responsive practices.

Multicultural education. Multicultural education has long been advocated as important for promoting and supporting diversity (Banks and Banks, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2011; Rios and Stanton, 2011; Sleeter and Grant, 2009). Banks (2004) identified five different eras of multicultural education, of which the civil rights was the most foundational and the critical multiculturalism era the most recent. In each era, ideas regarding the intersections among issues of identity, culture, diversity, equity, and education were further defined and developed, resulting in a wide range of contemporary views on multicultural education. During the most recent era, largely as a result of misapplications of multicultural terms and concepts both within and beyond the discipline of education, critical multiculturalism has been advocated to ensure attention

remains focused on issues related to power and privilege, as well as on the importance of institutional and social change.

Several educators have articulated comprehensive approaches to critical multicultural education (e.g. Bank & Banks, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2007). These articulations have in common that they view approaches to multiculturalism as progressively more inclusive and transformative. Stanton and Rios (2011) observe that multicultural education is described as having five levels of approach including ignoring multiculturalism entirely; viewing multiculturalism as a barrier to overcome in mainstream society; valuing multiculturalism in terms of contributions to mainstream society; comprehensively recognizing and valuing multiculturalism; and encouraging students to engage in promoting multicultural and democratic values. While multicultural education has received increased attention and interest, most schools and educators have not moved beyond additive approaches (Banks & Banks, 2009) that treat multicultural education as an extra supplement to traditional curriculum (Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Rios and Stanton (2011) suggest that common reasons for advocating multicultural education include: shifting demographics; discrepancies in achievement among different student demographics (“the achievement gap”); the need for countering legacies and systems of oppression such as assimilation, colonization, and cultural hegemony; and understanding multicultural education as a human right. Only more progressive approaches to multicultural education that both affirm pluralism and work to promote social justice and change can address these reasons and improve education and life for all students (Sleeter & Grant, 2007). In my teaching, I seek to increase awareness of these issues and the ways in which traditional educational systems and approaches fail

to move beyond superficial attempts at promoting and supporting diversity. I integrated community-based field experiences into my courses in an effort to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to consider ways in which issues related to community, education, and diversity exist in local contexts, as well as to connect these with multicultural and culturally responsive practices that embrace student diversity as a resource. Through focusing I community, I sought to demonstrate its importance in relation to education, as well as emphasize how knowledge of community and students is central to responsive practices that acknowledge and embrace students' diverse identities and experiences.

Culturally responsive teaching. Similar to multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching has been advocated as an approach to teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students. Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching as:

using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. (p.

31)

Like multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the necessity of recognizing and valuing students' diverse backgrounds, identities, experiences, and interests. It similarly treats such cultural knowledge and experiences as assets that can be used as resources to promote student achievement rather than deficits to be overcome. Culturally responsive teaching supports the belief that all students can be successful

without impugning their cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Gay (2010) suggests that culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory. (Gay, 2010) Culturally responsive teaching attends to the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amaniti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) students bring into classrooms and connects with their homes, communities, and cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Gay (2010) conceptualizes multicultural education as being primarily comprised of four essential components: caring, communication, culturally responsive instruction, and culturally responsive curriculum. Her articulation of the importance of care and communication augments our understanding of the attitudes and behaviors culturally responsive teachers should display. Care, for Gay, means that teachers must go beyond saying they care about students and show their care through action. These actions include demonstrating to students that they value diverse ways of knowing, while simultaneously setting high expectations and supporting achievement of all students. Additionally, culturally responsive educators demonstrate caring by actively learning from students and communities, and by using this knowledge to guide their practices. Nodding (2012) also emphasizes the importance of care in teaching and learning, and articulates related components of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation in caring approaches. I see each of these components as vitally important to promoting and supporting the development of caring, responsive educators. These guide my own practices as a teacher and teacher educator with my students. Through integrating community-based field experiences into my course, I sought to afford students with opportunities to consider the importance of recognizing and responding to multiple

influences in students' lives in ways that promoted acknowledgement and care for students as individuals. I viewed interacting with communities in which many of my students had little to no experience as a way to encourage them to consider the value in diverse ways of knowing, as well as provide them with ideas as to how to integrate community considerations and knowledge as a resource in their practices.

Teacher Education for Diversity

Shifting demographics of U.S. students, especially in comparison with teacher demographics are repeatedly cited as a justification for culturally responsive teaching. The need to recognize this divide is often termed as a *demographic imperative*. Lowenstein (2009) observes that this demographic imperative is “familiar to teacher educators and educational researchers, has been defined repeatedly as the disjunction between the sociocultural characteristics and previous experiences of the typical teacher candidate and those of many of our K-12 students, particularly in our nation’s urban schools” (p. 166). In contrast to the need for multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching that can successfully work with diverse students, a majority of teachers do not have knowledge and experience with cultural diversity (Sleeter, 2001). Most teachers in the U.S. are teaching children with different cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class backgrounds than themselves. This resonates with my own experiences as a teacher and teacher educator. As a teacher educator, many of my students have little to no experience in schools and communities beyond where they were educated, though they will likely go on to work in diverse settings. One rationale for focusing on community and integrating community-based field experiences into my course was to provide students with opportunities to interact with local communities in

ways that encouraged them to view them as resources in their teaching. Though students might not go to work in these communities, I also saw these experiences as a basis for developing the knowledge, skills, and commitment necessary to integrate community considerations into their future practices regardless of the particular setting.

My interest in developing teacher education courses that promote and support diversity relies on my understanding that, while some preservice teachers may enter with more diverse knowledge and experiences, all can benefit from courses that are founded on multicultural and culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning. While more efforts should be made to successfully recruit and prepare diverse teachers, it is also important to prepare those already entering or in teacher education programs (Gay, 2010). Additionally, while preservice teachers of color may bring more experience with and knowledge of diversity to teacher education, their programs often are not designed to build on and extend that knowledge (Sleeter, 2001). Additionally, most preservice teachers, regardless of their background were likely raised and educated in predominantly monocultural, Eurocentric, English-speaking environments (Nieto & Bode, 2011). Because neither group necessarily brings more knowledge about pedagogical practices, both need education programs that promote and support the knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to enact culturally responsive teaching and learning practices (Sleeter, 2001). While preservice teachers certainly enter education programs with a wide range of experiences, knowledge, and beliefs about diversity, I see it as important to recognize all as being capable of learning and able to add to their knowledge and beliefs (Lowen, 2009). I believe to do otherwise employs deficit thinking similar to what culturally responsive teaching seeks to counteract. I view my responsibility as a teacher

educator similarly to what I held as a teacher; I seek to recognize how their backgrounds and experiences shape their knowledge and perspectives and use my understandings to facilitate teaching and learning that meets students where they are as a basis for promoting growth. I understand community-based teacher education as providing a basis for analyzing and reflecting on issues related to community, education, and diversity in ways that promote and support the development of culturally responsive teachers. I see community-based field experiences as offering students opportunities to interact in diverse settings in ways that encourage them to connect to students' lived experiences beyond the classroom, and to value the knowledge and experiences students bring as resources.

Culturally Responsive Teachers

By emphasizing the importance of privileging considerations of student experience and identity, I seek to cultivate responsive practices that embrace diversity and support the needs and interests of all students. Teacher education programs preparing teachers to be culturally responsive are guided by what Villegas and Lucas (2002) articulate as six strands of culturally responsive teachers including: being socioculturally conscious; having affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds; being committed to making schools more responsive to all students; having a constructivist view of learning; learning about students and their communities; and teaching responsively. Sleeter (2008a) suggests four characteristics of strong teachers of diverse students that students need and teacher education can support. Students need teachers who hold high expectations for their learning regardless of how they are doing; can engage them academically by building on what interest them; can relate to their

families and communities, reading them in culturally accurate ways; and envision them as constructive participants in a multicultural democracy. The rationale for articulating these is to provide a vision that will enable teacher educators to systematically infuse consideration of multicultural issues through teacher education curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and present a call to action for teacher education that better promotes and develops these characteristics (Sleeter, 2008a). I see these characteristics as interrelated, and I focused on community-based field experiences because of the potential I believe they offer to provide as experiences that promote and support the development of these characteristics.

I understand a constructivist view of education as closely connected with approaches to teaching and learning that use student knowledge and interest to engage them in ways that both challenge them and promote their success. An understanding of students' lives beyond the classroom is necessary to connect to their experiences and interests, and requires understanding of students' families, homes, and communities. Sociocultural awareness enables teachers to locate their knowledge of students' backgrounds, identities, and experiences within a broader sociopolitical context, which is essential for working towards democratization and equity through social change. In my experience, these strands are interconnected in nonlinear, nonhierarchical ways. Preservice teachers may enter with experience, knowledge, and commitments reflecting varying understandings of multiple strands and the ways in which they function in relation. Often, I have found that commitments to one of these ideas can be built upon to foster awareness and acknowledgement of the importance of others. I saw the inclusion of a community-based field component in my course as allowing me to simultaneously

address considerations to multiple strands by providing students with opportunities to personally experience how they operate in interconnected ways.

Culturally responsive teaching relies on more than content knowledge; it requires knowing the communities in which their students live. Teachers and schools cannot be successful in isolation of the communities in which they exist. Describing the importance of school and community connections, Stovall and Ayers (2005) observe:

There is simply no substitute for an engaged community of parents, teachers, citizens—and, yes, students—coming together to build the schools that they desire and need. Creating an authentic community capable of identifying obstacles and opportunities, setting standards and expectations, grappling with the question of what knowledge and experiences are of most value, and deciding how best to provide students full access to such a curriculum is the indispensable feature of successful schools in a functioning democracy (p. 37).

While students spend much of their time in schools, a great deal more is spent outside; children spend 1000 hours per year in school compared with 5000 hours spent in their communities (Berliner, 2005). This influence of community on education should be recognized, especially given the important role teachers play in connecting families, schools, and communities (Epstein, 1995). I view culturally responsive teaching as having a reciprocal relationship with community knowledge and involvement.

Responsive teachers recognize the importance of community in relation to education and seek to learn about the communities in which they teach. They, in turn, use this knowledge to connect with students and their communities in ways that promote the

development of both.

Knowledge of the communities in which they will go on to teach in is obviously an important element in the success of preservice teachers (Wadell, 2013). However, there is little research regarding the importance of community in the education of teachers (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Often, teachers are not fully aware of or prepared to address the economic, social, political, and environmental factors impacting their students' lives, families, and communities (Noel, 2010). Seeing and knowing the communities where students live provides important knowledge and insight into these considerations, and is important for teachers to address the needs of all students (Catapano & Huisam, 2010). I view community knowledge as necessary for responsive teaching. However, my experience as a teacher educator resonates with those who observe that many preservice teachers have not had the opportunity to explore the important connections among students, schools, and communities in ways that enable them to use community as a resource in their practices. I see community oriented teacher education as important in approaches to developing culturally responsive teachers.

Approaches to Teacher Education for Diversity

Recognizing the need to better prepare more diverse teachers, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) added multicultural education in its standards as part of its accreditation process in 1976 (Cochran-Smith, 2003). However, despite additional revisions designed to provide support for these changes in 2000, criticisms continue with regard to the lack of preparation of teachers for working with diverse students and in diverse educational settings (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Gorski (2008) found in a review of syllabi from multicultural teacher education

courses taught across the U.S., that “most of the course were designed to prepare teachers with pragmatic skills and personal awareness, but not to prepare them in accordance with key principles of multicultural education such as critical consciousness and a commitment to educational equity” (p. 310). Questions continue within teacher education related to how to restructure it to be more multicultural, as well as to produce empirical research that substantiates approaches that develop the criticality and reflection needed to promote responsive practices that support diversity (Grant & Gibson, 2011). The challenge of preparing teachers for diversity is further heightened by competing approaches to teacher education reform that may strengthen or weaken the future of multicultural teacher education, including a professionalization agenda, deregulation agenda, and social justice agenda (Zeichner, 2003).

Additive. Multicultural and culturally responsive teacher education, much education in schools, often takes an additive approach (Banks & Banks, 2009) with one or two courses or components that address issues related to teaching and diversity added while the rest of the curriculum remains unchanged (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This resonates with my own experiences as a preservice teacher in a university teacher education program which did not require me to take any courses specifically related to teaching for diversity, and only offered a “sprinkling of disparate bits of information about diversity” in the curriculum (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 21). Though there is evidence that these additions have positively contributed to preparing teachers for diversity, it is insufficient to meet the needs of all students (Castro, 2010; Gay & Howard, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). As with additive approaches to

multicultural education, superficial approaches to diversity in teacher education may also reinforce the dominant paradigms and cultural hegemony found in schools (reference).

Infusion. To counteract an additive approach to preparing teachers for diversity, some have advocated for an infusion approach, whereby issues of diversity are addressed throughout the entire teacher education curriculum (Grant, 1994; Gay, 2010; Zeichner & Hoeft). Related to an infusion approach to strengthening teacher education, Sleeter (2008b) recommends that, in order to better prepare teachers for working with diverse students, teacher education be strengthened for equity and democracy through the support of three pillars: “preparation for everyday schools and classroom; content knowledge and professional and theoretical knowledge that universities can provide; and dialog with communities in which schools are situated, a crucial pillar that too often is ignored” (p. 1948). She, along with others (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001) contends that field experiences, can provide preservice teachers with opportunities to learn about children’s’ cultures in ways that can develop knowledge and understandings related to multicultural and culturally responsive teaching.

Field experiences. Field experiences are considered a valuable component of teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). When thoughtfully structured, such experiences can provide opportunities for preservice teachers to consider issues related to community, education, and diversity in ways that promote knowledge and skills related to culturally responsive teaching. Sleeter (2008b) observes:

Having multiple rather than single field experiences in historically underserved areas, in both classrooms and communities, using guided inquiry, has a reasonable research track record for disrupting stereotypes,

helping teacher candidates learn about students' cultural backgrounds, and helping them learn to connect student behavior and learning with what teachers do. (p. 1949).

I particularly resonate with the observation that such experiences can assist teachers in recognizing the impact their actions with student behavior and learning. In my view, understanding and being reflective about the impact personal teaching and learning ideas and practices have on students is essential to caring and responsive teaching. My approach as a teacher educator encourages teachers to develop a habit of mind that first reflects and questions their actions rather than negatively judging students' responses. Field experiences provide an additional way to integrate learning related to culture into teacher education programs and provide preservice teachers with opportunities to consider students' cultures that, if thoughtfully structured and supported, do not essentialize them as often occurs in theoretical practices (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Zeichner & Hoeft, 2000). Field experiences also offer opportunities to connect preservice teachers with communities in ways that enable them to consider the important relationship between community and education (Waddell, 2013).

Community-Based Teacher Education

Many teachers work with students who are very different from themselves, and many often teach in communities in which they do not live and may never even have previously visited (Sleeter, 2000; Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). In my experience as a teacher educator preparing preservice teachers for diverse settings, I have found that many of my students have never visited the communities in which they will student teach and potentially work (Wadell, 2013). Teacher education programs do not always include

consideration of aspects related to community in their programs, and existing research and literature does not often mention either the communities surrounding schools or the need to connect preservice teachers with them (Catapano & Huisman, 2010; Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Preservice teachers in teaching field placement experiences often spend little time in the communities surrounding their schools to understand how it might impact the identities and experiences of the children they will teach (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Most preservice teachers often “spend their entire teacher preparation program without experiencing a school setting beyond the ones that they are familiar with from their own K-12 experiences” (Catapano & Huisman, 2010, p. 82). Barab and Duffy (2002) question whether preservice teachers can really develop a shared perspective with their students without this knowledge.

Preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with strong beliefs and values about teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Such beliefs also extend to students, their families, and their communities (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). These views are often heavily informed by media portrayals and social stereotypes (Conner, 2010). Without connecting with diverse communities, biases and stereotyping regarding families, schools, and students may remain unexamined and go on to interfere with teacher and student success (Wadell, 2013). Such perceptions may influence preservice teachers to teach in what they perceive to be less challenging settings (Cooper, 2007; Terrill & Mark, 2000). Sleeter (2000) observes,

Most educators find it quite hard to acknowledge that we rarely understand a community to which we do not belong as well as we might believe that we do. At the same time, many teachers assume they know

their students well because they see them in the classroom everyday (p. 264).

In order for teachers and students to be successful, teachers must learn about the communities and cultures of the students they teach (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Ayers (1996), similarly believes that teachers need to understand and acknowledge the influences that shape students' lives rather than by perceiving the issues they face as community and family problems to be fixed.

Community-based learning has been advocated as a potentially powerful way to teach preservice teachers about issues regarding community, education, and diversity by providing opportunities for personal experiences related to them (Boyle-Baise, 2005; Murrell, 2001, Sleeter, 2000). However, research is limited as to how these experiences are interpreted by preservice teachers in relation to the goals of their teacher education programs (Catapano & Huisman, 2010). Zeichner (2010) suggests that community-based learning as it applies to teacher education focuses "on strategically utilizing the expertise that exists in the broader community to educate prospective teachers about how to be successful teachers in their communities" (p. 491). In his proposal of a community teacher education model, Peter Murrell (2001) emphasizes teachers' development of *community teacher knowledge* which encompasses knowledge of the cultural backgrounds, personal identities, and local contexts of their students. This idea aligns with culturally responsive teaching which also emphasizes valuing and utilizing students' lived experiences as potentially powerful teaching resources (Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Community-based field experiences provide opportunities for preservice teachers to learn about the history and culture of their students. In

community-based learning, the community provides the context for experiences and learning where students focus on community interests and issues, and in which community members are viewed as resources and partners in teaching and learning.

Sleeter (2000) asserts that, “community-based learning is essential to multicultural education” (p.264). She observes that the most impactful course experiences students relayed to her involved them working in the community. However, as with other methods, thoughtful planning and structuring is needed to promote awareness among students’ of cultural issues rather than confirm and perpetuate existing stereotypical views. Sleeter (2008) suggests that community-based learning experiences that are most beneficial to students’ growth are those that “are well-planned, linked directly to teacher education, and involve guided reflection” (p.565). She emphasizes the importance of providing preservice teachers with opportunities to learn about and discuss the history and current issues of a community before entering it, as well as to develop the skills such as active listening, careful observation, and interviewing necessary for investigation. Additionally, it is crucial that the instructor serve as a facilitator to guide students as they engage in making meaning of their experiences, as well as assist them in making connection between their learning and teaching.

Despite the potential of community-based learning, many questions remain as to how it can be effectively integrated into teacher education. Sleeter (2000) asserts “successful teachers are able to recognize and work with strengths and resources of the community. Doing this requires an ability to see other people’s communities in terms of their strengths and assets rather than their problems” (p. 270). Such community-based learning is consistent with multicultural and culturally responsive ideas that emphasize

the value of students' culture and lived experiences, and that works to use them as resources to empower students to act toward positive social change. My interest both in including a community-based field component and inquiring into how student participants interpreted their experiences centers on a desire to better understand to what extent community-based field experiences, as I approached them, served to promote considerations of community, education, and diversity in ways that encouraged the development of responsive teaching and learning practices.

Approaches to Community-based Teacher Education

Boyle-Baise & McIntyre (2008) observe that “community oriented teacher education is not easily defined because the term serves as an umbrella for different initiatives” (p.309). Exploring service learning and cross-cultural approaches to integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education enabled me to better locate my own approach and experiences within a broader context of community oriented teacher education. In doing so, I gained a better understanding of the implications of the ways in which my approach influenced participants' interpretations in ways that allowed me to reflect and continue to consider possibilities for future improvement. While numerous other approaches to field experiences involving schools and communities exist (e.g. Professional Development Schools and cultural immersion), service learning and cross-cultural community-based field experiences were most compatible given the structure of a campus-based three-credit hour semester long course.

Service learning. Service learning is probably the most familiar approach to addressing community issues in teacher education (Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008). Service learning encompasses a broad range of theories and practices. It has been

defined as both a philosophy and an instructional approach (Anderson, 1998). As an instructional method, service learning constitutes “a blending of service activities with academic curriculum in order to address real community needs while students learn through active engagement” (Anderson, 1998, p. 1). However, service learning may be more broadly interpreted, and, regardless of intent, not all practices identified as such support a community oriented approach to teaching and learning (Boyle-Baise, 2000; Boyle-Baise & McIntyre, 2008).

Murell (2001) critiques traditional service learning models of community-based teacher education as often failing to significantly involve faculty and students and provide them with opportunities to build local relationships. Similar to superficial attempts at multicultural education, such limited community interactions may actually serve to reinforce preservice teachers’ previously held assumptions, particularly with regard to urban, poor, and nondominant culture students, especially when the context of interaction in which students are positioned as “serving” less fortunate “others” of whom they have little understanding. In response, Murrell emphasizes the need for stronger collaborations that encourage preservice teachers to acknowledge and explore the rich resources of diverse communities. In order to avoid the pitfalls encountered with traditional service learning based models, community-based learning should focus on experiences that enable students to recognize the values and strengths of a particular community within the context of the broader socioeconomic, political, and historical factors that shape it.

Boyle-Baise (2002) acknowledges these considerations in her articulation of three orientations to service learning: charity, civic education, and community building. In a

charity or do-gooder orientation (Rhoads, 1997) emphasis on service rather than learning (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Sleeter, 2000) can make providers feel good about their actions, but often in ways that reinforce distance and difference (Tellez, 2000). This reminds me of my previous experience with preservice teachers at a local food bank, in which many of the reflections written on their experiences simultaneously emphasized feeling good about helping others while feeling bad for those receiving their help. More critical approaches (e.g. Boyle-Baise, 2002; Rhoads, 1997; Wade, 2001) provide examples of service learning that exemplify community-building orientations and address multicultural and social justice considerations. Stachowski and Mahan (1998) suggest using “3R’s of service learning,” including choosing *realistic* tasks that serve the community, involve a *reflective* component, and are “based on *reciprocal exchange* between equals” (p. 159). While I continue to be intrigued by the potential of more critical approaches to service learning, my previous experience encouraged me to structure my community-based field component around experiences that did not involve service and perceived roles as helpers. In a desire to approximate a community-building orientation, I intended this positioning to facilitate recognition of community strength and knowledge as well as issues. I also attempted to attend to the 3R’s by selecting experiences that focused on realistic experiences of visiting working community-based organizations and a school, including opportunities for discussion and written reflection, and reciprocal exchange that positioned community members as knowledgeable.

Cross-cultural community-based learning. While, depending on the context, service learning experiences could also be considered cross-cultural, I included this as a separate approach to preserve the distinction related to service and recognition that

service learning is not inherently cross-cultural; however, I realize these are not mutually exclusive categorizations and that overlap may exist, and should even be encouraged between the two. Research related to cross-cultural community-based learning in teacher education indicates it provides opportunities for developing culturally responsive classroom teaching (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Sleeter, 2008a; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Sleeter (2008c) suggests that such cross-cultural community-based experiences comprise the leg most often missing from a platform that supports multicultural and culturally responsive teacher education through a theory practice linkage among university-based coursework, school-based fieldwork, and community-based learning experiences. Sleeter (2008a) observes:

Cross cultural community-based field experiences, although not part of most teacher education programmes have tremendous potential. In classrooms, candidates often see students reacting to school, but often attribute their reactions to students' lives outside of school. In cross-cultural community-based field experiences, candidates are guided in learning how to learn about students' community-based lives using strategies such as active listening and non-judgmental observation. By doing this, candidates can gain a much better understanding of students' capabilities, strengths, and interests. (p. 1950)

Culturally responsive teachers of diverse students have learned how to recognize the knowledge and assets that students bring and can interpret their classroom behavior accurately. Additionally, they can contextualize student issues within a "sociopolitical rather than cultural deficiency analysis" (Sleeter, 2008c, p. 563). While preservice

teachers may or may not go on to work in the communities in which these experiences take place, cross-cultural community-based learning enables them to learn from another community in ways that provide experience and knowledge that they can access in their future practices. Villegas and Lucas (2002) observe that though preservice teachers “cannot develop this knowledge in advance in programs of preservice teacher education, they should be helped to understand what they need to know about their future students and develop strategies for familiarizing themselves with those students” (p. 80). While I recognized that only a small portion of the preservice students in our course might go on to student teach or work in the places we visited, I hoped that our experiences would provide a basis for connecting with future students and their communities.

While more sustained cultural immersion experiences are likely to have a greater impact on attitudes and knowledge, shorter experiences entailing visiting communities have also been shown to result in attitudinal changes and willingness to teach in communities like those visited (Moule, 2004; Seidl & Friend, 2002). However there is also evidence that short community-based learning may not produce change beyond “eye-opening” (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000) and could even confirm stereotypes that preservice teachers may bring (Ross & Smith, 1992). It may be especially difficult to contextualize these experiences within broader sociopolitical contexts. Seidl and Friend (2002) observe:

The development of sophisticated, culturally relevant pedagogies is a process that requires commitment over time and lived experience. It is impossible for our students to unlearn years of racist socialization and develop anti-racist and sophisticated bicultural identities in one year.

Thus what we hope for is that our students begin to understand the difficulties that arise when schools are not responsive to children's sociocultural experiences (p. 427).

While cross-cultural community-based learning does not guarantee strong teaching for diversity, when well-planned, linked to educational issues, and supported by reflection, it can provide an experiential basis that is often lacking in teacher education and may promote development of culturally responsive practices. I position the community-based field experiences investigated in this inquiry as cross-cultural since the majority of students in the course were unfamiliar with the communities we visited and most also shared different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds than the community members and students with whom we interacted. While these experiences were shorter, aligning with a visit rather than immersion orientation, I sought to provide students with a basis for considering issues related to community, education, and diversity in critical and reflective ways. As literature and research suggested, I attempted to support these experiences through planning, providing information prior to our experiences, and allowing time for discussion as well as written reflective narratives. My intention was, as Seid and Friend observed, to provide an experiential foundation for rethinking perceptions and creating new knowledge. This inquiry was prompted by my interest in gaining insight into both how student participants interpreted their experiences, as well as how those interpretations shaped their teacher knowledge and identities. In inquiring into their experiences, I also sought to gain insight into my own practices, as well as contribute to the small but growing body of research related to community-based learning in teacher education.

Teacher Identity

Teaching, like any other profession, is a multifaceted and complex practice that encompasses a variety of knowledge and skills. Teacher professional identity can be considered as one component, associated with the profession of teaching, of multiple aspects of a person's identity (Gee, 2001). Identity has a profound impact on both teacher education experiences and teaching (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010). Teachers' professional identities are essential to their "beliefs, values, and practices that guide their actions within and outside the classroom" (Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010, p. 455). Olsen (2008) further observes that, "teacher development is circular even as it is also forward moving: a teacher is always collapsing the past, present, and future into a complex *mélange* of professional beliefs, goals, memories, and predictions while enacting practice" (p. 24). Thus, while experiences in teacher education inevitably impact the development of preservice teachers' professional identities, they cannot be isolated from their previous and future experiences.

A critical component of both cross-cultural community-based field experiences and teacher education for diversity is reflexive practice that encourages students to examine their own identities in relation to diversity and schooling (Cochran-Smith, 2000), as well as analyze how educational and social systems and institutions often function to reproduce forms of inequality (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Narrative understandings of experience, identity, and knowledge are central to this process, as it is through living, telling, retelling, and reliving that we story and restory our lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). These narratives reflect teacher identities, stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and personal practice practical knowledge of

teaching and learning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Narrative in teacher education, particularly related to community-based field experiences, provides a valuable approach to encouraging preservice teachers to reflect on and analyze their identity and beliefs in ways that can be used to promote and support knowledge of and commitment to culturally responsive teaching practices (Cochran-Smith, 2009; Coffey, 2010)

Experience

Narrative understanding of knowledge and identity acknowledge the primacy of experience in shaping our lives. Dewey (1998) emphasizes the importance of experience and its centrality in education. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey paraphrases Lincoln's words on democracy when he asserts that a philosophy of education should be "...based upon a philosophy...of, by, and for experience" (p.10). Indeed, he insists that, "...amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p.8). For Dewey, the processes of education, and indeed of living, are inextricably interwoven with and tied to experience.

Experience according to Dewey is comprised of two fundamental principles: continuity and interaction. Continuity refers to the cumulative nature of experience in which, "...every experience influences in some degree conditions under which further experiences are had" (p.14). Prior experiences inform current experiences which then go on to influence experiences in the future. Experience functions then, not as a series of isolated incidences, but as a collective. Dewey envisions this collective as existing as what he refers to as an "experiential continuum" spanning the entire course of one's life.

The second principle of experience, interaction, refers to the understanding that experience involves contact and communication. Dewey observes,

An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked about being also a part of the situation (p.17)

Thus, the nature of experience is contextual and is defined by the interactions among its participants. Dewey emphasizes the importance of interaction when he insists that, “all human experience is ultimately social” (p.14).

However, Dewey cautioned that experience cannot be considered directly equal to education, since not all experiences are “equally educative” (p.8). Therefore, he asserts that it is insufficient to “...insist upon the necessity of experience, nor even of activity in experience Every- thing depends upon the quality of the experience, which is had” (p.9). For Dewey then, the principle challenge of education is to facilitate meaningful experiences that, “live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p.9). Educative experiences must connect to and extend prior experiences as well as have meaning and value to students’ present lives.

Dewey’s notions regarding education and experience are often translated into the idea that teachers must simultaneously know something of their students’ prior experiences, recognize and start where students currently are, and consider future experiences that will assist in their continued growth and development. Thus, experience is both personal and

social, and requires understanding that acknowledges both the importance of the individual as well as of interaction with others. Community education is powerful precisely because it facilitates such meaningful experiences in which preservice teachers are given opportunities to reflect on and develop their own knowledge of both themselves and others in an interactive context. Understandings of the ways in which experience shapes our knowledge and identity are central to narrative understandings of each. The conceptualization of education as experience is also important to this inquiry as it served as basis for integrating community-based field experiences into the course. Part of my investigation into how these experiences were interpreted by student participants rested on my interest in gaining understanding as to the extent these experiences may have served as educative or miseducative in their development of knowledge of and commitment to caring and responsive practices.

Narrative Understandings of Teacher Knowledge and Identity

A wealth of literature regarding teacher identity exists, however multiple purposes and interpretations make it difficult to condense this knowledge into a common understanding (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Indeed, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004), in their systematic review of research on teacher professional identity cited a lack of definition; however, they did identify four essential features: (1) professional identity is an *ongoing process* of interpretation; (2) professional identity implies both *person and context*; (3) a teacher's professional identity consists of *subidentities* that more or less harmonize; and (4) *agency* is an important element of professional identity, meaning that teachers have to be active in the process of professional development. Additionally, relevant to this study, they concluded that the

metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) could offer additional meaningful perspective as to how teachers' professional identities develop in context. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) in a recent investigation of issues related to teacher identity research observed that "an important topic of discussion in the literature on identity revolves around its narrative and discursive aspects and the ways in which narrative and discourse shape and are shaped by identity" (p. 181). Adopting a narrative understanding of teacher identity enabled me to attend to the centrality of experience and the ways in which we think about experiences narratively (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In the course, this led me to have students begin by writing autobiographical narratives related to teaching, community, education, and diversity, as well as to include reflective narratives throughout the course based on our field experiences.

Stories to live by. Connelly and Clandinin (1999), developers of narrative inquiry, observe that, "teachers' working lives are shaped by stories and that these stories to live by compose teacher identity" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.94). Working from a narrative perspective Connelly & Clandinin (1999) reflect:

Identity is a term that tends to carry a burden of hard reality, something like a rock, a forest, an entity. Being true to this identity, being true to oneself, is often though a virtue. Yet, from the narrative point of view, identities have histories, they are narrative constructions that take shape as life unfolds and that may, as narrative constructions are wont to do, solidify into a fixed entity, an unchanging narrative construction, or they may continue to grow and change. They may even be, indeed, almost

certainly are, multiple depending on the life situations in which one finds oneself (pp. 94-95).

The significance of this conceptualization of teachers and their identities is that it acknowledges both the broader context of experiences in which identities are shaped, as well as the narrative qualities of those experiences. Further, “the stories these narratives are built on are both personal, reflecting a person’s life history, and social, reflecting the professional knowledge contexts in which teachers live” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 93).

Having previously developed the concepts of both personal practical knowledge and the professional knowledge landscape as possibilities for understanding teacher knowledge, they began to inquire into using these understandings as a basis for making connections between teacher knowledge and identity. This research led them to link knowledge, context, and identity through the concept “stories to live by,” which “refer to identity,” and “is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). Further, “people’s experience, their personal practical knowledge, of space and time gives life force to their identity, to their stories to live by” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 113). These stories are further shaped by experiences in both in- and out-of-classroom places where teachers live and tell secret stories, sacred stories, and cover stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). My inquiry focuses on how participants interpreted their community-based field experiences and how these interpretations shifted their identity and knowledge as teachers. Adopting a narrative understanding of experience, knowledge, and identity, I inquired into these changes through examining shifts in the stories to live by students told related to teaching,

community, education, and diversity. Using their course narratives and interviews, I composed, along with my participants, what I viewed as their stories to live by prior to entering, during, and after exiting our course and inquiry. Following participants into their student teaching, I gained an understanding as to how interpretations of their course experiences informed their stories and knowledge as they transitioned to classroom teaching. In doing this, I sought to add depth to the research and literature regarding how community-based field experiences may inform preservice teachers practices as they transition to teaching, as well as how these experiences might promote development of and commitment to culturally responsive teaching.

Teacher knowledge. These understandings of teacher identity are based on previous work by Connelly & Clandinin (1995; 1988) on teacher knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) approach their exploration of teacher knowledge by posing the question, “How should we think about teacher knowledge?” (p. 315). In their ensuing inquiry, they emphasize the storied nature of experience and the subsequent need for narrative understandings of teacher knowledge that are rooted in the experiential (Dewey, 1998) and the practical (Schwab, 1969). Connelly and Clandinin conceptualize and describe teacher knowledge in narrative terms because:

we live in a world of stories, and though we help shape those stories, we are shaped by them. Our stories, and the shaping stories of our professional knowledge landscapes, are narratively constructed. Both our personal stories and our landscape stories have moral, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions. (p. 318)

This storied nature of experience leads Connelly and Clandinin to assert that narrative is “both phenomenon and method” (p. 318) and is used as a means of both thinking about as well as studying teacher knowledge.

Drawing on Dewey’s writing on experience, Connelly and Clandinin suggest positioning teacher knowledge in a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space comprised of the *temporal* (past, present, and future), *personal/existential*, and *place*. *Temporal* refers to the cumulative nature of experience that recognizes that experiences stem from and are influenced by previous experiences. This suggests a temporal continuity that encourages us to examine any experience and the knowledge it generates from multiple perspectives of past, present, and future in an effort to understand the interrelated influences of temporality on how we continually make and remake meaning out of our experiences. *Personal/Existential* and *Place* refer to the interactive and social nature of experience and encourage us to examine interrelated influences of ourselves, others, and our environments in shaping our experiences and the knowledge that stems from them. This multidimensional narrative understanding of teacher knowledge suggests that it should be thought of as fluid and contextual, and that inquiries regarding teacher knowledge should likewise position it as such according to consideration of these multiple dimensions and perspectives.

Further elaborating on understandings of teacher knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly (2004) carefully distinguish between *teacher knowledge* and *knowledge for teachers*. Knowledge for teachers is something teachers possess similar to a tool that may be employed in practice with more or less skill depending on circumstances. This is knowledge that is commodified, produced by others, including researchers, policy makers,

and curriculum developers, for acquisition by teachers. In contrast, teacher knowledge is “knowledge that comes from experience, is learned in context and is expressed in practice” (p. 579). My intent was to structure the course and community-based field experiences in ways that would enable students to interpret their experiences and add to their teacher knowledge, rather than having them view information from these experiences primarily as knowledge for teachers.

Following their framing of thinking about teacher knowledge in a multi-dimensional narrative inquiry space, Connelly and Clandinin (2000) approach their second question of “What is teacher knowledge?” (p. 320). They address this inquiry by presenting two interrelated concepts of *professional knowledge landscapes* and *personal practical knowledge*. Similar to their multidimensional narrative inquiry space, these two concepts embody distinct yet complementary perspectives from which to consider teacher knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin observe that, “every teacher works in a particular setting in which things are known in certain ways” (p. 322). They refer to this setting as a professional knowledge landscape and emphasize that one of its most prominent features is the way in which it is dependent on the outside world. Influences such as governmental and school policies, curriculum, administration, and staff are all provided as examples of *conduits* for how teacher knowledge is shaped by outside forces. Likewise, Connelly and Clandinin emphasize that teachers live their professional lives in both places *in- and out-of-the classroom, places* and that these out-of-classroom places are where teachers reconcile such conduit transmissions in the cover stories of teaching they tell. In contrast, in-classroom places are “a safe place for living out secret stories of teaching” (p. 323). Whereas professional knowledge landscapes are contextual and point

outward, personal practical knowledge is individual and points inward. These are the personal perspectives and experiences that teachers bring to their practices and refer to both what teachers *say* and *do*. Together, these multiple and varied accounts of teaching in the form of *secret*, *cover*, and *sacred stories* create *nested stories* in which teachers are central characters, and serve as the way they live, think about, make meaning of, and tell about their experiences and practices. Both personal practical knowledge and professional landscapes provided me with ways to think about teacher knowledge in relation to my inquiry. Through telling stories related to their student teaching experiences, I gained insight into how their interpretations of their community-based field experiences shaped their personal practical knowledge of teaching. These stories also revealed the ways in which their encounters with the professional knowledge landscape related to their student teaching placements verified or challenged this knowledge.

Narrative in Teacher Education

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize that these understandings of teachers' lives, knowledge, and identities have important implications for teacher education. They observe,

Basically a teacher education programme that is concerned with teacher knowledge begins with what preservice teachers already know, in contrast with knowledge that should be taught to them. Working from a perspective on teacher knowledge means that teacher education focuses on both personal practical knowledge and the professional knowledge landscape (p. 99).

Shifting the orientation towards teacher knowledge privileges the identities and

experiences of preservice teachers in ways that view them as capable learners who also have valuable perspectives regarding their own learning and teacher education experiences. Thus narrative understandings and analysis of teacher knowledge and identity provide tools for investigating both how preservice teachers make meaning of their teacher education experiences, as well as how programs can be improved based on their interpretations. Narratives have been used in teacher education in relation to community-based field experiences (Coffey, 2010). Through reflective narratives, preservice teachers analyzed their experiences in ways that encouraged them to connect to their identity and knowledge related to community, education, and diversity. Autobiographical and reflective narratives student participants composed provided insight into how their teacher stories to live by and knowledge was shaped and shifted through their experiences throughout the inquiry.

Summary

In order to meet the needs of all students, education and teaching must promote and support diversity in ways that acknowledge and validate students' diverse backgrounds, identities, experiences, and interests (Banks, 2009). This necessitates approaches to teacher education that attend to issues related to diversity and promote multicultural and culturally responsive teaching practices (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Knowledge of students and their communities is central to these approaches (Sleeter, 2008c). However, many preservice teachers enter and graduate from programs without opportunities to investigate the important role of community in relation to education and diversity (Koerner & Abdul-Tawwab, 2006). Community-based field experiences provide potentially valuable approaches to exploring these issues in an effort to promote

and support more caring and responsive teaching and learning practices. More research as to how these experiences are interpreted by preservice teachers, especially in terms of their identity, knowledge, and practices is needed to better understand how to effectively integrate these experiences into broader approaches to teacher education for diversity (Sleeter, 2001; Cooper, 2007). Using narrative understandings of teacher experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), and knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), I sought to gain insight into how preservice teachers interpreted their community-based field experiences in a university teacher education course, as well as how these interpretations shaped their knowledge and shifted their identities as teachers. These understandings provided insight both into my own practices as a teacher educator, as well as implications for integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education. Though this review, I have positioned my work in relation to existing literature, as well as identified ways in which it adds to research on community-based learning in teacher education and the ways in which preservice teachers' identity, knowledge, and practices are shaped by their teacher education experiences.

CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY PROCESS

Introduction

My inquiry considers the following wonderings: How do preservice teachers interpret their community-based field experiences as part of a university teacher education course? How do these interpretations shift their identities as teachers and shape their teacher knowledge? Based on these considerations, what are implications for integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education? The purpose of this inquiry is to gain insight and understandings into how preservice teachers' interpretations of their experiences shape their identities through informing their personal practical knowledge of teaching in an effort to improve teacher education. The complexities of inquiring into the experiences and understandings of participants as we interacted within the context of our course while simultaneously shifting among varied roles of student, educator, learner, teacher, teacher educator, and researcher required me to examine data from multiple perspectives. Entering into this inquiry, I was guided by narrative understandings of experience, identity and knowledge as well as a critical perspective. This chapter explores the theoretical understandings of narrative inquiry as informed by a critical qualitative approach, as well as presents an explanation and rationale for its use in this inquiry. It includes a description of the proposed research context and participants as well as data, tools, analysis, and representation. The chapter concludes with examining issues particularly relevant to the inquiry.

Inquiry Process

Critical Qualitative Research

This inquiry was informed and guided by a critical understanding and approach to qualitative research. It recognizes that “...most research exists in a complicated web of power, neoliberalism, patriarchy, Western linear thinking and elitism,” and attempts to “situate a humanistic research paradigm, which cannot be separated from the political” (Steinberg, 2012, p. ix). A critical perspective acknowledges the broadly pervasive inequities of our economic, social, and political systems and seeks to address and challenge them through research specifically focused on promoting social justice through action and transformative change. Thus, an important aspect of critical research is that it goes beyond description to demonstrate what changes are needed (Shields, 2012). However, its potential has yet to be fully realized, with many scholars from critical perspectives emphasizing theoretical over empirical studies (Shields, 2012). Therefore, my narrative approach to this inquiry is grounded in the experiential (Dewey, 1938) and practical (Schwab, 1970) while still informed by a critical perspective that recognizes a broader sociopolitical context and a need for social change. In combining these approaches to inquire in-depth into the lives and experiences of my participants, I sought to incorporate the importance of experience emphasized in narrative research, as well as the privileging of voices and issues often marginalized or omitted that is emphasized in critical research.

Narrative Inquiry

While narrative research has well-established histories and traditions in many fields, including education, and has been increasingly employed in studying educational

experiences, narrative inquiry remains a relatively recent methodological approach to educational research (Xu & Connelly, 2010). Narrative inquiry is a comprehensive research methodology that understands narrative as both phenomena and method in which “Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Through *experiencing* (method) *experience* (phenomena), the narrative inquiry process is an experiential and shared endeavor among researchers and participants collaboratively engaged in understanding and making meaning of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) observe that, “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p.2). They draw on Dewey’s (1998) understanding that life, experience, and education are intertwined as a basis for their conceptualization of experience as being fundamentally narrative and assert that we recall, tell, listen, and retell the experiences of our storied lives using narrative structures (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) extend Dewey’s ideas on experience to rationalize that, because “experience happens narratively,” (p. 19) it is by examining the narratives of our experience and of self that their meanings and importance are best understood.

Clandinin (1992) has described narrative inquiry as the “storying and restorying of our narratives of educational experience” (p. 126). Connelly and Clandinin (2006) provide the following understanding of narrative inquiry:

Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially,

lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 477)

Drawing on Schwab's (1973) notion of commonplaces, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) identified *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place* as three commonplaces serving as dimensions that define the narrative inquiry space. The commonplace of temporality recognizes that "Events under study are in temporal transition" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Experience exists on a continuum of past, present, and future, and must be understood as always in process and transition. The commonplace of sociality recognizes that experience is interactive and attends to both personal and social influences. Personal conditions refer to internal considerations of "the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" of inquirers and participants; whereas, social conditions refer to external considerations of the surrounding environment, people and other forces (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). The commonplace of place recognizes that all experiences "take place some place" and refers to "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Together, these

commonplaces form the basis of understanding narrative inquiry as a “multi-dimensional exploration of experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 476). Narrative inquiry necessitates a “simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479).

Movement through these dimensions occurs in four directions: *inward* and *outward*, *backward* and *forward* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Inward refers to internal considerations such as feelings, while outward refers external considerations such as the environment. Backward and forward refer to the temporality of past, present, and future. Narrative research requires simultaneous moving in each direction in order to consider an experience from multiple perspectives within the multidimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Each direction is important and offers a new angle from which an experience may be explored and examined. Conceptualizing experience as a continuum, one that is multidimensional as well as multidirectional, provides narrative inquirers with ways to move within that continuum in ways that enable us to continually evaluate and reevaluate the meaning of experiences with regard to past, present, and future interpretations and reinterpretations. Such considerations allow for new interpretations as experiences are continually lived, told, retold, and relived. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2012) observe:

As narrative inquirers, we invite researchers to not only understand the current contexts and constraints in lived experiences but rethink the contexts and constraints and think of new ways to be in relationship in their own experiences related to the phenomenon of inquiry. It is in

interpretation of experience where story resides and the potential for telling, retelling, and reliving emerge. (p. 3)

It is, perhaps, in these imagined possibilities (Greene, 1995) of interpretation and reinterpretation where the greatest potential for narrative inquiry lies, as it enables researchers to envision positive alternative and work towards transformative change. My interest lies in inquiring into how participants perceive their experiences and how those perceptions influence who they are and what they know as teachers, as well as to consider alternative interpretations and possibilities for teacher education. Thus narrative inquiry is ideal because of its emphasis on the telling, listening, reimagining, and retelling of stories that encourages interpretations of multiple perspectives through both broadly and narrowly focused lenses.

Relationship between researcher and researched. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasize that, “relationship is the key to what it is that narrative inquirers do” (p. 189). The unique relationship among researchers and participants distinguishes narrative inquiry from other research approaches (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry perceives researchers and participants as collaborators working together to co-navigate the inquiry process to co-create research texts. Each is recognized as bringing valuable and necessary perspectives to the process that reflect individual storied lives and lived experiences. As opposed to the “inners” and “outers” in what has been termed “blitzkrieg ethnography” (Rist, 1980), narrative inquirers live and work in-depth alongside participants. Thus, “the narrative researcher’s experience is always a dual one, always the inquirer experiencing the experience and also being a part of the experience itself,” and indeed, “we are in the parade we presume to study” (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000, p. 81). This feels especially true in this inquiry that I, along with my participants, entered into after having already worked alongside each other during our course. This relational approach to research reflects my constructivist views of teaching and learning and enabled me to continue working with participants in ways built on our established relationships as co-facilitators of teaching and learning.

Narrative inquiry in teacher education. Craig (2011) observes, “because teacher education is inextricably linked to teachers’ lives and narrative inquiry studies lives in motion, the link between teacher education and narrative inquiry could not be stronger” (p. 20). Narrative inquiry recognizes the importance of experience in shaping the personal and professional identities that inform teaching and learning knowledge and practices. Clandinin (1992) asserts:

Too often we look at teacher education as separate from the ongoing lives of teachers and student teachers. We pull out the years of teacher education to examine them. In doing so, we separate teacher education experiences from the pasts and futures of our student teachers’ lives. We do not create space to acknowledge either the ways they have already written their lives prior to teacher education or to the ways they continue to live their stories in the context of teacher education. (p.124)

By imbedding opportunities for students to tell and retell their stories of experience throughout our course, I sought to promote recognition and consideration of the myriad factors (e.g. personal, social, political, temporal) that influence our thoughts and actions so that students might become more aware of how they both consciously and unconsciously shape their personal practical knowledge of teaching and learning

(Connelly and Clandinin, 2000) in ways that shift their stories to live by as teachers. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2004) this is knowledge that “comes from experience, is learned in context and is expressed in practice” (p. 579). Specifically, I hoped to facilitate the awareness that this knowledge is inextricably linked to their own experiences as learners as well as to their presuppositions and perceptions of the world.

Embedded in my investigation of participants’ experiences was the notion of change. I was interested in how both their experiences as well as how telling and retelling those experiences changed their perceptions and therefore knowledge and identities. Conle (1997) acknowledges that there is pressure to justify narrative in relation to changes in teacher behavior. She observes that through listening to, telling, and retelling stories, we become participants in those stories, and that that participation alters our perceptions. She observes:

When we hear a particular story with a particular content, it is not the content as such that influences our life, as much as what the listening to the story does to beliefs, feelings, memories and so forth that we bring to it. The effect comes through our participatory involvement in the story. (p 214)

Based on this, Conle reasons that this accounts for why students find listening to each other’s stories of educational experiences interesting. She concludes by observing:

All of these stories activate belief structures and information that the listeners bring to a colleague's story. The story affects what student teachers bring to it as they listen. The effect a story has on listeners' lives occurs through the changes it effects in what they bring to it as they listen.

They don't have to even believe what they hear; change still occurs.

(p.216)

Narrative inquiry provides a basis for investigating both how participants made meaning of their experiences, as well as how those experiences, through telling, listening, and retelling them together, shifted their interpretations, thereby shaping their stories to live by and knowledge as teachers.

Situating the Inquiry

Context

One section of a semester-long three-credit university education course, Community-based Education, in which I served as instructor provided the context for this inquiry. When I taught it, this course was one option for satisfying a requirement for both undergraduate and graduate Education students seeking certification. The purpose of the course was to model constructivist teaching and learning by providing participants with ongoing opportunities to engage in a critical approach to examining educational issues related to community, education, and diversity. It emphasized promoting understanding and appreciation of the connection between schools and communities, as well as on teaching and learning knowledge and practices that acknowledged and affirmed students' diverse experiences, identities, and interests. Themes focused on included teaching and learning, multicultural education, school and community connections, and local to global connections. My intent was to provide students with teaching and learning opportunities that would promote and develop cultural responsiveness that emphasized the importance of learning about students and their communities and using that knowledge in teaching and learning practices.

I taught the only section of this course in the last semester it was offered. The university's teacher education program was transitioning to a new degree plan for several of its program areas, and it was eliminated, with some elements integrated into a new course, Twenty-First Century Learner. Due to these changes, enrollment in the course was smaller than usual, with only 16 students. Additionally, the course met once a week during the afternoon for three hours. This unique situation provided me with greater flexibility than might otherwise be present in a course with multiple sections, more students, or that met in the evening to accommodate students' teaching observation and student teaching placements. Given this context, my intention was to structure the course around a series of community-based field experiences. These included visiting local community organizations, collaborating with students at a local high school for an interview project, and exploring the community surrounding their school. These field components of the course provided a basis for shared experiences as well as consideration of the concepts of community and education in a variety of contexts. It was my intent that they also promote analysis, discussion, and reflection on issues related to community, education, and diversity, focusing on how these issues influenced and were influenced by broader educational and societal contexts. The course was structured using autobiographical and reflective narratives. Students composed autobiographical narratives of their journey to teaching and their experiences with community, education, and diversity in school, and wrote reflective narratives following each community-based field experience, as well as a final narrative at the conclusion of the course analyzing and reflecting on their experiences.

Community-Based Field Experiences

Throughout the semester, we engaged in five community-based field experiences in three different communities, with two experiences occurring at the same site, a local high school. My intent was to facilitate interactions that enabled students to experience community in a variety of contexts that would encourage them to consider issues related to community, education, and diversity in new ways. These field experiences began in the fifth week of the course, after students had constructed social identity representations and composed autobiographical narratives related to their decision to teach and their own experiences with education, community, and diversity. These early campus-based classes served to introduce, analyze, discuss, and reflect on ideas and themes from the course and encouraged students to consider their personal experiences in relation to course readings and activities. After completing our first community-based field experience, a visit to an organization and tour of the community surrounding the university, we spent our next class on campus devoted to sharing and discussing our reflections, as well as preparing for subsequent field experiences. We engaged in the remaining field experiences over the next several weeks, first to a neighborhood center located further outside the city, then to a local high school and surrounding area in a community adjacent to the university, and finally returning to the high school again. Again, campus based meetings served as opportunities to devote extensive time to sharing our experiences. Additionally, we held discussions at both the high school and a local café in the community as part of those field based experiences. The remaining few weeks of the course were dedicated to presentations of Community Snapshot projects and sharing of Final Narratives.

Pseudonyms are used throughout this inquiry in the descriptions of these field experiences, as well as in references to specific places and people.

University community. This community-based field experience was comprised of visiting a local arts-based organization and touring the surrounding community, in which the university is also located. Located in what was once, and is still often referred to as one of the city's former wards, and is one of the city's oldest African-American communities. The organization, in operation for over a decade, is dedicated to transforming community through local art, history, and culture, and has developed several programs, both artistically and socially based, devoted to neighborhood revitalization, historic preservation, community service, and youth education. I selected this organization and community because of its proximity to the university and its example of a grass roots community-based organization that has successfully used local resources and involvement to positively impact its community. Its proximity to the university was also important, as I saw this as an opportunity for students to learn more about the community surrounding the campus. Finally, the history of the community provided multiple connections to issues related to community, education, and diversity, including recent issues involving school defunding and gentrification. Through this experience, I also sought to provide students with opportunities to consider the broader sociopolitical context of education.

Neighborhood center. Similar to our visit in *University Community*, this field experience consisted of visiting a community-based organization, a comprehensive neighborhood center, in a community further from the university. This community was originally outside the city, but has since been enveloped by urban sprawl. It is one of the

most ethnically and culturally diverse neighborhoods in the city. Though initially locally founded many years ago, the organization has evolved and grown considerably over time. This neighborhood center is one location among similar developments by a larger institution that receives both large-scale public and private funding. The comprehensive scale and nature of this center, which includes a charter school, adult and community learning, banking services, and recreational activities provided an opportunity for students to experience a larger-scale initiative that, though involved community partnerships, was also part of a much bigger organization than the one in *University Community*. Through this experience, I sought to offer multiple interpretations and perspectives as to what community organizations and involvement could look like. Additionally, since this community has a high immigrant population, I viewed it as connecting to issues related to community, education, and diversity in ways that were both similar and different from our previous experience in *University Community*. I saw this as an opportunity for students to further consider a broader sociopolitical context from additional and new perspectives.

City high school collaborative. This field experience entailed collaborating with a class of juniors at a local high school, located in another historic ward adjacent to the university, to dialogue about perspectives and issues related to education. Prior to meeting, both university and high school students developed a series of questions related to teaching and learning experiences. University students focused on inquiries related to the high school students' learning and school experiences, as well as on their perspectives related to community, education, and diversity, while the high school students mainly focused on inquiries related to the university students' experiences preparing for and

attending college. After developing a series of questions, the groups met on two occasions and, in pairs or small groups, discussed their questions. The rationale for this collaborative was that it would provide students with the opportunity to articulate their perspectives and experiences, enabling them not only to offer valuable insights but also to reflect on their own thinking about their educational experiences. Its position as a historic urban school, currently serving a predominately Latino population (approximately 98%), also offered many students an opportunity to experience a school context different from their own. Additionally, I intended this experience to serve as a possibility for preservice teachers as to how they could connect with their own students and gain valuable knowledge with regard to their experiences and perspectives that they could use in their practice.

City high school community snapshot. Following their collaboration at the local high school, students were instructed to work in groups to explore the community surrounding the school. As part of their investigation, they were tasked with documenting their exploration with 10 photographs that showcased their experiences that would form the basis of presentations in class. Guidelines for the images were provided, and students were asked to capture images they felt were representative of the community according to general guidelines (e.g. something historic, something that reflects the community is changing, something that could encourage people to come to the community, something that could be improved, something that illustrates community involvement), as well as any additional images they wanted to add.

Participants

The participants in this inquiry were comprised of three preservice teacher education students who were enrolled in the course. Participants for this study were sought and selected among these former students. The invitation to participate was extended to all students, and expressed that I was interested in conducting research related to their interpretations of their course experience. Five former students initially expressed an interest, and of these five, three were selected based on their progress in the program that would enable them to complete student teaching during the course of the inquiry. No attempt was made to achieve demographic representation. Instead I was interested in beginning with students' personal experiences and knowledge, irrespective of cultural background, though participants could be considered to represent both dominant and non-dominant backgrounds. All participants are referred to using pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. The first participant, Abby, is a White, European American female. She was born and raised in Texas and has spent approximately half of her life living in a suburb west of Houston, after moving from a suburb outside of a large city in North Texas. During the course of this inquiry Abby successfully completed her student teaching and graduated with an undergraduate degree in Education and a Science 4-8 certification. The second participant, Hande, is a Turkish female. She was born and raised in Turkey, and her husband's career took them to Russia and California prior to their move to Houston, where they have been living for the past several years. She is currently a senior completing her student teaching and will be graduating with an undergraduate degree in Education and a Math 4-8 certification. The third participant, Jackie, is a White, European American female. She was born in a small

Midwestern town and lived there through elementary school, when she moved with her family to a suburb south of Houston. She was a senior completing her teaching and working towards an undergraduate degree in Education with a Social Studies 4-8 certification, though events related to her family necessitated that she move out of state prior to graduating. She is currently completing her degree at another university near her new home.

Field Texts

Data for this proposed inquiry were comprised of field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in various forms drawn from multiple sources of the three participants and myself. Clandinin and Connelly observe that, “Field texts aid the inquirer to move back and forth between full involvement with participants and distance from them,” as well as “assist memory to fill in the richness, nuance, and intricacy of the lived stories and the landscape” (p. 80). Through ongoing reference to and reflecting on field texts, researchers are able to move between records of the experience being investigated and records of themselves experiencing that experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Field texts included archival texts from the course in the form of students’ autobiographical and reflective narratives, course syllabus and materials, teaching journal, as well as texts from my interactions with participants following the conclusion of the course, including participant reflections, interview notes and transcripts, and research journal. Exemplars from the field texts serve as a basis for representing participants’ storied experiences and illuminating and illustrating themes from the inquiry.

Archival coursework. Over the course of the semester, students composed and shared a series of autobiographical and reflective narratives. Analyzing these narratives

provided insight into the meaning participants made of their course experiences as well as revealed their stories to live by and personal practical knowledge of teaching and learning.

- **Personal Narrative** – Students were instructed to begin the course by reflecting on their journey to becoming educators, and to write a 3-4 page narrative detailing the experiences that they identified as being significant in influencing their desire to teach. In it, they were instructed to discuss and analyze 1) at least three important experiences that contributed to their decision to become an educator; 2) how these influenced their decision and informed their knowledge of teaching and learning; and 3) what implications they had for their future educational practices.
- **Educational Narrative** – Following the completion of their Personal Narratives, students were instructed to continue their personal reflections by reflecting on their own school experiences, and to write a 3-5 page narrative detailing their educational experiences prior to college. In it, they were instructed to discuss and analyze 1) the educational background of their parents and grandparents; 2) the racial, cultural, and class composition of the schools they attended; and 3) the racial, cultural, and class composition of the communities in which they lived and went to school.
- **Reflective narratives** – During the semester, as part of our field, we visited and interacted with residents and students in several local communities. After each visit, students were instructed to write 2-3 page reflections on their experiences. In these, they were instructed to discuss and analyze 1) their expectations prior to visiting; 2) their experiences at the organization; and 3)

connections among their experience, class discussions and readings on community and multicultural education, and teaching and learning applications.

- **Final Narrative** – As a culminating project, students were instructed to reflect holistically on their course experiences, and to write a 5-7 page narrative detailing significant aspects that had impacted their perspectives and knowledge of teaching and learning. These were intended to reflect students' cumulative experiences and learning throughout the semester.

Archival course material. Materials related to the course, including the syllabus, assignments, readings, and activities also served to provide information related to course and community-based field experiences. While such documents are often overlooked or dismissed, they are relevant in that they provide additional and important context to the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Teaching and research journals. Throughout the course, I maintained a teaching journal to document my thoughts and experiences. I made notes in this journal during class, wrote reflections directly following class upon returning to my office, as well as at other various times when reflecting on events that occurred, issues that arose, or in preparation for upcoming class meetings. Journals can serve as powerful texts in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This is largely because they often reflect the process of puzzling through the inquiry experience. Further, they serve as an “*active recording*” to suggest the ways in which we see the researcher expressing her personal practical knowing in her work,” as well as “to highlight that the notes are an active reconstruction of the events rather than a passive recording, which would suggest that the

events could be recorded without the researcher's interpretation" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5). Thus, journals provide an additional means through which researchers participate in co-constructing meaning of the inquiry process. I maintained a research journal throughout the inquiry. Similar to my teaching journal, this served as an additional space in which I captured and reflected on the ongoing inquiry process.

Interviews. Interviews between researchers and participants may become part of the ongoing narrative record through transcription and note taking (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). A series of four interviews lasting approximately 1 1/2 hours (6 hours total) was conducted with each participant. These interviews focused on participants' experiences and understandings related to education, community, and diversity prior to entering our course, perspectives on community and education, community-based field and course experiences, and student teaching experiences. These interviews provided me with additional insight into participants' experiences and understandings prior to, during, and after our course. These conversations revealed how their interpretations of our community-based field experiences shaped their teacher knowledge and identity as were reflected in the stories they told about their course and student teaching experiences.

Analytic and Interpretive Tools.

The transformation from field to research texts is an ongoing process that is layered in complexity. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) observe that, "It would be tempting to view this overall process of analysis and interpretation in the move from field texts to research texts as a series of steps. However, this is not how narrative inquiries are lived out. Negotiation occurs from beginning to end" (p. 132). These negotiations rely on a variety of analytic and interpretive tools aligned to the nature of the inquiry, its

participants, and available field texts. Following are the tools I used in the analysis and interpretation of field texts as I transformed them into research texts. In using these, I adopted Maxine Greene's (1995) approach of seeing my inquiry both big and small.

Greene (1995) elaborates:

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. The vision that sees things small looks at schooling through the lenses of a system—a vantage point of power or existing ideologies—taking a primarily technical point of view.... When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable" (pp. 10-11).

Broadening. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe that, *broadening*, occurs when we generalize:

An event recalled will be used to make a general comment about a person's character, values, or way of life or, perhaps, about the social and intellectual climate of the times. These generalizations appear as character and social descriptions, long-handed answers to the questions What sort of person are you? or What kind of society is it? Although these questions are interesting, they are not as stated, narrative ones. A useful rule of

thumb is to avoid making such generalizations and to concentrate on the event, in a process we have termed *burrowing* (p. 11).

Broadening was used to contextualize the studied experiences within a broader educational landscape by attending to more foundational considerations related to the inquiry. This approach reflects Greene's notion of seeing small in that it addresses to broader systemic perspectives.

Burrowing. In contrast to broadening, *burrowing* focuses on "the event's emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities," and asks "why the event is associated with these feelings and what their origins might be.... This way of approaching the event is aimed at reconstructing a story of the event from the point of view of the person at the time the event occurred" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). Burrowing was used to explore the nuanced particularities of the studied experiences. This approach reflects Greene's notion of seeing big in that it focuses on particular details that cannot be easily measured or quantified, but that often embody the essence of experience.

Restorying. Restorying is the process of moving inwards, outwards, backwards, and forwards through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to consider how meaning-making of an experience may shift and change, thereby creating, "a new story of self which changes the meaning of the event, its description, and its significance for the larger life story the person may be trying to live" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). Thus restorying reflects the process by which experiences are interpreted and reinterpreted through living, telling, retelling, and reliving.

Tracing. Keyes (2012) describes:

The tool of tracing allows me to more specifically describe my process of reproducing various storied images together to one central location – just as a child might trace three or four images of interest onto one piece of paper...it appeared valuable to me in making sense of my own experiences as I collected and sketched them in one place for the purpose of sense-making. (Keyes & Craig, 2012, pp. 27-8)

Drawing on the notion of tracing enabled me to collect and layer stories reflecting multiple perspectives and dimensions into a shared space for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. This process encouraged additional connections among multiple narrative dimensions, thereby allowing further possible interpretations to emerge.

Debriefing. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) observe, “As narrative inquirers, we share our writing on a work-in-progress basis with response communities...we ask others to read our work and to respond in ways that help us see other meanings that might lead to further retelling” (p. 60). Throughout the inquiry, I shared my field, interim, and research texts with participants as co-creators and co-constructors in meaning-making. This promoted dialogue and reflection regarding participants’ perceptions and interpretations of their experiences and my own in an effort to engender resonance among participants in relation to the representations in the research text.

Research Texts

Connelly and Clandinin elaborate on the challenge of transforming field texts into research texts by acknowledging that, “Part of the difficulty in writing narratives is in finding ways to understand and portray the complexity of the ongoing stories being told

and retold in the inquiry” (p 9). The ongoing storying and restorying of experiences among narrative inquirers and participants throughout the inquiry process creates continued opportunities for interpretation and reinterpretation in which the meanings derived shift and change.

Stories to live by. Resonating with Connelly and Cladinin’s (1999) narrative understanding of teacher identity as stories to live by, I adopted this as a basis for representing the research text. My initial interest in the image of stories to live by as potential analytic and representational approach was further influenced by Nelson’s (2003; 2008) use of stories to live by to convey shifting stories to live by of four educators resulting from a cross-cultural immersion professional development experience in Kenya. In my own inquiry, I used initial autobiographical narratives composed and shared by participants’ from our course, along with interviews to construct what I viewed as their entering stories to live by with which they began the course. I used a similar process, along with interviews about their student teaching experiences to construct exiting stories to live by with which they concluded the inquiry. Laying these stories alongside one another, I sensed the ways in which participants’ teacher knowledge and identities were shaped and shifted as a result of their experiences.

Resonance. Conle (1996) uses the concept of resonance to further describe and elaborate on the process and impact of listening to and telling stories. She defines resonance by explaining, “When a story reverberates within us and calls forth another in an echo-like fashion, we pull that remembered story out of a previous context and place it into a new one” (p 301). Resonance is helpful in understanding how the sharing of stories reverberates through our collective consciousness to inspire unique responses

from each individual that promote new connections and understandings as we continually retell and restory our experiences and lives. This concept of resonance served as a basis for both using narrative inquiry throughout the course as well as for analyzing how we collectively and individually made meaning from our experiences.

Considerations

Ethics. Ethical considerations are always a primary concern when involving students in research, especially when the instructor also functions as researcher. To address these concerns, students were not solicited to participate in the inquiry until after the course had concluded and final grades had been released. Additionally, pseudonyms protect the identity of all participants. I fully informed and engaged participants throughout the inquiry process regarding the purpose of study. I also shared field, interim, and research texts throughout the process and invited participant feedback and negotiation of composing final texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This enabled participants to contribute to the meaning-making process and helped to ensure that representations reflect participants' lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Trustworthiness. I also recognized the need to address general concerns about the validity of my research. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) assert that, "like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability" (p 7). They suggest that such research should instead seek to convey trustworthiness through presenting readers with a depth and richness that enables a kind of vicarious experience in which they can interpret the events in relation to their own experiences. In order to facilitate this, I incorporated multiple field texts to reflect varying perspectives. I also interpreted texts through multiple methods to strengthen the

plausibility of my findings. Finally, by adhering closely to participants' original words, the research text assisted in cultivating a vicarious experience that resonates with readers and invites them to interact with the texts through their own meaning-making of the experiences presented (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

I also remained conscious of the temptation to smooth stories and avoid the potential pitfall of a "Hollywood plot" in which everything works out (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). My relative inexperience as a teacher educator served to ground and remind me that this investigation would doubtlessly reveal much that can be improved upon. Presenting participants' words with transparency also assisted in ensuring that experiences were captured and conveyed with complexity and detail. This study is not driven by directional hypothesis but by an inquiry into how students' experiences informed their perceptions and knowledge of community, education, and diversity. My purpose was to explore both these experiences and my own practices in an effort to, as Clandinin (1992) states, "to have other readers raise questions about their practices, their ways of knowing" (p. 135).

Context. One specific criticism of narrative is that it emphasizes the individual over the social context (Connelly, and Clandinin, 1990). They further emphasize that it is important that both researcher and participants are given voice within the relationship. Similarly, Kitchen (2009) observes that, "it is critical that we see ourselves not as islands unto ourselves but as individual teacher educators situated in contexts with temporal, social, and spatial dimensions" (p. 48). I addressed these concerns by using multiple field texts and analytic approaches that empathize the importance of both my students' as well as my own experiences. Further, through ongoing discussions and telling and

retelling of our narratives, we created a space in which we collaboratively and collectively shared and reflected on our experiences. In this way, the experiences of each individual became embedded in a greater social context of shared experiences.

Summary

Through this investigation I sought to gain insight into how participants interpreted and made meaning of their community-based field experiences and how those interpretations shaped their knowledge and shifted their identities as teachers. I also sought insight into my own practices as a novice teacher educator and how these experiences shaped my own perceptions alongside those of participants, my former students. I used narrative inquiry informed by a critical qualitative perspective in an effort to provide multiple ways of interpreting multiple field texts so that I could present a rich, deep, and complex account of our varied experiences and perspectives. In doing so, I sought to add to the discourse surrounding teacher education in ways that promote both new insights and questions into our practices and ways of knowing.

CHAPTER FOUR: STORIED EXPERIENCES

Introduction

This inquiry explored how Abby, Hande, and Jackie, three preservice teachers interpreted their community-based field experiences as part of a community-based teacher education course in which I served as instructor. It centered on how these interpretations shifted their identities, stories to live by, (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and shaped their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of teaching and learning. Reflecting the temporality of the inquiry and recognizing the connections among past, present, and future experiences, the collected stories of each participant are presented as triptychs. A story in three parts, focused on a common theme, with the intention that they be read and appreciated together, these triptychs present each participant's experiences prior to, during, and after our course related to how they interpreted their community-based field experiences.

The first section centered on what I refer to as participants' entering stories to live by, as I understood them, upon beginning our course. The stories in this section focused on how Abby, Hande, and Jackie saw themselves as coming to teach, as well as their experiences with community, education, and diversity. Entering stories to live by were composed from autobiographical narratives written at the beginning of our course and conversations from interviews. These stories to live by provided insight into the experience and knowledge each participant brought into our course, and the ways in which these informed her interpretations of her community-based field experiences. These entering stories also helped me to consider the ways in which each participant's knowledge and stories to live by shifted throughout the inquiry.

The second section centered on participants' interpretations of their community-based field experiences. The stories in this section focused on how Abby, Hande, and Jackie interpreted and made meaning from their experiences in ways that shaped their knowledge and shifted their stories to live by. These stories were composed using reflective narratives written in our course following each experience and conversations from interviews, reflecting participants' living, telling, retelling, and reliving of these experiences over the course of the inquiry. These stories reflected how each community-based field experience added to understandings of community, education, and diversity.

The third section centered on what I refer to as participants' exiting stories to live by, as I understood them, at the conclusion of the inquiry. The stories in this section reflected ways in which Abby, Hande, and Jackie viewed their community-based and course experiences as influencing their student teaching experiences. Exiting stories to live by were composed from a Final Narrative written by participants and the end of our course and conversations from interviews. Through story telling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) of their student teaching experiences, I gained a sense of how participants' interpretations informed their teacher personal practical knowledge. These exiting stories are presented in contrast to participants' entering stories to reflect their shifted knowledge and stories to live by, as well as provide for future wonderings.

Abby's Storied Experience

Abby was born and raised in a metropolitan area near a large city in North Texas before moving to a small city in the metropolitan area of Houston in the sixth grade, where she currently lives. She describes her parents as high school sweethearts who married and began a family soon after graduating, with her father working and eventually

starting his own business while her mother was a stay-at-home-mom. She is the third of four children, with an older sister and brother as well as a younger brother, and was the first of her siblings to pursue a college education. During the course of this inquiry, Abby successfully completed her education coursework and student teaching, going on to graduate with her bachelor's degree in Education with a teaching certification in 4-8 Science. She has since been hired by a local school district as a designated substitute teacher while continuing to coach gymnastics part-time. She plans to seek a full-time teaching position for the coming academic school year.

Entering Stories to Live By

Coming to teach. Abby's stories to live by related to becoming a teacher reflected how her desire to teach was rooted in her own experiences as a student. Despite being successful in school, Abby felt that the practices of her teachers, including heavy reliance on traditional methods like lectures, memorization, and bookwork, were ineffective. Abby had long considered the possibility of entering teaching and the opportunity it presented to improve public education. However, it was not until she entered college that her experiences in an introductory biology course as well as coaching gymnastics inspired her to pursue a career in education. Each of these experiences added to Abby's entering story to live by of becoming a teacher who would improve the quality of education offered to students beyond what Abby had experienced herself.

Abby's own impression of her experiences in school contrasted sharply with those that she hoped to provide for her future students.

...I will veer away from the traditional, ineffective instruction that I received which relies heavily on memorization, boring lectures, and

bookwork, and instead will utilize a student's prior knowledge, visual aids, demonstrations, and task-based activities to teach new material...All the techniques above are educational practices that I plan to utilize in an attempt to give middle school aged children what I didn't get in school, a quality education. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

It seemed to me that Abby looked on her educational experiences primarily as exemplars of what she wanted to avoid as a teacher herself. Abby confirmed her desire to provide engaging and relevant instruction in our conversations, following a year after her participation in our community-based education course.

As a student I did not like doing worksheets or, like, writing stuff down. I'm more hands-on; I need to go out and see what something is – like for biology or geology, you can't really teach the composition of something. Like, what is this rock? What is it made out of? Well it's made out of this, this, and this. Let's show you, let's try and understand. Okay, this is where you can find it. That always helps me, relating it to real-life things, making it relevant to their everyday life. I feel like they're more likely and more inclined to remember it. (Interview excerpt)

Her desire to teach, as well as her approach, was significantly influenced by her experience in an introductory biology course. She recalled how, after hating science in high school, her college professor captivated her interest with his engaging approach.

I sat in class that first day, wrapped up...about why we study life and the purposes of biology as a science. He used real pictures he had taken, real life examples, and allowed an open discussion and questions throughout

the class period. His classroom didn't feel like school to me, it felt like I was having a two way conversation. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

Abby's interest in the course inspired dedication that eventually resulted in her becoming a leader in class that her peers looked to for assistance with experiments and questions, a position she enjoyed. This inspired Abby to enroll in a second biology course taught by her professor, and it was during this course that Abby decided she wanted to become a middle school science teacher.

[The professor] taught me how to love science and showed me the importance of being a good mentor to students. In my classroom, I plan to make learning fun like [he] did...I also plan to carry open discussions frequently in my classroom, as well as share real life examples of concepts. This way I can get my students involved and capture their interests in the subject as [he] captured mine. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

Abby's description of how her biology professor encouraged her to develop a passion for science provided me with insight into the type of teacher Abby aspired to become. For Abby, this professor and his course exemplified what teachers should do and be for their students, and part of her entering story was the importance of becoming a teacher like him, the teacher she never remembered having in school.

Abby's experience as a gymnastics instructor also contributed to her story of becoming a teacher. Through this, Abby further developed an appreciation for guiding adolescent students through the learning process while also serving as a mentor beyond the ostensible skills being taught.

I've found that I love teaching young adults. In the gym, not only do I get to teach them the fundamentals of gymnastics, but I also get to act as their life mentor, teaching them how to behave in social situations and how to voice their opinions...Acting as a gymnastics instructor has made me realize how much I love being a part of the learning process and watching students progress through certain areas. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

From these stories, I discerned the importance Abby placed on becoming a teacher different from those she had experienced in school herself. She saw herself as a teacher who would provide relevant and engaging instruction while also serving as a mentor to her students. Entering our course, Abby's identity, her story to live by, related to teaching, was one of improving education through becoming such a teacher.

Experiences with, community, education, and diversity. Abby's stories related to community, education, and diversity reflected her contrasting experiences growing up in a metropolitan area near a large city in North Texas before moving to a suburb in the metropolitan area west of Houston. Abby's stories focused on how her contrasting experiences contributed to her knowledge of diversity. She reflected that the move resulted in greater exposure to diversity, which provided her with opportunities to experience and appreciate people different from her. Abby believed that these experiences contributed to her being well rounded and having an open mind regarding differences. She further felt these traits would benefit her as a teacher by enabling her to interact more effectively with her students. These understandings supported Abby's entering stories to live by of becoming a teacher who could use her experiences with

diversity to build relationships with her students, as well as share this knowledge with them.

In her Educational Narrative, Abby described how, after moving to a city outside of Houston and as a result of being located near the boundary of her city, zoning dictated she attend school in a neighboring city, an experience she felt benefited her by exposing her to greater diversity.

Through middle and high school, I attended school in the [district]. The school and the community was made up of about 45% Hispanic/Latino, 20% African American, 30% white, and 5% Asian. Rich in cultural diversity, this atmosphere forced me to become familiar with different races and cultures, while teaching me to respect the perspectives of others...I've found that my past experiences have helped me to better understand topics that are covered in relation [to cultural diversity].

I understood that Abby viewed herself as someone who had experience with diversity, and that this experience enabled her to be more accepting of those who were different from her. These experiences with diversity contrasted with life in her previous community and school in North Texas, which was “predominantly white” and where Abby felt like she lacked exposure to diversity (Interview excerpt).

I was really glad I got the opportunity to go to that school because I feel like I'm a more well-rounded person in that sense. Because, in [first city], I was just exposed to one, I don't want to say, type of people, but that's kind of how it felt, that everyone was just the same and they didn't really keep an open mind. I don't know; I just feel like I wouldn't have

developed such an open mind about people if I hadn't been able to go to school there. (Interview excerpt)

Interested to hear more about how she believed this experience had influenced her, I encouraged Abby to elaborate on how attending her school had contributed to her perspective. She responded “just being exposed to different, to like a very wide range of different types of people and interacting with them every single day” (Interview excerpt). I wondered what Abby meant when she said “different types of people” and again asked her to elaborate on what she had said.

Um, different races, different socioeconomic statuses, gender orientation, stuff like that. I never saw anything like that in [previous city], even going back to visit. My sister went to high school over there and there was never anything like that and so she, I don't know if that contributed to her outlook on things because, she's more closed off to that kind of stuff and I'm not, and so, I don't know, I felt like that helped me a lot. (Interview excerpt)

It appeared that Abby understood diversity in terms of differences between dominant and nondominant cultures, and that her exposure to such differences promoted a tolerance in Abby that was not shared by others in her family who had not had similar experiences.

Abby also expressed her belief as to how her experience with and knowledge of diversity would benefit her as a teacher, both in building relationships with students and providing them with useful information.

I believe this exposure will enable me to better myself as an educator.

Moreover, these past experiences will help me to relate to my students. In

summary, my culturally diverse community and school district has contributed greatly to my ability to construct good relationships with my teachers and classmates. Additionally, this ability provides me with the opportunity to pass useful information to my students. (Educational narrative excerpt)

I viewed the contrasting accounts of two communities in which she lived, as well as her schooling experiences there as evidential hints (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) of Abby's identity as told through her stories to live by. I understood Abby's identity, her stories to live by, related to community, education, and diversity entering our course as reflecting her contrasting lived experiences. Abby storied herself as someone who had experienced and had knowledge of diversity. She felt these contributed towards her acceptance of those different from herself. Further, she viewed her experiences and perspectives regarding diversity as valuable resources upon which she could draw on as an educator, both in building relationships with her students, and in the knowledge she could offer them.

Community-based Field Experiences

University community. Prior to this community-based field experience, Abby expressed her perceptions of University Community as rundown and unsafe. Following an introductory discussion prior to our visit, Abby recalled that she remained unsure as to what she would encounter there. However, after our visit, Abby reflected that her experience contrasted sharply with her initial expectations, causing her to consider how her lived experience shaped her perspective. This reflection prompted Abby to recognize

how her biases conflicted with how she viewed herself. Through her telling and retelling of her experience, I sensed how Abby had both shifted and sustained her stories to live by.

In her reflective narrative written following this community-based field experience, Abby reflected that, though she was unsure of what she might encounter during our visit, she did not have high expectations for her experience.

When I was told that we would be completing one of our community-based experiences in [University Community], I hadn't the slightest clue of what I would actually encounter. Before visiting [the organization] (but after discussing it), I imagined a few, newly painted, white houses in the center of a run-down neighborhood. After I was told there would be art displayed in these houses, I envisioned being walked through these houses and told about different paintings done by African American artists and then leaving.

Abby further reflected on how her perception of the surrounding community as unsafe arose from a combination of how she had interpreted recent occurrences on campus, as well as her upbringing.

Most of all, however, I expected to enter a neighborhood with broken windows on every block and threatening people roaming the streets. In fact, when I conceptualized such a threatening environment, I was scared to drive my car. This fear was heightened when I recalled all of the crimes that had taken place on campus in previous weeks. In general, I assumed that being on campus was safer than the outskirts of campus. Moreover, I thought that if campus was no longer safe, then the outskirts of campus

were even more dangerous than usual. I believe these presumptions about the lack of safety and negativity in low-income areas roots within my upbringing. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

From her stories, I sensed the influences Abby identified as important in shaping perceptions of University Community. It appeared that, in contrast to her story already in place of accepting diversity and viewing diverse experiences as providing beneficial knowledge, Abby was initially hesitant to experience this community. It seemed that Abby's perception of the community as a dangerous and threatening place outweighed the potential benefits of the knowledge that could be gained through visiting it. Further, Abby's expectations and description of the community prior to visiting it suggest that my introduction and course resources had little impact on her perceptions.

Reflecting after our visit, Abby found her perceptions of the organization and surrounding community shifted significantly. She recalled that, contrary to her initial expectations, she found the organization to be extensive and the surrounding to have historic and cultural value.

After visiting [the organization], I realized my expectations had been askew. First of all, I expected to find only a few white houses filled with paintings...Instead, I was pleasantly surprised by how far [the organization] spread through [the community] and the beauty of the structures that lay within these boundaries. I was given the opportunity to journey through the entire community to see many historical buildings and structures. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Abby offered two examples of sites that resonated with her, a music venue and a local middle school. Abby described how each of these sites enabled her to personally connect with the community's history, culture, and issues.

The [venue] was important for me because it represented the rich, musical culture within the community – past and present. The tour guide explained to us that this community entertainment venue has been the stage for many influential musicians. In fact, according to the readings, Ray Charles, one of my all-time favorites, performed here...[The local] Middle School, on the other hand, made me see a different side of the community. During our tour, I learned the school lacks funding, which I had already anticipated. However, what I didn't know was that the funding was so poor that all of its students were without a nurse and after school programs were becoming difficult to conduct. This made me infuriated, sympathetic, and disappointed all at the same time...What was even more disturbing was that the building itself held so much historical significance – being the old [local] High School, the second African American school to open in the city – and it didn't seem right that the school was “forgotten”. During class, my table and I discussed vaccinations and how unlikely they were to occur amongst these students, which made me reevaluate things that I personally took advantage of growing up. However, I learned that parents, teachers, and other members of the community have come together to ensure after school programs and school nurses are not a thing of the past.

(Reflective narrative excerpt)

I sensed that these personal connections to her own experiences shifted Abby's perception of the community. Her experience at the middle school offered her multiple perspectives of the community, that it both faced issues of poverty, but also that it had strengths exemplified by the community involvement and action in the school. Abby further expressed how her experience had changed her perspective on safety in the community, as well as encouraged her to reconsider the meaning of community.

Most importantly, however, my perspective on safety in [University Community] has changed. Before my visit, I was convinced that [University Community] was a threatening environment. However, this was by no means the case. In fact, during and after our tour around the community, I found myself envious of the sense of community and family of the [University Community]. The tour guide, for example, knew almost everyone by first name as we passed them on the street and every one of them was friendly and willing to speak with us...I have lived in my house for over ten years, yet I don't know a single one of the neighbors on my street on a first name basis. The most interaction I have with any of them is a simple "hello" or "how are you?" (Reflective narrative excerpt)

It appeared that Abby's experience encouraged her to revise her initial perception of the community as well as to reflect on how she viewed her own community. I found it interesting that Abby expressed envy of the sense of community she observed. It seemed that while Abby emphasized the strengths she viewed the community as having, she overlooked the issues present in the community that produced the relationships she

observed. I wondered to what extent she considered that living in such anonymity might be seen by some as a privilege.

When prompted to elaborate on where her negative preconceptions regarding the community originated from, Abby expanded on ideas she had touched on in her coursework related to reflecting on the role prior experience played in influencing her perceptions. She acknowledged and emphasized the process by which her parents had been taught views regarding communities different that the predominantly white communities in which they were raised, having both grown up in Texas during integration, and how these views had been passed on to her without her awareness of them. Abby wrote that, “Throughout my life, my parents ‘trained’ me to be cautious of minority populations and poorer neighborhoods. Although my parents never blatantly said those words, it was spoken through their actions” (Reflective narrative excerpt). She further expanded on this in our conversations.

...a lot of it comes from how I was raised and how my parents were raised...because they weren't very familiar with integration and things that were happening, and I guess they passed that on to me without really understanding it...my high school opened me up to it a little bit more just because it was diverse and I went to school with lots of different people. But at the same time I felt like it was still embedded in me because that's the way that I was raised and then after we went to [the organization], I just completely changed my opinion and my mind of what hearing [University Community] and what it actually is, and just thinking like how many preconceptions have I made about other places or other

generalizations have I made about other places or generalizations that aren't really valid. (Interview excerpt)

In attributing her own beliefs to those held by her parents, it seemed that Abby recognized the complex and layered process by which, through interaction, the lived experiences of others come to inform our own. Without realizing it, Abby had adopted a story her parents lived by, that of having negative perceptions regarding minority and poor communities and people, as her own story. Further, it seemed that Abby's awareness of the ways in which her initial perception of University Community conflicted with how she storied herself as accepting of diversity prompted her to question the validity of her other preconceptions. I sensed that Abby engaged in this process of critical self-reflection in order to sustain her identity as told through her stories to live by.

This community-based field experience was the first Abby chose to reference in her Final Narrative at the end of the semester. As she retold her experience, Abby closely echoed her initial telling, but added further emphasis as to how she had interpreted its importance. She expressed that this experience had been the most influential of the semester.

This community education experience, I believe, was the most influential for me this semester. Although at first it was difficult to acknowledge, this experience forced me to face my bias and stereotypical way of thinking that had been passed down to me from my parents. I realize that I had no valid reason to be afraid of the [University Community] and that it is illogical and unfair to make presumptions about people or communities that I have never met or visited. Moreover, I am thankful to have had this

opportunity so that when I'm a teacher, I can teach my students to acknowledge and work towards preventing paranoia, stereotypes, and bias, and promoting a sense of community and teamwork. (Final Narrative excerpt)

Abby also emphasized the importance of this experience in our conversations that occurred more than a year after our course, as well as reflected on how challenging the process of reflection had been for her.

[University Community] was probably the most influential in the course for me just because my bias before going there and my preconceptions thinking the neighborhood was something that it wasn't, and I felt like the course helped me to take a look at my own bias and the perspectives that I have and to look at myself and...not make generalizations based on what I really don't know... I think kinda looking back at my own bias was probably the most challenging, kinda like really realizing, not for the first – yeah, for the first time, that I held these biases and just kinda thinking why, why is this happening, why do I feel this way? That was probably the hardest, and overcome it – which it wasn't very difficult after we had experiences outside the classroom. (Interview excerpt)

I found it interesting that Abby chose to retell her story of this community-based field experience and its influence both in her later coursework and in our conversations. It seemed that this story of awakening to her bias had become an important story for Abby both personally and professionally.

I wondered what Abby felt had encouraged her to so significantly shift her perceptions and asked her to elaborate on the basis for interpretation. Abby responded that she attributed her changing perceptions to personally experiencing the community for herself rather than simply reading about it.

...when I read something, I take it with a grain of salt, and going there and actually seeing it for myself and actually experiencing it on my own solidified it for myself. I'm not just going to take what somebody else says, I'm going to want to see it firsthand and that's what happened at [the organization], and I think that's why my opinion has completely done a 180 and I don't think that would have necessarily happened if I hadn't done something like that in the class. (Interview excerpt)

I was reminded of the importance Abby placed on experience related to teaching and learning, and I was stuck by how Abby's stories to live by related to teaching connected with those related to community and diversity. Additionally, the knowledge Abby gained through her experience became something she readily shared with others. In one of our conversations, she recalled how she conveyed her new understandings when confronted with perceptions similar to those she held prior to her experience.

One of my friends said something about [University Community], and started, you know, kind of tearing it down and they didn't really understand what it was, and so I was able to pass that knowledge on to a friend and be like, "Hey, they have this really great thing going on there" and that it's not how a lot of people think that it is. I mean they have a really great community there. (Interview excerpt)

Through her telling and retelling of this community-based field experience, I came to understand the ongoing importance it held for Abby, as well as how it had shaped her stories to live by related to teaching, community, and diversity. While her initial perceptions of the community surrounding the university had contrasted with how Abby saw herself, her experience encouraged her to reflect on those perceptions in ways that enabled her to sustain and strengthen her entering stories to live by. Further, it seemed that Abby had added to her identity and stories a vision of herself as someone who sought to recognize and address biases in both herself and others.

Neighborhood center. Abby contrasted her expectations regarding this community-based field experience with those she had prior to visiting the community surrounding the university. Abby emphasized how that experience had shaped her perceptions to the extent that she was careful to consider how similar assumptions might negatively influence her expectations visiting this local neighborhood center. As a result, she expressed that she anticipated seeing a diverse and vibrant community. While Abby admired the programs and services offered by the center, she was particularly interested in those related to nutrition, an issue that held previous interest for her. These encouraged Abby to consider educational and social issues in new ways, thereby adding layers to her earlier stories.

Abby reflected that prior to our visit to a local neighborhood center, her perception of it was that she would encounter a sense of community similar to what she had previously observed during our last experience. She attributed these expectations to our previous community-based field experience.

Before [University Community], I was distrusting of the world around me. Primarily due to my upbringing, I had created a negative schema and stereotypes for minority neighborhoods; presuming that all of “their” neighborhoods were dangerous. However, as a direct result of my experience in [University Community], my outlook on minority communities has been transformed. Moreover, since my visit to [University Community] I have continually worked towards becoming aware of my presumptions and the stereotypes our society has created; addressing them to myself, and attempting to minimize this negativity within my assumptions. In fact, I noticed this change in myself as we were discussing the [neighborhood center] in class. After discussing the location of the building and finding out that the building was located...[in] an area that is referred to as a “bad part of town” by most people familiar with the Houston area, I was not scared nor was I expecting to find a threatening environment during my visit. This was very different than my uneasy initial reaction to [University Community]. Instead, I was expecting to find what I found at [University Community], which was a great sense of community and family. In addition, when we first began to discuss the [neighborhood center] I expected to find a small building, similar to the community center in my neighborhood, with a few rooms for residents in the area to use. Furthermore, after watching the youtube video provided about the [neighborhood center], I also anticipated a colorful building

filled with people from different backgrounds...(Reflective narrative excerpt)

It seemed that Abby remained sensitive to the ways in which her previous experience contrasted with the how she saw herself in relation to diversity. I saw this story as reflecting the shifting ways in which Abby restoried her knowledge of diversity. While Abby had reconsidered some of her understanding of diversity as those different than herself, it seemed others remained unchanged. Abby also recalled being particularly impressed with the cultural diversity of the neighborhood surrounding the center, and that it prompted her to reflect on her own experiences.

I was curious as to how my life would have been different if I had grown up in a melting pot like [this community]. After much thought, I believe this experience would have enabled me to be more well-rounded. Moreover, I believe the stereotypes I hold for particular ethnic groups would be minimal. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I found it interesting that Abby wondered how her story might have changed if she had grown up in this community. While Abby considered how her understandings of diversity might have differed, she did not share other differences that she believed would have resulted from growing up in a community admittedly different from her own. I wondered to what extent Abby recognized that broader implications related to privilege her own upbringing afforded her.

The multiple programs and services offered by the center impressed Abby; however, she was most interested in their nutritional programs, as this was an issue that had previously interested her. She reflected, “although I believe all of the programs and

services offered at the center are essential to keep the community prosperous, the educational nutrition program is the most significant to me” (Reflective narrative excerpt). Abby discussed the importance of proper nutrition, and her awareness of the connection between nutrition and income inequality. She reflected that access to proper nutrition, something she viewed as essential, was dependent on income, with those in lower socio-economic areas often without access to grocery stores or the resources to afford fresh food. Abby returned to these ideas in one of our conversations. She expressed that, though she did not remember much about visiting the neighborhood center, she recalled how she connected the issue of nutrition to her teaching observation experiences, extending them to broader educational issues she had previously discussed.

I was at [a middle school] and they actually just started a new program where all the students were brought breakfast to make sure all the students would eat and it would be a balanced breakfast but before that I talked to some of the teachers there and a lot of the students wouldn’t eat at all, and I think that one of the problems in some of the lower income areas is that the students aren’t eating or they’re not eating right, because, I mean cheap food and so I think its really important that the kids are eating healthy because they’re obviously going to do better in school if they’re eating a well-balanced meal and if they’re eating regularly. I mean I can’t concentrate if I don’t have food, and you have to take into account whether some of these students might be hypoglycemic and no one would even know it because maybe they can’t afford healthcare or something like that. That’s another thing that ties back to standardized testing - can

you really measure a student's knowledge from one test without taking into account all these circumstances that are influencing their test grade?

(Interview excerpt)

It seemed that this experience provided Abby with the opportunity to consider how nutrition, something she had long been interested in, related to educational issues. I saw this as adding to Abby's understandings that student success was dependent on factors beyond her control, but that nevertheless remained important considerations teachers should acknowledge and address. Additionally, I sensed how Abby began to connect these considerations to broader equity issues.

This community-based field experience seemed to reinforce Abby's reconsiderations related to our previous experience. It seemed that it provided Abby with new opportunities to further reflect on how perceptions that contrasted with how she storied herself continued to remain part of her identity. I sensed gradual shifts in Abby's stories to live by as she began to connect her experience with broader educational issues extending beyond her previous understandings of teaching. It seemed that Abby's interpretations of her experiences continued to add to her vision of a teacher as someone who acknowledged and addressed multiple factors as influencing students' educational experiences.

City high school collaborative. Prior to this community-based field experience, Abby reflected how a previous experience with a similar group of students had influenced her and given her the impression that these students would be disinterested and disrespectful. As a result, Abby anticipated that this experience might have similar results. It seemed she felt she knew from these

experiences what to expect; therefore, her expectations were limited. In contrast, Abby found that this experience demonstrated the commonalities she had with these students as well as provided her with insight into educational issues in ways she had not previously considered. From the stories Abby told about her experiences, I sensed how they shifted and added to her understanding related to education and diversity.

In her reflective narrative, Abby expressed that before visiting City High School, she had limited expectations of the interest and interaction she could expect from students there.

If I can be honest, prior to my visitation to [City] High School I was anticipating a forced conversation based upon interview questions and awkward pauses...In addition, when I was told about visiting [City] High School students this semester, I expected a few of the students to be disrespectful. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Abby attributed these expectations to a previous experience in which she had worked with a similar group of students at the university as part of another course. In this experience, Abby recalled that the students appeared disinterested in engaging with her and her university classmates. In our conversations occurring following the course, Abby shared how her previous experience contributed to her perceptions of City High School students. Abby reflected that her impression during that experience had been that “they just didn’t want to do anything, they didn’t want to talk to us, and I kind of made a generalization that the whole school was like that” (Interview excerpt). I found it interesting that, in contrast to our experience at the neighborhood center in which Abby

emphasized consideration of her preconceptions, she seemed to let these generalizations influence her expectations of this experience. I wondered to what extent it might have been because, based on her previous experience, Abby felt she already knew what these students were like. Thinking about this, I was reminded of the importance and challenge of facilitating community-based field experiences that offered opportunities to reconsider rather than confirm such generalizations.

However, Abby found that her actual experience diverged considerably from her expectations. In her reflective narrative following our experiences, she shared how impressed she was by the students' commitment to education as well as the insights they provided related to educational issues.

Visiting [City] High School was nothing like I had conjectured. I expected to find a classroom full of uninterested adolescent students with little to talk about and interview questions that would be answered generically. Fortunately, I was wrong. Instead, I found a group of driven, goal oriented students excited to learn and further their education. In addition, I encountered a student whose family influence and view on standardized testing was very different than what I had envisioned... Not only did I learn that my expectations can be deceiving, but that student input is always important. My meetings with Jessica reminded me of what it was like to be a student, which will be a precious perspective to hold when I am an educator. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

She elaborated on this further in one of our later conversations, recalling that upon arriving in the classroom, "I was just, like, blown away by just how well the students

responded to their teacher and how respectful they were, and how much they were interested in what we had to say” (Interview excerpt). It appeared that these experiences contrasted sharply with Abby’s expectations based on her previous interactions with a similar group of students. I sensed how this experience seemed to encourage Abby to reconsider the assumptions she had made earlier about what students from City High School were like.

Abby reflected that from her interactions with her student partner, Jessica, she learned they shared similar perspectives regarding education and teaching.

Once we had introduced ourselves, I found that [Jessica] was very engaged and interested in the questions I had to ask, which was refreshing and made me feel appreciative. In addition, I found that [Jessica] and I had quite a bit in common. For example, we both learn by doing, believe that one of the most important things teachers can do to help students with challenges is to listen, and believe teachers should be patient and respectful to students. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Abby also identified with Jessica’s stories related to her current and future educational trajectory, observing, “I found that we had followed similar roads to get to where we are in our education” (Reflective narrative excerpt). Like Abby, Jessica would be the first in her immediate family to attend college. This discussion prompted Abby to further reflect on her own experiences.

I gained a new understanding of my own reasoning for attending college. I don’t believe I attended college to “make my parents proud,” but instead I believe I attended college to prove something to myself, that I could do

something no one else in my immediate family had done! (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Again, I sensed a shift in how Abby storied her knowledge of what City High School students were like. It seemed that Abby was shaping new knowledge regarding these students that also influenced the ways she thought about them as different from her.

Abby was impacted not only by the commonalities she discovered with Jessica, but also by responses that diverged significantly from her expectations. Abby emphasized how unexpected responses to her questions regarding standardized testing prompted her awareness of and rethinking of related educational issues.

As I continued to ask questions, I noticed that Jessica wasn't answering them the way I intended. However instead of correcting her or asking the question in a different way, I followed the advice given in community education – I didn't interrupt the student, I let her continue and followed her lead. Opportunely, I learned more about her influences in school and her viewpoints on standardized tests than I had planned...I was expecting a negative response about the test. However, I learned that Jessica was supportive of the standardized tests. In her opinion, such tests are useful because they "evaluate students and teachers"... I believe Jessica may hold this viewpoint because of what she has been told by teachers and administrators throughout her many years of schooling. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Abby expanded on this exchange and the considerations it prompted at length in our conversations following our course. She reflected that her conversation with Jessica

encouraged her to continue thinking about issues related to standardized testing as she transitioned into her student teaching:

I actually started taking to some of my students last semester and kind of got their insight on it, and they thought it measures student knowledge. So it kinda made me think that these students that are failing standardized tests, does that mean they think they're stupid? Or if they're passing, are they really smart? And the way that they're being placed...I think it's kind of a joke just because most of the questions on the test you can memorize; this is not measuring knowledge, this is measuring memorization...I just thought it was interesting the way that she said that was like the correct way to measure knowledge. (Interview excerpt)

These stories indicated to me that though Abby's experiences at City High School had concluded during our course, she continued to think about educational issues her conversation with Jessica had raised. I found it interesting that Abby appeared to recognize multiple and complex issues related to testing, as well as the implications it held for students. Given Abby's perspective that such tests were not valid measures of knowledge or ability, I wondered what she believed encouraged students to continue to support them.

I think it has a lot to do with what they're told. I mean they're conditioned to do well on this test but, I mean, they don't know any better. They don't know what goes into the test, how the questions are made up, they don't know about the bias that's present in the test and how questions are asked and how that targets certain students in particular. (Interview excerpt)

From this, I sensed how Abby appeared to add layers to her entering stories to live by in ways that connected ideas related to education and diversity. I wondered to what extent Abby had considered such issues and connections prior to our experiences at City High School.

I had thought about it before, but I didn't think I was going to get the answers she gave me. I thought she would have been like "I hate taking this test". I didn't think that she was going to give me any insight into what it was measuring. I got something completely different. I would not have thought about that before. It never even crossed my mind to think about, like, that has such an impact on the way these students are graded, and it's not anything they have any control over, and it's not because they're not trying hard...I obviously looked at standardized testing way deeper than I had before and I don't think I would have done that, maybe until way later, if even ever, if I hadn't had the opportunity to talk to that one student. She opened my eyes to that. (Interview excerpt)

Abby's telling and retelling of her experiences made me think that the interactions that arose from this community-based field experience had significantly influenced the ways she considered implications of standardized testing, and that this continued to remain an issue important to her. I was reminded of Abby's strong desire to provide students with a quality education beyond what she had experienced, and I saw these new understandings as sustaining her entering stories to live by related to teaching that emphasized engaging and relevant instruction. It also seemed that this opportunity had provided Abby with new ways to think about education in relation to diversity.

Abby also expressed how this experience had provided her with a process and approach she planned to use as a teacher.

I thought it was really cool that we got to pair up with students and we prepared before hand. We made the student interview which was really, really important for me because I'm a planner and I like knowing what I'm going to do and so being able to think out certain questions I was going to ask, and I remember that you posted an article how to interview, like if they're not answering the question that you want them to answer or the way that you want them to answer it, just let them kind of take over and it will lead you to other questions that maybe you hadn't even thought of...I really like the idea of just partnering with another person and just kinda getting to know them. You can take that process and teach it to your students and use it as a getting to know you or I mean for group projects or whatever, but I think that it's a really important element in a classroom.

(Interview excerpt)

I was interested by how Abby seemed to interpret the preparations we did and the resources presented as useful, not only in helping her to prepare for our experience at City High School, but also in enabling her to let Jessica guide their interactions. I sensed that this experience had added to Abby's understandings of how to build the student relationships and classroom environment she envisioned.

As Abby storied her interpretations of this community-based field experience, I saw ways in which it shifted her understandings related to her entering stories to live by. Abby's reflections suggested a shifting story regarding her knowledge and understanding

of students she perceived as different from her. I also viewed her as adding new layers to old stories related to teaching that further emphasized the importance of knowing and listening to each student.

City high school community snapshot. Before this community-based field experience, Abby expressed that, in contrast to its history, she expected to find little evidence of divisions of income reflected in the community. Despite anticipating that the community would be comprised primarily by low-income residents, Abby reflected that, as a result of our previous community-based field experiences, these expectations were not accompanied by a sense of hesitancy. However, Abby found her experience contrasted with her expectations and was surprised by the apparent income diversity in the community. This experience encouraged her to reconsider ideas related to community, education, and diversity in ways that shifted her understandings.

Abby expressed in her reflective narrative that, prior to this experience, her expectations of the community were primarily influenced by course readings that described its history and development, as well as our visits to City High School.

Prior to exploring [this] community, I knew only what I had seen driving to and from [City] High School and the basic facts I found in the [course article]. I learned that in the 1900's, the area was home to the exceptionally rich and the intensely poor population of Houston. However, before my exploration of the community, I expected that this division no longer existed in the [community] and instead I believed that the area was made up of all low-income households. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I found it interesting both that Abby focused on her expectations on the socioeconomic status of the community, as well as that, while some of her previous perceptions regarding local urban communities seemingly remained, she did not express hesitancy prior to this experience. In our later conversations, Abby confirmed that she felt more comfortable prior to this experience than our first community-based field experience in the nearby community surrounding the university.

I wasn't scared or I didn't feel nervous...I think that it had to do with being exposed to [University Community] and going to [City High School] because this was going to be one of the last projects that we did...I didn't have a negative outlook on the community because I'm not going to make generalizations anymore just because of things I've been told in the past. (Interview excerpt)

While I sensed that Abby continued to position this community as different from her own, it also seemed she had gradually shifted her perspective regarding the implications of these differences.

In her reflective narrative following her experience, Abby shared how she was surprised to find that the community reflected an income diversity that she had not anticipated.

This exploration enabled me to gain an appreciation for [this] community that I honestly didn't know existed until recently. One of the most surprising aspects I immediately recognized about the community was the number of high income houses. As I mentioned before, prior to my exploration, I expected to find mostly low income housing. I believe my

reasoning behind this belief lies within my roots. Living in a suburban area all of my life, everyone in the surrounding area makes roughly the same income. Instead, I found a clear division of incomes within the community; ranging from rich to poor. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

It seemed that Abby recognized how her own experiences influenced her expectations of what communities looked like. While this initially appeared to be an unfamiliar story for Abby, she later connected it to an incident from her teaching observations. She had observed her cooperating teacher's efforts to organize a field trip in which she had sent home a communication inviting those that were interested to contribute additional funds to attend the trip to assist students that might otherwise not have been able to afford it. This resulted in having enough funding for all students to attend. Abby reflected that while such differences were initially unfamiliar to her, she had come to recognize them as potentially beneficial.

This brought my initial reaction to the division into perspective. First, I realize that my negative reaction was based purely on lack of knowledge and understanding. Secondly, I have learned to appreciate different aspects present within a community because, on many occasions, positivity can arise from such differences. (Final Narrative excerpt)

It appeared that this experience had encouraged Abby to consider new perspectives regarding difference and the ways in which diversity could serve as resource.

Abby also connected her observations to our discussions in class of issues involving the gentrification of local urban communities. Abby reflected that, although she

understood the desire to live in close proximity to downtown, she disagreed with how recent housing trends had displaced local residents.

Personally, I would love to live in the city. If I did, I would be close to all of the businesses and I would avoid the famous Houston traffic. However, by no means do I agree with the individuals that think longtime homeowners in the area should be pushed out of their homes simply for others' convenience. Instead, I suggest the city of Houston and longtime homeowners work together in restoring (not demolishing) old homes, sidewalks, and fences within the community like [the organization] did in [University Community]. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

From her story, I again sensed ways in which Abby had gradually shifted her perspectives to reflect her new knowledge and understandings of community. Further, I was interested by Abby's suggestion that she would enjoy living in the city, and I wondered how our community-based field experiences might have influenced her perceptions of communities like this as being potentially desirable places to live.

As Abby storied and restoried this community-based field experience, I sensed the gradual ways in which she also shifted her understandings of community, education, and diversity. While it seemed she continued to understand herself in relation to diversity in terms of difference, the implications of these differences appeared to shift. I saw these shifts as adding layers to her entering stories to live by related to valuing diversity.

Exiting Stories to Live By

Experiences with community, education, and diversity. Entering our course, I saw Abby's stories to live by related to community, education, and diversity as

influenced by her experiences growing up in what she described as two different communities. She believed that attending a diverse high school after moving to a suburban community in the metropolitan area west of Houston had provided her with opportunities to experience diversity that made her open minded and tolerant towards those different from herself. Abby believed her experience with and knowledge of diversity would benefit her as a teacher, both in building relationships with students and providing them with useful information. Through our community-based field experiences, Abby was encouraged to reconsider her perspectives regarding community and diversity in ways that enabled her to add layers of new understandings that both shifted and sustained her entering stories to live by.

In her Final Narrative, Abby reflected how she believed our community-based field experiences had awakened her to new understandings.

Although this may sound cliché, through my community experiences in this course this semester, I feel as if my eyes have been truly opened for the first time. This course was much more than I thought it would be and has taught me a lot about myself. While I had previously assumed that I had overcome most of the bias and stereotypes that were passed to me while growing up, I realize that this is a battle that I have just begun. However, with acknowledgement, I'm confident that I can slowly overcome these issues. Additionally, because of this course, I am more aware of the importance of community and socialization within the classroom. (Final Narrative excerpt)

From her analysis of her community-based field experiences, I sensed how valuable Abby found them as providing opportunities to reconsider her preconceptions, including where they originated from as well as how addressing them would be an ongoing process. I wondered what, specifically Abby felt had prompted these shifts, and, in our conversations following a year after our course, I asked Abby to elaborate on what she felt had been most impactful about it.

I guess what I would say that stuck out to me the most that I would point out is that it's more real-life experiences and getting out of the classroom than just book work or lectures and when we were in the classroom it's more of a two-way conversation than I'm going to talk at the front of the classroom and you're going to listen... I mean anyone can say something to you and I mean it doesn't necessarily mean that it's true, but if you see it for yourself then it becomes real and, I mean, you internalize it, I mean at least that's the way it is for me. (Interview excerpt)

Though Abby had entered the course emphasizing the importance of personal experience in education, she expressed her surprise at just how much she had gained from our community-based field experiences in comparison to simply taking information from a text.

I didn't realize how much I would take away from just kinda being in a place and just talking about it rather than doing book work. I mean, yeah, you always realize you're going to learn more but you don't realize how much more you're going to learn that way.

From her retelling, I sensed that our community-based field experiences, in combination with supporting course elements, had provided Abby with opportunities to create new personal knowledge. Thinking about this, I was reminded of the importance Abby placed on personally seeing and experiencing things for herself. It appeared that, through our community-based field experiences, ideas and issues that Abby had only encountered theoretically were made “real” for her. Abby also shared the importance reflection had in enabling her to interpret and make meaning of her experiences.

I really liked, as funny as this is gonna sound at the time, like the reflections, like before I would do it I was like “Ahh, I have to write this reflection!” But after I wrote it and gathered my thoughts, I mean it really helped me like I said reevaluate like my way of thinking and kind of like ask myself questions why I was thinking this way and it just, I don’t know, really helped sort my own thoughts out and that was really important as well. (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that Abby viewed both discussion and written reflection as important for processing her experiences. I found it especially interesting that Abby felt that, while she faced reluctance prior to writing her reflective narratives, this process provided her with an opportunity to critically reflect on her experiences and deepened her understandings of them.

From her stories, I viewed Abby as interpreting her community-based field experiences in ways that encouraged ongoing reflection related to community, education, and diversity that contributed to the development of new understandings of these ideas. By encountering unfamiliar stories, it seemed Abby recognized her contrasting

perceptions and experiences in ways that shifted her perceptions, enabling her to sustain her entering stories to live by of being open towards and tolerant of diversity. Though I believe Abby continued to think of diversity in terms of dominant and nondominant culture differences, these experiences seemed to shift her understandings related to the context and implications of these differences. Abby continued to story herself as using her knowledge of and experience with diversity as a resource in her teaching.

Going to teach. Entering our course, I viewed Abby's identity, her stories to live by, as reflecting her commitment to improving education by providing students with relevant and engaging instruction. Abby interpreted her course experiences as providing opportunities to rethink her own perspectives, as well as emphasizing the importance of encouraging her students to do the same. Her stories also reflected how she added to her personal practical knowledge of teaching in ways that both shifted and sustained her entering stories to live by. Her exiting stories reflected the increased importance Abby placed on acknowledging students' diverse experiences and identities as a basis for building caring relationships that addressed their personal and academic needs.

In our conversations occurring a year after our course, Abby and I discussed how class discussions contributed to her interpretation of our community-based field experiences and encouraged her to reconsider her perspectives.

I mean the class discussion really just, they made me think about, I mean, all these different issues and see what other people think and why they think that and so I think that's important to take back to your own classroom and realize hey I have this viewpoint but so many people in just my college classrooms had all these other ones so maybe I should also

take a look into those and see maybe what's behind it...It was a class discussion and we knew that we could share information with you and like discuss things with you in the context of the classroom or outside of the classroom and we knew that we weren't going to be judged for it or it was a safe environment. (Interview excerpt)

She went on to recall an experience from her student teaching connected to these ideas and her increased awareness of the harm stereotypes could have on students and the classroom community.

A lot of the students at the school I was student teaching at, they are predominately are from the Middle East or India so they would make jokes all the time like "You're not aloud to get below a 99 because you're Indian or Asian," and that really stood out to me because it was occurring almost every single day and I finally, you know, said something to one of the students that, well multiple students, that were saying these things and I asked them, "Why do you feel this way, why do you feel that you can't get below a 99?" and they're like, "Well everyone knows that Indians don't get below a certain grade," and so they think that if they score lower than a 99, that they're stupid or that, I mean, I had a girl, she scored a 92 and she started crying and I was like, "why are you crying?" and she was like, "My parents don't let me score below a 99" and she's like, "Indian people don't score this low." And that's just something that I think will always stick with me just because I see them doing, it's like a competition between them and I mean, that grade in particular doesn't really say

anything. It could've been, I don't remember what it was, but it could've been a multiple choice test for all we know and I don't know and that's just...I mean if it had been my own classroom, I would have stopped the students and we would have had a discussion, I mean talked to them about why and let them voice their opinions and let them know, that you know, that I'm listening. And I feel like that if I'm listening to them and I'm showing them that I care and that the classroom is a community, that they'll be more likely to take in what I have to say and try and see both sides of it and hopefully open up their eyes and not necessarily change their opinion but let them be aware of two different viewpoints. (Interview excerpt)

From her story, I sensed the multiple issues Abby saw related to this incidence. She expressed concern that students' perspectives on academic achievement were influenced by ethnicity, and appeared struck with the extent to which one student had internalized these stereotypes as part of her identity. Additionally, Abby seemed further concerned that this thinking was pervasive in the class, and that it had created a hostile climate in which students felt pressured to compete to maintain their sense of identity and worth. While Abby inquired into the rationale behind students' perceptions, I found it interesting that, though she shared what she would have done if it had been her own classroom, she did not take similar action in this incident. I wondered why Abby felt constrained to act on what she seemed to view as a detrimental influence on the classroom community.

Throughout our course, I sensed how Abby had interpreted her community-based field experiences in ways that shifted her stories to live by related to community,

education, and diversity to reflect increased emphasis on connecting and building relationships with students that focused on personal as well as academic considerations. During our conversations, Abby told several stories from her student teaching that exemplified her understandings related to these ideas. She reflected that the importance of building such relationships had been one of the ways our course most influenced her.

I think making myself available for students to talk to if they need anything, regardless of if it's relating to academia or something else. I mean I had a student when I was student teaching that she was having some issues with, I guess, boyfriend problems but she would come to me and talk to me about it if she was upset, or she had a problem with another teacher and she came in crying, and, you know, I talked to her about it and let her know, you know, "I'm here if you want to talk about it. We can talk about it in class or whatever," and she actually, before I left, she wrote me a letter telling me how much she appreciated it – it was so sweet, I mean I'm going to frame it and everything – she told me how much it meant to her that I was there for her and that none of her other teachers had done that and she said she felt like she could talk to me about it. (Interview excerpt)

Abby shared a similar story, adding how she saw these personal relationships as also supporting students' academic achievements.

Yeah, it's really great, and then I had another student, and, I mean, I told all the students if you need something come to me and I'll help you, and another student came to me, I guess he got in a fight with his mom and he

wanted to talk about it, so I asked him um what had happened and he kinda went through the story with me and then he started crying and then I, you know, I gave him some advice and told him, you know, I mean everything is going to be okay and he came back the next day and of course everything was okay, but after that he would come to me if he had an issue and he knew that I was there for him and he would, I saw that he would try harder after that for me in particular. Like if I asked him to do something or there was, he would turn in an assignment and, I don't know, it wasn't the way it was supposed to be turned in, you know, I hand it back to him he would be like "Oh yeah, you know, let me fix this for you."

(Interview excerpt)

From these stories, I sensed how Abby storied herself as a teacher that students could trust and confide in, as well as how this story was connected to her entering story of mentoring students at her part-time job as a gymnastics instructor. Listening to her stories, it seemed to me that personally knowing and connecting with her students was becoming an increasingly important part of her stories to live by. I also saw the ways in which Abby connected these stories to those of providing a high quality education, as it appeared that she viewed strong relationships with her students as basis for also increasing their academic achievement.

Abby further reflected on the ways in which her experiences contributed to her knowledge and understanding of the importance of seeing students as individuals and recognizing how their diverse lived experiences influenced their educational experiences.

I keep going back to this because it really influenced me, but being able to look at a student and know each one of them are so, so unique and they come to school with different knowledge and experiences and abilities and taking that into account when you're a teacher is so important and, I mean, not very many teachers I guess in the old way of teaching, they don't really look at that. They don't see that everyone learns in a different way and I think that that's something that I definitely took away from the course...I've found that I definitely think about that more and I don't know if I ever would have. Most of the teachers at my school where I've student taught at or observed they don't think like that they don't take into account all the different circumstances each student goes through and just people in everyday life.

It seemed that Abby had added to her knowledge regarding the importance of knowing each student as a basis, not only for providing relevant and meaningful instruction, but also for developing relationships with her students that recognized and acknowledged their diverse experiences and identities. As I listened to Abby, I again sensed a shift in her stories to live by as she added layers of understanding to what she saw as effective teaching.

Abby also shared that, as a result of her course experiences, she had applied to teach in one of the city's large urban school districts. I was interested to learn more and asked Abby to elaborate on her decision.

There's probably a zero percent chance I would have applied to [the district] because I always thought I would want to work in [my] area.

Actually whenever I told some of the teachers at my cooperating school that I was applying to [large urban school district], the first thing that they think of, “Oh [the district], there’s so many negative things going on in that area...” And I thought that was really interesting and I don’t think I would have thought about that if I hadn’t taken this course that kind of just opens your eyes to that and how people make generalizations all the time without realizing it and I’m not going to. It’s not necessarily their fault, I mean maybe it’s the way that they were raised or their culture, or I mean they’ve lived in [suburban community] all their lives, and I mean I’ve lived in [suburban community] for a long time but I have a lot of friends that live in Houston and before I went to [university] I was a little bit hesitant because I have had that preconception that Houston city – it scared me because I’m not familiar with it but now I mean I plan on living there eventually, which is never something I would have thought previous to [university] and now knowing about all the great things that are in Houston, even in the areas that I thought were negative areas or that had bad people quote unquote, I just know it’s not like how many people see it.

(Interview excerpt)

It seemed that Abby had connected to the city in ways that enabled her to see herself living and teaching there. While I understood these shifts in Abby’s perceptions as the result of a larger, ongoing process it appeared that Abby continued to think about her course experiences in relation to her evolving understandings.

From her stories, I sensed the ways in which Abby's exiting stories to live by reflected her interpretations of our course experiences and influenced her personal practical knowledge of teaching. In the stories she told, I viewed Abby as continuing to think about how her experiences shifted her perceptions of community, education, and diversity in ways that continued to encourage her consideration of these issues, as well as sustained her entering stories of using her knowledge of and experience with diversity as resources in her teaching. I also sensed how Abby added new layers to her personal knowledge of teaching in ways that shifted her understandings of effective teaching to emphasize acknowledging students' diverse identities and lived experiences. Her emphasis on building caring relationships with students that recognized their personal as well as academic needs indicated how Abby continued to sustain and add to her entering stories to live by of providing a quality education to all students.

Hande's Storied Experiences

Hande was born and raised in a large city in Turkey. Her father is Turkish while her mother is Cherkess. Growing up, her father worked while her mother, previously a tailor, remained home to raise their family. She is one of five siblings, having two older sisters and two younger brothers. Hande lived in her hometown in Turkey until marrying her husband and, shortly after, moving abroad – first to Russia for eight years and later to the United States, living first in California and then Texas. She has spent the last several years in Houston continuing her studies while raising her two children, a daughter and son, both of whom attend a local charter school. During the course of this inquiry Hande successfully completed her education coursework and student teaching, planning to graduate with her bachelor's degree in Education with a teaching certification in 4-8

Math at the same time I was finalizing this research text. She plans to seek a full-time teaching position for the coming academic school year.

Entering Stories to Live By

Coming to teach. Hande's stories to live by related to entering teaching reflected how she had long held a desire to teach. Indeed, for Hande, the dream of being a teacher had become a sacred story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) rooted in her past experiences as an adolescent growing up and attending school in Turkey. Having first been inspired to become a teacher during her own schooling experiences, Hande had pursued her dream of teaching for many years. These experiences contributed to Hande's entering story to live by of becoming a teacher who felt, deeply, the importance and responsibility of her position and cherished the opportunity to work with students in ways that supported their learning and development.

In her Personal Narrative, Hande recalled when one of her teachers asked her to tutor some 8th grade students in math and science. After working with these students, their positive attitudes toward her gave her confidence in her abilities as a teacher. Additionally, she was happy when her teacher complimented her and praised her to other teachers at school. It was this experience that first inspired her to think about becoming a teacher.

There were three students we worked together for almost entire semester after school for a couple of hours three days a week. Teaching was really fun. These students attitude to me gave me more confidant. My teacher complimented me when she saw me at school hallways and talked about me to other teachers. This made me very happy. I felt myself important

and productive. At this time I started to think about being a teacher could be a good idea. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

By the time Hande reached her last semester of high school in 12th grade, she was still uncertain as to what she wanted to pursue as her career. She recalled how her family encouraged her to become a public administrator but, despite preparing to attend a political science college, she was not happy with this prospect. At this time, another teacher inspired Hande, through her approaches to teaching and her relationships with students, to reconsider her own desire to become a teacher.

When we got in trouble [the teacher] was there to help us. She volunteered to tutor us after school till she thought that we don't need any more help about her class even about other subjects like social studies or history. I really enjoyed her class. She was so knowledgeable, honest, cooperative educator I have ever had. Her positive energy encouraged me to study hard and learn everything she taught. I really enjoyed school in that year more than ever and I decided to be teacher like her. I wanted to be a friendly, understandable, considerate, and full of passion and love toward my profession and students like my teacher. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

Hande's description of the impact this teacher had on her education provided me with insight into the values Hande held for herself as a teacher. For Hande, this teacher demonstrated a passion and caring Hande came to emphasize in her own approach.

However, Hande struggled to pass the difficult state exam necessary to attend university and was discouraged about the possibility of ever being able to pursue her "dream career" of teaching (Personal Narrative). Over the next few years, while

attending vocational school and preparing to retake the exam, Hande met and married her husband, a teacher, and moved with him to Russia where he would teach middle school.

I wondered how Hande's observation of her husband reinforced her own desire to teach.

I really enjoyed when he talked about his students. Sometimes he complained about the students and talked about their problems but those problems were not seemed to me like a problem. I thought that at least you work with students. It would be wonderful if I could do it. My love toward the education, and school grew each time when I saw my husband spent time with his students and how they enjoyed learning. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

When they moved to Moscow, Hande was finally able to enroll in university. However, she took a break from school in order to raise her two children, a daughter and son. In the intervening years, employment opportunities for her husband brought them to the United States, and Hande and her family moved to California and then Texas. Hande continued to pursue her education again after moving to the U.S. and was excited to move to Texas, where tuition was less expensive than in California. After pursuing her degree for more than a decade, Hande looked forward to graduating and finally being able to realize her dream of becoming a teacher.

When I get my degree, I believe I will be better teacher than many teachers who reached their goal easily. It was not easy to reach this point, but I will not give up. Now, there are only nine courses between me and my dream. I love teaching so much and I am looking forward to meet my

students one day. That day will be my best day ever in my life. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

From her stories, I sensed the deep importance Hande placed on both the responsibility of a teacher and on her dedication to achieving this position. She viewed herself as having pursued her dream of teaching despite having encountered obstacles. She believed this perseverance resulted in a dedication to teaching that would separate her from those who had entered teaching with less determination. She eagerly anticipated the time when she could finally fulfill her vision of a dedicated and caring teacher. Entering our course, Hande's identity, her story to live by, related to teaching was one of realizing a long cherished dream of becoming a caring teacher like those that had inspired her as a student.

Experiences with community, education, and diversity. Hande's stories related to community, education, and diversity reflected her experiences of being raised in a culturally diverse home and community, as well as having lived in different countries. These experiences shaped Hande's stories to live by related to these ideas by affirming, that for her, despite differences in time, place, and culture, children and students continued to share similar social and emotional needs. However, Hande's stories also indicated that she recognized the importance of culture and experience in shaping perceptions, and that such considerations were beneficial for teachers in their interactions with students and their communities. These understandings supported Hande's entering stories to live by of becoming a caring educator who recognized and provided for the needs of her students.

From her Educational Narrative, I sensed that Hande understood diversity as inherent in her community. Reflecting on her experiences in elementary school, Hande provided insight into how she had grown up with diversity at home and in school.

There were 28 students in my class. Most of the students were from different nations but they knew Turkish very well....There were Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian, Bosnian, Kurt, Cherkessk, and Arabian students in my class and in our school...My father is Turk but my mother from Kafkasia. My mother is a Cherkess. I can understand my mother language but I cannot speak. Most of my friends also were like me. They understood their home language but they couldn't speak it. Students in my school all had different socioeconomic backgrounds. There were really rich students in the school but they never use it as differences from other students. They were respectful to their friends. (Educational Narrative excerpt)

From her story, I viewed Hande as someone who understood diversity in multiple ways including, ethnicity, nationality, language, and class, but did not view these as differences that separated her from her classmates. Hande confirmed that she did not understand these differences in terms of otherness when we discussed her perceptions of diversity growing up in our later conversations.

It was big city and school was big and population was so big and diverse. But, you know what? That time I didn't realize that we are so diverse after taking your classes because in Turkey everybody speaks Turkish. We know that they are not Turkish but we never thought they are different nation...In here I realize that people speak different language, they are

from different nation. You know, we feel like all Turk... (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that, while Hande recognized the many cultures represented in her school, and even in her own home, she believed that a common feeling of Turkish identity unified her family and community to the extent that diversity was not perceived as differentness. I found it interesting that, in our conversations, Hande revealed that the strong sense of community she had experienced in her youth had deteriorated. She recalled how her once tightly knit neighborhood community, comprised of homes in which families had lived for several generations and in which neighbors often felt like relatives, had been replaced by apartments in which no one seemed to know or cared to know each other. I wondered how her perceptions of community and diversity might have differed had she remained in her hometown rather than moving abroad as a young adult.

Hande's experiences living in different parts of the world and observing educational practices in these diverse settings seemed to reinforce her beliefs that all children and students shared a basic need for caring and nurturing.

It is very important how we raised our children and teach them important values for the society to provide healthy community but it is not enough to give it at home. Warm and appropriate classroom environment, good relationship with teachers and friends, and appropriate education system is other foot of the child success. When I compare my childhood life and that of my children now, I observe that children's lifestyles can be different in different times, and at different places, but their needs never change. What

they need the most are believing, love, attention, and trust. (Educational Narrative excerpt)

Hande's observation that "children's lifestyles can be different in different times, and at different places, but their needs never change" again indicted to me that she believed such differences did not fundamentally change what students needed to be successful. For Hande, an important responsibility of teaching lay in recognizing and attending to students' diverse experiences in order to create what she believed was a shared need for a caring classroom community.

If they believe, if you can earn their trust, I believed everything going to change, everything....If you can provide this environment in your class, they are going to say to each other, this love going to spread to others, you know...Because everybody has something inside, you know. We all human, we all feel same way. They are going to understand, in time, they are going to believe you. Because they have a life, they have experiences, their own experiences; they're looking own experiences eyes. They're judge by their experiences. (Interview excerpt)

During one of our conversations, Hande told a story about her own children's teachers that I saw as reflecting her beliefs regarding how knowledge of students' culture benefited teachers.

[The teachers] learn our culture, that we very open to each other. And because of that, when I say I am Turkish, they know my culture and they know how they can relate with me. I'm friendly, they can come my house, they can speak with me very openly. How can I say? You know,

sometimes they have to say something indirect, some parents very strict, say your children very smart or something....But my children's teacher said, no they have to study this, they need to improve this part. I expect to speak that way. Yeah, we have good relationship their teachers. They call me say directly and say something they want. And I expect that because I said them please feel free to say anything because I know you also wants to see my children successfully, me too, and there's no reason to go around to say something....And my children knows my relationship good with their teachers and they know they're going to tell me they act like....It really matter. They know that they did something, I will know, like a neighbor. (Interview excerpt)

I understood Hande's identity, her stories to live by, regarding education, community, and diversity entering our course as complex and reflecting her varied experiences. While she recognized the importance of diverse experiences in shaping identity, the images of communication and collaboration remained a strong theme in the stories she told. Hande storied herself as someone who understood diversity as inherent, and as a resource teachers could use to connect with students and their communities to meet the needs all children share.

Community-based Field Experiences

University community. Before engaging in this community-based field experience, Hande reflected that she appreciated the opportunity to visit and personally learn about the community surrounding the university, and felt that this experience would provide her with knowledge she could use to connect with her students. She also

expressed how the course resources prior to our visit enabled her to make personal connections to the community-based on her own experiences. Following our visit, Hande described how her understandings of the community resonated with her own experiences in what she perceived as a similar community, as well as those of being considered different from others. She further reflected on how the experience provided her with knowledge she could use not only to build relationships with students, but also to create meaningful instruction. Through her tellings and retellings, I sensed how this experience sustained and added to Hande's entering stories to live by through reinforcing her identity of being a caring teacher.

In her reflective narrative written following this community-based field experience, Hande storied how her perception of the community arose from a combination of theoretical knowledge from our course and her own lived experiences. She recalled how she initially connected information from course resources related to the organization and surrounding community with her own experiences living in California.

Visiting after learning about the [organization] in theoretically and that community gave me pre-knowledge to understand their goals better. I knew what they are talking about, why they did this project, and what they try to do with this project. I knew that neighborhood was mostly African Americans and most families and residents in this area were in lower socioeconomic class. Some of the families need support to provide their basic needs; the perception is that this area may not be safe to visit alone, if you are not one of them. This is general thought, but I didn't think that way. I lived in [city in California] where the majority of people there were

African American and people who live here are generally poor...They didn't have official name for it, but they did exactly same thing in [that city] like [the organization]. Upper class or high income residents of community help lower income families or people to make their life more valuable. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

From these stories, I began to get a sense of what Hande considered important influences in her perceptions of the community surrounding the university prior to our experience there. It appeared that the course resources presented prior to our visit prompted Hande to make connections between this community and one she had previously experienced living in California. I found it interesting that Hande observed that, while the general perception of the community might be that it was unsafe for those who were not a part of it to visit, she did not hold these views. Her description of the community indicated that she entered this experience anticipating the opportunity to compare this organization and community to what she had read about them as well as seen previously when living in California. Additionally, Hande expressed her belief that the experience would provide her with the opportunity to gain insights that would benefit her as a teacher. She reflected, "It is good to know a little about the history of the city that I live and teach the children, because most probably, many of the students in my classroom will be the grandchildren of those people who built this community" (Reflective narrative excerpt). I was reminded of the importance Hande placed on recognizing students' experiences as a basis for building relationships with them.

Reflecting after our visit, Hande expressed that she was impressed by the tour, and enjoyed learning about the various projects as well as the enthusiasm our guide

displayed for his community. She emphasized the importance of each of the programs related to the project, public art, arts education, and the young mother's residential program, believing that each contributed to enriching and proving hope to the community.

The tour was amazing. Seeing their excitement has drawn my attention. I wanted to learn more about everything they try to show us about their culture and personality to make them part of the community. Their enthusiasm to introduce about their culture to us seems to me that they believe we do not know much about them. The man who gave the tour was so happy what he was doing and trying to show us how he was happy being a part of that community. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Again, I noticed Hande's interest in learning about the culture of this community. I found it interesting that she interpreted our guide's enthusiasm as indicating a desire to express to us that he not only enjoyed being part of this community, but also that he believed that we were not familiar with it.

However, Hande also reflected that she was saddened to learn about how issues the community faced related to equity had impacted education.

I really felt sorry when I learn about African American children's education process in time from readings. It was so sad to learn how people can be unfair to each other. When I made empathy, I felt that considering "others" was painful. It was not difficult to do that for me because I also felt sometimes like "others" than other people. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I understood that Hande personally identified with the experiences of this community as being perceived as different and how this perception of otherness contributed to the challenges it faced. I wondered how often Hande had faced similar challenges while living in the U.S., especially during a time when wearing hijab was often perceived negatively. Again, I sensed the multiple and personal ways in which Hande had experienced and understood diversity, and how these understandings influenced her interpretations of this community-based field experience.

Hande also reflected on how this experience contributed to her evolving and expanding definition of community.

There is not only one explanation for community. It is very comprehensive word and I think one cannot understand just reading its definition...I can describe it for now; community is a group of people with a common interest and expectations between its members based on shared values, beliefs, and meanings but I am sure after extend my knowledge about the community I will add new sentences in it. [University Community] was very good example to this definition. There was an idealist group of people who want to change their environment in a good way with keeping their own culture. I saw strong community sense on them. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I understood Hande as interpreting her experience by adding to the ways she understood community to function through a shared sense of connection and belonging, images that remained prominent in the stories she told related to teaching, community, and diversity.

In our conversations occurring more than a year following our course, Hande referenced this experience as being one she remembered well and considered an important part of the course. She reflected, “it was good to know where students come from, where they live, and it’s good to understand and puts you in their place and think about them” (Interview excerpt). She elaborated on the importance of this experience that provided insight into lives different from her own, and the ways it expanded her perspective and enabled her to better connect with students.

Before we go there I know they have different lives but you just imagine how they live. All the time you are looking the world from your side: where do you live? How do you live? Probably a little bit lower and a little bit higher you can understand the lifestyles, but if you go and see their environment then you can say, you know, understanding a little bit more about their psychology if you see the people, how they help each other, you know...these students can be economically not very well, but if you talk to them from your heart, they can understand and you can make deal with them and you can do something with them. I saw that. I’m seeing where they live and you can come up with new strategies to communicate with the students. This is a big thing, I think. This is a very big thing – finding some way to communicate with them. Otherwise, you know, you close your eyes and try to find something, this is also awesome where they live and how they keep their tradition. You can use those things to communicate with them, to understand their psychology. They’re like family, they talk each other, everybody knows each other. It means you

can provide trust with them. Between those students you can be very successful and you can bring success to them. This is awesome. You know, opens the door, go and see there and you can talk something with them.

You know it's easy to find common things. Yeah. (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that Hande recognized the importance of lived experience in shaping perspectives and the value in opportunities to consider such experiences that diverged significantly from her own. Again, I sensed her emphasis on using the knowledge and understanding she gained from this experience as a basis for identifying commonalities with students in order to communicate and build relationships with them. It seemed that this experience reinforced Hande's belief that student success was based on establishing such connections. I understood Hande's interpretation of this experience as sustaining her entering stories to live by of using her knowledge of students to demonstrate care and cultivate connections that would promote student success.

In addition to reflecting on this experience as a basis for understanding and building relationships with students, Hande also expressed how she gained inspiration from it related to developing curriculum.

When we visited the little houses with art, this is also different and good.

It means they have something but we usually don't give them the opportunity to work on this. We more focusing on math, science or something. But they can get relax and they can also see what they can do, it also gives confidence to the students. This time I plan myself I can do art in my class art project with math. They can come, you know, they can calculate and measure something, do something art with the materials, and

I can teach math at the same time and they can see touchable math problem they can own solve. They all the time solve but it's going, disappears on the paper but after they solve and create something they can see the result. That time I plan to do that and I still working on it. I am collecting books and I'm searching, I'm reading what can I do for project, math project. Yeah, I have four new books in school I get. I get this idea from this visit. (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that Hande had been inspired by this experience to consider new ways in which she might act as a curriculum maker (Craig & Ross, 2008) to provide her students with meaningful instruction. From this story, I understood how Hande hoped to engage students in math using applications beyond simply solving equations. The telling of this story indicated to me that Hande continued to think about this experience after our course in ways that added new layers to her identity as a teacher.

As Hande retold and relived this community-based field experience, I understood how it had sustained her entering stories to live by related to teaching, community, and diversity. I believe that Hande interpreted her experience as reinforcing her initial beliefs regarding the importance lived experience has on shaping perspectives, and the value of understanding this process as a basis for connecting with students. I also saw how this experience added layers to Hande's vision of herself as a teacher who served as a curriculum maker by using her knowledge and understanding of students not only to build relationships with them, but also to create meaningful instruction that would connect math to tangible applications student would enjoy.

Neighborhood center. Prior to this community-based field experience, Hande expressed that course resources and her own previous experience volunteering and working with non-profit organizations prepared her for our visit. She also connected the programs and services the center offered to immigrants with her own experiences living abroad and reflected on the importance of education in supporting and strengthening a society. I sensed that, for Hande, this neighborhood center represented a familiar story related to her entering stories to live by that emphasized belonging and cooperation as important to both community and education.

Before visiting the neighborhood center, Hande reflected that exploring the online resources provided in the course enabled her to gain a sense of the neighborhood and organization. Similar to our visit to the community surrounding the university, Hande connected this information to her own previous experience, in this case working with non-profit organizations. She reflected, “since I have volunteered for some other nonprofit organizations, it made me more experienced and knowledgeable about nonprofit organizations” (Reflective narrative excerpt).

Following our visit, Hande reflected that the architecture and décor of the center contributed to an atmosphere that appeared to her as welcoming and comfortable. She observed that the people she saw while at the center seemed relaxed and engaged in a variety of activities. Hande was impressed by the scope of the organization and the various programs and services offered. She was particularly impressed by the services offered to immigrants.

I really liked the community center how they help to newcomers to America. They guide them when they enter the country about education,

health, and finance was amazing. The newcomers can easily access all the information from them, and the community center will help them to understand what they need to do. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I noticed Hande emphasized the ways in which the center worked with those who had recently arrived to the U.S., and it occurred to me that she made a personal connection to the experience of arriving in a new country and the process of learning to navigate the various systems and institutions. Hande seemed to confirm this when she later expressed that her belief in the importance of these services was strengthened by her own experiences, which she believed gave her insight into these issues.

I partly experienced some kind of similar issues when I first came to America and understand the importance of these centers that help people to familiarize with the surrounding, procedures and rules in America. I believe they are do fantastic job for those people...It is a good idea to educate and create productive people with little effort then fighting against crimes. Families will feel comfortable, safe, accepted, and belong to their new society. This will provide peaceful and productive community for all.

(Final Narrative excerpt)

I was reminded of how the images of belonging and cooperation remained strong themes in the stories Hande told. I also sensed the importance Hande understood education to have in relation to supporting society. It seemed that Hande believed the way to strengthen society was primarily through education. Additionally Hande was also

impressed by the efforts of community residents to transform a busy street near the neighborhood center into a public space for residents.

I really liked what they did to build a playground. They closed the nearest street right behind the center that could cause problem from children. They closed the road and built a playground. They receive a huge public support for this project and I think this is just wonderful. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Again, Hande emphasized her appreciation of the collective efforts taken by the community to provide for the safety of local children.

Hande did not reference this experience in our conversations. I wondered if it was because her previous experiences volunteering and working with non-profit organizations, as well as her own experiences living abroad had made centers like this common to her. It seemed that, though she valued this experience as an additional opportunity to learn more about the local Houston community, this was a familiar story to her. Rather, I saw her as interpreting this community-based field experience through her existing stories, and strengthening her beliefs in the importance of education and community.

City high school collaborative. In contrast to our previous community-based field experiences, Hande expressed some hesitancy prior to collaborating with students at City High School. While Hande was interested to hear students' perspectives on educational issues, she wondered whether she would be able to connect with them enough to capture their interest in discussing these issues with her. However, after our experience, Hande reflected that it had provided a valuable opportunity to consider issues

related to community, education, and diversity in new ways. From her reflections and our conversations, I gained insight into how she added layers of new meaning to old stories.

Hande described having conflicting feelings regarding her expectations prior to visiting City High School for the first time. She looked forward to the opportunity to visit a local high school and speaking with students, especially since she believed they possessed the maturity to discuss topics related to education and communicate their perspectives. However, Hande questioned whether they would be interested in speaking with her.

Before we visit the [City] High School, I was a little confused about my feelings. I was okay with high school students because they are mature enough to communicate and discuss the topic. I thought that I can get logical answers from them to my questions. On the other hand, (I never experienced but I heard a lot about high school students from my friends that there is no way to communicate with them) I was nervous about how I can make a good conversation with them if they don't care about anything.

(Reflective narrative excerpt)

Hande expressed that the preparations we did in class prior to meeting with students as well as the course readings related to interviewing helped her. She reflected that these were resources she felt she could use with her future students.

I read all the readings about how I can do a good interview, also learned the techniques on note taking during the interview. There are very good techniques that I can use in the future to establish effective communication

with my students...As a future teacher, I think we have to know the ways to get valuable information with little questions from our students. It is part of our job. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I was reminded of the emphasis Hande placed on communicating with her students and the importance this continued to play in how she storied her identity as a teacher.

Following our experiences, Hande shared in her reflective narrative that she was initially overwhelmed by the size of the school, but was reassured once we met with the students in their classroom.

The school was big and there are so many students. It was scary. I was not feeling comfortable until I entered the class and saw the students. They seemed to me very friendly. That was good sign. I thought that I can do effective interview with one of them. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

From their conversation, Hande learned that, Arianna, the student she partnered with, had transferred to City High School from another school in hopes that it would provide a better education and opportunities for her. She described her desire to graduate and attend cosmetology school because of her interest in hair and make-up. Hande recalled that they discussed Arianna's reasons for attending the school, her classes, activities she enjoyed in school, and extracurricular organizations, all of which Hande thought were normal topics to which she received unsurprising responses. However, when they began to discuss Adrianna's perspectives on school diversity, her responses surprised Hande.

Everything was normal until I asked about the diversity in the school and in her class. I was shocked when I heard her answer but I respect her opinion. She said she wants to be a successful student, get a good career

and make enough money to live better. This school is a good place to reach to her goal. Her only concern was immigrant students. She believes that they cause problems. They talk a lot in class or disrupt the class. She said, they sell drug, argue with other students, and they speak their language when they meet each other. She doesn't like if they dress different than American students. She believes school environment can be better if they don't have so many diverse students in their school. I found her thoughts interesting because she was Hispanic, she speaks Spanish, and probably she and her family try to keep their culture and beliefs which is very normal. She thinks that other immigrants cause all the trouble! I would ask her how she feels about herself as her family was also immigrant, but it would not be nice. I tried to tell her that those students might think that they belong here just like you do. She said maybe! I am not sure if she got my point. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

It appeared that, through their conversation, Hande had discerned the apparently competing stories Arianna told. I found it interesting that Hande seemed to easily recognize these contrasting perspectives and, further, that she suggested that Arianna might benefit from considering the perspective of the students she criticized. I wondered to what extent Hande connected this discussion with Arianna to her own experiences of living outside her native country of Turkey. From this story, I sensed that Hande wanted to encourage Arianna to find commonalities with other students that would help her to understand their experiences and perspectives. I was again reminded of how

communication and collaboration continued to remain strong themes in the stories Hande told.

Hande was pleased, after hearing her previous remarks, to learn that Arianna also said that she had friends from other cultures.

I asked her if she has friends who are from different culture and nation.

She said that one of her friends is from India. She is a Muslim and they are pretty close to each other. She said that she likes her friendship. That was good after hearing her thoughts about immigrant students. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Still, Hande remained confused by the seemingly conflicting perspectives Arianna had shared and she left their meeting with many questions. Though she planned to discuss these ideas further with Arianna at our next meeting, she was unable to attend the following week and was left pondering what Arianna had said. Since she was not able to discuss her questions with Arianna, she shared them in her narrative reflection.

It opened another window to look from students' perspective to immigrants. Who is an immigrant according to the students, who is not? Are there any benefits to have different nations in our classroom setting, or what they think? What is the solution according to them? Why might people migrate to other countries and what is the role of children in this situation? Are they happy to being in foreign country? Who are immigrants in their eyes truly? There are bunch of other questions whose answers can be solution to multicultural educations problems. It is important that educators understand and want to solve them for both

students who are native and immigrant. I think visiting schools, field experience, observations, and other activities can guide us to come up with good ideas to reach some of our students and solve their problems as a teacher. I believe that people can get far with little steps. Every effort is valuable to make education better for all who live in this country and around the world. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

These questions provided me with insight into the complex and varied ways Hande thought about diversity related to community and education. I sensed that this experience encouraged Hande to reflect on these issues in ways she might not have previously considered as she tried to make sense of Arianna's contrasting experiences and perspectives related to diversity. Additionally she seemed to suggest how important she saw these issues as being for all students, regardless of background, and I was again reminded how, in her entering stories to live by related to teaching, she emphasized the needs she believed all students shared. That Hande chose to share these lingering questions made me think that, though she was not able to discuss these ideas with Arianna, she continued to think about them and the importance they held for education.

Hande reflected that she believed her experience at City High School was a valuable opportunity to connect and consider ideas of community, education, and diversity.

I think a school is a little community. Each child rises with their culture, language, and beliefs and they bring them to the school and share it. They practice the miniature world in their school environment. Each student represents their own country, or community and culture. They try to find

common things that they can use to communicate with others and build relationships. They are very good little models of the big diverse country. If we listen to them carefully we can find many ways to resolve the problems which we have in our society...Visiting mainstream classroom also show us another community which exist in the school. They were all different pieces of the big picture which create community when we put all together. I figured out that different cultures, nations, religions, and languages make this picture colorful and interesting. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

From this story, I again recognized the multiple ways in which Hande understood these ideas, as well as how these understandings influenced her personal and professional stories to live by. Hande seemed not only to recognize the ways in which lived experiences influenced students' school interactions, but also valued the diverse perspectives each student brought. I found it interesting that Hande used the metaphor of a community to describe schools, and I saw this as exemplifying her perspectives related to each of these. Hande's ideas regarding the importance of communication and relationships again came to mind, and I viewed this experience as sustaining her entering stories to live by related to teaching, diversity, and community.

Hande also reflected that she valued the opportunity to interact with students in their own school, and that she believed that this helped ensure students were comfortable and felt they could be honest in their conversations.

As a future teacher, it was wonderful opportunity for me to meet with students in their school and speak with them about education and their

problems. Visiting the high school students provided me chance to observe them in real class setting with their classmates in a class period. They were in student mood in their class with their school uniforms. I think it is important to get qualitative information from them, because setting is really affects the peoples' mood. If I want to do real conversation with students it was good idea to meet them in their community.

(Reflective narrative excerpt)

Hande similarly emphasized how valuable she found this experience in one of our conversations following the course, as well as how much it had helped her feel more comfortable interacting with students.

It was good to see. It was different for me because I was not here when I was in high school and I did not see any high school before, because my daughter was not in high school at that time...Seeing them in class and you are not teacher you are also students and they are more comfortable talking with you, you know. I just not observe my students I observe others also and see how they act. It was good experience to see. I can communicate with them, I can share with them something. It was big step for me. I feel comfortable. Maybe it was not the same for other classmates, they used to that but for me it was big step. Before I scared to go there and speak with students. You know I had image from the movies and I said "Okay, that's okay they're also normal I can speak with them, that's okay." From this perspective it was good for me. I feel comfortable and gain some confidence. This is important for me at least. (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that, given Hande's emphasis on the importance of communication, she valued this opportunity to interact with students and build her confidence in her abilities to connect with them.

As Hande storied her experiences, I gained insight into how she added additional layers to what I saw as already complex understandings related to community, education, and diversity. It appeared that though she continued to emphasize ideas that had remained strong themes in her stories to live by, this experience provided opportunities to think about and add to these stories in new ways. Additionally, it seemed Hande also interpreted this experience as providing an opportunity to become familiar with school settings and students she had not encountered before, and to shift her understandings of them.

City high school community snapshot. Before this community-based field experience, Hande reflected that she was interested in visiting this community in part due to its diverse cultural history. However, while she made personal connections to previous experiences, her experience with this community seemed to contrast with her expectations regarding the visibility of the community's cultural history. As Hande storied how her expectations contrasted with her experience, I sensed the importance Hande placed on recognizing and preserving cultural history.

Prior to this experience, Hande expressed in her reflective narrative that the readings about the community had captured her interest regarding the cultural diversity and history of the area. She was particularly interested to learn that there had been, at one time, a large number of Russian immigrants in the area, since she had lived in Russia prior to moving to the United States.

I know something about Russians since I lived in Russia for eight years. That's why this area has drawn my attention, and I really was curious about the region; how it looks and what distinguishes it from other parts of Houston, and what kind of historical places I can visit. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Hande connected the history of this community with her own experiences, and I was reminded of similar connections she had made with our other course experiences. It seemed that Hande's diverse experiences living in different communities in different countries had provided her with knowledge that enabled her to make a personal connection with most of our community-based field experiences.

Following our experience, Hande expressed in her narrative reflection that she enjoyed meeting for class prior to exploring the community. She reflected, "the restaurant was different and I liked it. It was warm and friendly...that made me feel comfortable" (Reflective narrative excerpt). Reflecting on her exploration of the community itself, Hande described her interest in observing local art and architecture. She recalled feeling a sense of familiarity when encountering a mural on a building she identified as representative of Mexican culture that reminded her of artwork she saw while in San Francisco. However, she was surprised she didn't see any evidence of German and Russian cultures that, she had learned from course readings, had historically been part of the community.

After I started to walk around I saw the wall picture on the building and that also was wonderful. I saw that kind of art work in San Francisco and I believe this is a part of Mexican culture because these pictures were on the

side of region where mostly Mexican population lives. I also expected to see some Russian signatures somewhere on the buildings and streets but there was not any sign that they were there and made a big population sometimes back in the history. I know from the reading that there are still so many fifth generation of first German, Russian settlers but it is really interesting that they didn't show their culture in that region. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

While Hande connected what she saw to her previous experiences in San Francisco, I found it interesting that she was surprised not to see more evidence of the other cultures that had historically lived in this community. After reading about the rich cultural history of the community, Hande was surprised not to see more evidence of these traditions, and contrasted this with her perception of Turkey.

I am from Turkey and my country also was very diverse. One can find lots of historical monuments in any region and understand what cultures and nations have once lived and governed the region. I expected to see that in there but there were almost everything has the same characteristics and look like everywhere else in Houston. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Hande's expectations and her contrast between this community and Turkey suggested to me ways in which Hande believed culture and history should be recognized and preserved. It seemed that she did not find evidence of such recognition and preservation in this community.

Hande did not discuss this experience specifically in our conversations following the course. While her narrative reflections indicated that she enjoyed the experience and

the opportunity it provided her to learn about this community, I wondered to what extent it was memorable for her beyond the course. Rather, it seemed that her experiences in this community contrasted with her expectations and strong beliefs regarding the acknowledgement of cultural diversity and history.

Exiting Stories to Live By

Experiences with community, education, and diversity. Entering our course, I viewed Hande's stories to live by related to community, education, and diversity as influenced by her experiences growing up in a culturally diverse home and community in Turkey, as well as having spent the majority of her adult life living abroad in Russia and the United States. The experiences encouraged Hande to understand diversity in multiple ways, and appreciate how diverse lived experiences shaped identity. Through her experiences with education, as a student, observing her husband as a teacher, as a mother of children attending school, and preparing to become a teacher herself, Hande came to understand that, while diversity was inherent, children and students shared similar needs. Hande storied herself as someone who believed that, by recognizing how diverse lived experiences shaped identity, teachers could use their knowledge to communicate and collaborate with students. Through this teachers could build strong relationships with their students and provide them with the caring and support they needed to be successful. During our community-based field experiences, Hande added layers to her entering stories to live by as she gained additional knowledge related to education, community and diversity.

In her Final Narrative, Hande reflected how important she believed our community-based field experiences had been in contributing to new understandings.

While attending this class I realized that community also grows with people who live in it. It is also changing, growing, transforming with its residents. We have visited some critical places which show how to begin community life in there and some place shows how to change community by the time. These visits gave me so much knowledge than dry information. I saw, observed, and understood the community by myself. This was a great opportunity. I learn better if I can see, touch, and experience it like many students. Our trips were perfect to my learning style. I wanted to be a teacher in Texas but I never had a chance to visit any of its regions other than I lived. Learning about the city and its residents make me feel belong to it. Now, I can say that I learned which nations came here for what, where they lived, how they lived, what they did to this community. Also how wards were settled around the country. All those information that I learned are very important because their children may be my students one day and probably will. If I know about them and their history I can communicate effectively and build good relationship with them. This will provide better learning environment to them and to me. They will learn more and will educated people. Educated people all the time is productive people. Those kids will create healthy community around them which is my goal as a future teacher. (Final Narrative excerpt)

From this retelling of her community-based field experiences, I sensed how Hande had made meaning from them in ways that added to and sustained her entering stories to live

by. She reflected how these experiences provided opportunities to gain valuable personal knowledge about previously unfamiliar communities, giving her a sense of connection to them. She felt this knowledge would better enable her to understand and connect with her students. I saw how Hande's interpretation of her experiences at the conclusion of our course reflected the ways in which she believed they supported her entering stories to live by that emphasized acknowledging students' diverse lived experiences as a basis for building strong relationships with them.

In our conversations that took place a year later, I asked Hande to reflect on her experiences from our course. She shared how she continued to value our community-based field experiences, and had shared how she believed she benefited from them with her Cooperating Teacher during her student teaching.

It's really change my look to the education, I can say that. Definitely you have to have to take this class. I like the idea, do you remember when we visit the [University and City High School communities]? I like the idea it was good to know where students come from, where they live and its good to understand and puts you in their place and think about them. It was awesome. I'm still talking about this project to my CT. Yeah, really!

(Interview excerpt)

From these and other stories she told during our discussions, I sensed that Hande continued to think about these experiences in ways that added to her understandings of community, education, and diversity.

Throughout our community-based field experiences, I saw Hande as interpreting her understandings of them in ways that added to and sustained her entering stories to

live by. It appeared that though she continued to emphasize ideas that had remained strong themes in her stories to live by, these experiences provided opportunities to think about and add to these stories in new ways. Hande continued to emphasize the importance of knowing and understanding students' diverse lived experiences as a basis for connecting with them and providing them with care, support, and meaningful instruction.

Going to teach. Hande's teacher identity, her stories to live by, entering the course reflected the dedication with which she had pursued her dream of teaching for many years. Through her experiences, she had come to view teaching as an almost sacred responsibility of caring and providing for the needs of her students. Hande interpreted her experiences in our course as adding to her understandings of how to connect with students. In doing so, she extended her desire to build relationships with students to create new storied knowledge that positioned her as a teacher as curriculum maker in which she co-created instruction with her students. However, her knowledge and stories competed with those she encountered on the professional knowledge landscape upon entering student teaching. While she seemed to sustain her teacher knowledge and identity, part of Hande's exiting story also became one of questioning whether she would continue to be able to do so once she entered the profession.

In our conversations following our course, Hande and I discussed how she thought her community-based field experiences had influenced her teaching. She expressed how her experiences had prompted her to create new knowledge related to teaching.

Yeah, actually I learn a lot from your class. It's really change my look to the education. I never feel like you're knowing something and saying to me, just I feel all the time you are curious about my thinking. "What you think?" all the time. This also base of my teaching ideas. Think, learning about your students, what they thinking. Not about what you know and what you want to teach. What they want to learn and what they know. How we share this knowledge and build together new things, new ideas, and how to use these ideas in education for get better things. This was really, I can say your class was milestone in my ideas and education, you know, strategies or something. (Interview excerpt)

I sensed how Hande had interpreted her experiences in ways that extended her emphasis on connecting with and caring for students to her pedagogical approach. These understandings emerged as strong themes in the stories Hande told about her student teaching experiences.

In our conversations, Hande shared stories from her student teaching she believed exemplified how our community-based field experiences influenced her teaching. From these stories, I understood how Hande lived a competing story alongside her Cooperating Teacher and the challenges she faced as her own personal practical knowledge contrasted with the professional knowledge landscape she encountered.

Hande described how her attempts to enact the knowledge she had gained in our course were often met with resistance from her Cooperating Teacher and her colleagues.

I can say that my ideas like become not realistic for them when I talk with other teachers in my CT's friends. I'm talking about all the time in your

class and how we did things and they said they're ideal things but in real life it doesn't work really like that. They said that, but I really planning to try let's see what works. I want to see the results but now I have no time to practice it because it is my CT's class, you know? I have to act how she wants to teach students but when I'm teaching that class I'm really prefer to math how to solve it how they thinking, you know? I try to get their ideas. If even they do mistake, I never am saying this is not right, I'm saying why you think that. Because they think something and do this math just, you know, I'm always trying to understand their thinking and I will do that in my class. And your class give me this idea because I feel that as a student and I know what does it mean for the students how it gives different perspective to the things...Actually my CT sometimes not agree with me. She says we don't have time to discuss problems or ideas but I will do the same thing as you. I will not only solve the problems in my class actually I'm planning to put more word problem and discuss their thinking, how they see, what's their perspective to look to problem and how they solve it. Not only like mathematical approach, you know, how they see this problem, why they don't like it, how they think different for each student. (Interview excerpt)

It appeared that, while Hande's personal practical knowledge reflected the importance of dedicating time and attention to students' perspectives, the professional knowledge landscape she faced attempted to invalidate this knowledge. I was interested in how, despite this confrontation, Hande continued to privilege her own knowledge as important.

I sensed that she felt she would have to further defer her aspirations of becoming the teacher she envisioned until she had her own classroom and students.

Hande further described the challenges she faced in her student teaching related to these contrasting approaches. She told a story about arriving to school on a day she was supposed to be observed by her university supervisor only to find her Cooperating Teacher had changed the lesson Hande had planned to teach without consulting or notifying her.

I was shocked because I don't know problem and I am going to solve with the students. Even I know how to solve it, I need to solve before them and see what can miss, you know? There's many steps. I can solve from my mind, but I need to see from student's perspective, and I have to think they might lose this point, you know, and I have to discuss in my mind. I put there two problems; she put four and, you know? It was really frustrating for me and I lose my motivation when I saw the PowerPoint, and it's really irritating and it really affects my teaching, you know? I'm still, I feel like I'm walking with others shoes. Still, I can say that I cannot have opportunity to practice my ideas. It doesn't work for me but I see what I have not to do. Only I get ideas about this. I did not have practice my ideas in my CT's class. She is good person. She is friendly, she is helpful, but I don't know what she thinks...But I can say I didn't have any opportunity to practice my ideas, even though I am sharing with her. She is agreeing with me. She says, "Yeah, this is okay, this is awesome," but she's never

doing this, you know? It's good next year we can talk, maybe something can change, I don't know right? (Interview excerpt)

From her story, I, again, sensed how Hande felt unable to act on her knowledge. I was struck by her image of walking in the shoes of someone else, shoes that did not fit, as a metaphor for how she saw her personal practical knowledge contrasting with the professional knowledge landscape represented by her Cooperating Teacher. It seemed that, though Hande believed she had gained new knowledge from our course experiences, she felt unable to implement her ideas. Instead she saw her student teaching experiences as providing examples of what not to do. Hande further reflected on the ways in which her approach contrasted with that of her Cooperating Teacher. From this, I sensed the ways in which Hande interpreted her experiences as validating what she knew about teaching, even if she could not express it in her student teaching placement.

You know what? She is repeating herself all the time. She said we don't have time to discuss the ideas, but she is repeating same class, maybe more than I can spend with them. It's good to discuss the idea at the beginning of the class when they first learning it, you know, discuss and get idea, because they need to see their ideas and see if it's right or wrong and see if it fits the math or not. They need to see that, but she is just giving the information and making practice. Even we have block, she says we don't have time to do that. So, I really tried put my ideas, at least some of them, yeah, so let's see. (Interview excerpt)

As Hande storied her experience, I sensed how her stories to live by contrasted with those of her Cooperating Teacher. While Hande lived a story of a teacher as curriculum maker,

it appeared that her cooperating teacher lived a story of teacher as implementer. I saw Hande as reflecting how she had interpreted her course experiences through her entering stories to live by that emphasized the importance of connecting with students in ways that encouraged her to adopt a collaborative approach to teaching based on students' perspectives. It seemed that Hande believed that by providing students with opportunities to think about and discuss their reasoning, despite the time it might take, she believed she would spend less time than her Cooperating Teacher, whom she observed often repeated herself.

Hande told another story that reflected how these challenges also extended to the approach taken by her Cooperating Teacher to establishing relationships with students. Hande began her story by again emphasizing that her Cooperating teacher had a good relationship with her students, and that she was well liked by them. However, I wondered if this served as a cover story that Hande used to prevent herself appearing more critical of her Cooperating Teacher. Hande related how, during her student teaching, she became increasingly aware of students that she believed were struggling and could benefit from extra help. Wanting to share this information with her Cooperating Teacher, she compiled a list of students' names and presented them to her. She viewed this as valuable information and a resource her Cooperating Teacher could use to improve the success of these students. She described giving the list to her Cooperating Teacher and having her accept it and place it on the desk, thanking her. However, later, Hande noticed the list in the trash, and she felt that the Cooperating Teacher had dismissed this important information. She was saddened at the recollection of this incident and I sensed how painful it was for her to have what appeared to be such a strong image of her identity

as a teacher challenged by someone that represented professional knowledge. As Hande storied this experience, I again saw how she had added to her entering stories to live by in which she positioned herself as a teacher who wanted to connect and use her knowledge of students to promote and support their success. While she seemed to sustain these stories when confronted by competing stories, I also sensed that she questioned whether she would be able to continue to sustain them once she became a teacher herself.

From her stories, I sensed the ways in which Hande's exiting stories to live by reflected the ways in which she had added to her personal practical knowledge of teaching. In the stories she told that she felt reflected how her course experiences influenced her, I saw Hande as shifting her image as a teacher that used her knowledge to connect with and support students to that of a teacher as curriculum maker who used these resources to co-create instruction with her students. Simultaneously, I also viewed her stories as ways in which she had sustained and strengthened her entering identity as a caring teacher providing for the needs of her students. Even when confronted with competing stories, she seemed to sustain this identity, though she felt unable to live it as a student teacher. This appeared to leave her questioning how her teacher knowledge and identity might shift and change once she finally realized her long held dream of becoming a teacher. I, too, left our shared inquiry space wondering how Hande's stories to live by would continue to develop once she entered the profession.

Jackie's Storied Experiences

Jackie was born and spent her early childhood in a rural town in the Midwest before moving to a suburban community in the metropolitan area south of Houston in the fourth grade. Growing up, her father was a high school teacher and later a college

professor, while her mother was a stay at home mom. Her family moved to Houston when her father received an opportunity to work for NASA. During the course of this inquiry, Jackie continued her education coursework towards a bachelor's degree in Education with a teaching certification in 4-8 Social Studies. However, during her student teaching, her family unexpectedly moved to another state in the Midwest after her father accepted a teaching opportunity there, and Jackie chose to move with them and transfer to another university to complete her coursework rather than stay in Houston. She is currently completing coursework there. She plans to graduate and seek a full-time teaching position in her new home.

Entering Stories to Live By

Coming to teach. Jackie's stories to live by related to her decision to teach reflected her many different interests as well as the influence of her growing up as the daughter of an educator. Though Jackie recalled an interest in teaching that extended back to her early childhood, it was not until college that she finally settled upon teaching as a career, eventually deciding specifically to teach middle school social studies after considering several other possibilities. These multiple and varied experiences each provided additional layers to Jackie's entering story to live by of finally deciding to become a teacher, a profession she had, in many ways, known and experienced closely all of her life.

In her Personal Narrative, Jackie recalled her early memories of playing as a teacher at home.

When I was in preschool and elementary school, I made desks for my stuffed animals and would often create tests, quizzes and homework to

give them. I imagined that I was the teacher and would grade my stuffed animal's assignments, put grades in a grade book and discipline them when their behavior was unacceptable. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

She also described a story she remembered her mother telling of how she had to warn Jackie's kindergarten teacher that she would try to organize the classroom. The role of a teacher seemed to come naturally to Jackie who recalled "As I progressed through my education I found it very easy to help other students if they didn't understand what the teacher was saying, or even if they were just searching for an alternative method to solve a problem" (Personal Narrative excerpt).

I wondered whether Jackie's early interest in education might have been related to her father's career as a teacher, then professor. Jackie expressed deep admiration for her father's accomplishments as well as for the dedication he showed to both his students and his family.

...while my dad was a professor at [university], I had many experiences with college students at a very young age...My father was not only very socially accepted by many of his students, but he was also highly respected as well. My father has always had a busy career, but he has always set aside time to spend with his family. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

Jackie's description of her winding route towards becoming a teacher also provided me with insight into an image that remained a strong theme in the stories she told, that of wanting to help others. Jackie recalled how, while in high school, she had initially considered medicine, but was discouraged by her "weak stomach," and decided

she needed to “find another career in which [she] could help people” (Personal Narrative excerpt). In college she briefly pursued law and then psychology before deciding on education. Further, she hoped to combine her love of teaching and history by becoming a social studies teacher.

Jackie also referenced her experiences, both positive and negative, with teachers that had influenced her approach to teaching. These references provided me with insight into the values Jackie held for herself as a future teacher. She recalled an art teacher who inspired her with his creative classroom environment as well as his approach to teaching.

His room was my definition of an art classroom, it inspired me to find interest in the subject, and showed that he cared a lot about trying to get all his students interested in the subject. He also made a point to make sure everyone felt included, even if you weren’t the best artist. He assisted anyone that needed help with just about anything, regardless of the content area, and always gave constructive criticism for work completed in his own class. (Personal Narrative excerpt)

She contrasted this experience with a teacher she had in middle school whose false accusation and unwillingness to listen resulted in unfairly having to serve detention.

Jackie also contrasted two of her professors she had recently taken, one of whom had interactive lectures with visuals and tested conceptually, while the other read from notes and tested specific details.

From her stories, I understood the importance Jackie ascribed to helping others, and I sensed that she saw teaching as a way to do this. Beginning with her own father, she admired those teachers she had known who reached out to students, supporting them

in their interests and learning. Jackie also seemed to have a natural affinity for learning and teaching, enjoying the process of learning, organizing, and teaching information to others. Entering our course, Jackie's identity, her story to live by, related to teaching was one of combining her desire to help others with her own love of learning.

Experiences with community, education, and diversity. Jackie's stories related to community, education, and diversity reflected her contrasting experiences growing up in a small rural Midwestern town and then moving to a suburban community in the metropolitan area south of Houston. In each place, Jackie understood community and diversity to function differently, variances that would add to Jackie's own interpretations of these ideas. Jackie's stories often focused on her personal experiences related to diversity and her interactions with those whom she viewed as different from herself. These understandings supported Jackie's entering stories to live by of becoming a teacher that encouraged students to learn from and about each other, and who intended to use her own knowledge of students to create meaningful and relevant instruction.

In her Educational Narrative, Jackie contrasted her experiences living and attending school in what she saw as two very different communities. Jackie described her hometown in the Midwest as being a small farming community where her limited exposure to "cultural diversity" resulted mainly from her father's position at the local university. (Educational Narrative excerpt)

[The town] had a total of two stoplights and the majority of cultural diversity was introduced to me only because my father was a college professor at [university]...The majority of the population came from college students who attended university during the school year. The racial

and cultural composition [of the town] was very limited to predominately middle/lower class Caucasians. (Educational Narrative excerpt)

In our conversations, Jackie recalled sensing that those who were different often seemed excluded from what she remembered as being a tightly knit community in which “everybody knew everything about each other” (Interview excerpt).

In [town], it was primarily white and occasionally you had somebody that was different, and they kinda felt outcasted I feel. They tried not to interact, or they tried not to meddle. They felt like they were kind of isolated I guess. I mean, I had friends who different ethnicities up there but other people chose not to... (Interview excerpt)

This feeling extended to Jackie’s small combined K-12 school where she recalled that she rarely encountered “cultural diversity” at school. (Educational Narrative excerpt) An exception to this was her memory of befriending a classmate who had recently moved to town.

When I was [there], I had a friend, [name], and I think she was from India or somewhere thereabouts...I hung out with her a lot and sometimes, you know about the whole outcast thing, I would hang out with her and the girls would not hang out with me when I was hanging out with her. (Interview excerpt)

I sensed from Jackie’s story that in this community, diversity was often negatively associated with differences, primarily based on race and ethnicity, from the dominant culture. I wondered if, as Jackie had implied, it was her close relationship with her father,

with his education and connection to the university, that prompted her to associate with someone her classmates avoided.

These experiences contrasted sharply with those Jackie recalled after moving to a suburban community in the metropolitan area south of Houston, where she found both her neighborhood and schools to be much more diverse than those in her previous community.

When I moved to [community] however, I felt as if I had suddenly been exposed to a very diverse and culturally rich city...I have acquired a wide variety of friends that have come from all over the world...I'm very pleased with the large variety of individuals that I have been introduced to when I moved [here]. I wouldn't change a thing about my family's decision to move here, because I feel that the different interactions I have had with these very different individuals...have been truly insightful and have really opened my eyes. (Educational Narrative)

Jackie reflected that as a result of moving to and attending school in her new community, she had the opportunity to develop close relationships with friends who were culturally different from herself. She recalled memories of attending once close friend's quinceanera, while another introduced her to henna. In our conversations, she reflected on how much she enjoyed learning about experiences and perspectives different from her own.

The diversity was definitely nice because you get to hear their stories, their background, what they've been through, how they live, what they do at home, their religious values, and all that other stuff. It's really

interesting to get to hear that and I just would not have been exposed to that had I not attended [university] or moved [here]...(Interview excerpt)

While Jackie continued to story her knowledge and experience with diversity in terms of nondominant culture, she seemed to view her interactions with diverse others as opportunities to learn about experiences and perspectives different from her own. Jackie confirmed this in our conversations when she asserted “I really enjoy having different people’s opinions. I love hearing different perspectives. I’m very open-minded about a lot of things, including religion, politics, all that other stuff...” (Interview excerpt).

In contrast to her perception of her new community as more accepting of ethnic and cultural diversity, Jackie reflected in our conversations that she felt greater intolerance of socioeconomic differences. She recalled memories from school of inclusion being based on having a particular brand of purse or owning a car. One memory in particular stood out to her of having a classmate question whether she had enough money to regularly maintain and style her hair, something that Jackie felt was unnecessary given her active involvement in her school’s swim team. This focus on money, possessions, and appearances was new to Jackie; it had not been like this in her hometown.

It’s very materialistic in my opinion. It’s all based on what you have and if you don’t have it you’re just not...It wasn’t like that at all in [town]. Because [there], I guess there’s still rich and poor, people that claim to be rich and poor. I guess you could state that on how much land you had or how big your house was, but there really weren’t big houses, like there weren’t any mansions but there are mansions [here], on this side of

town...so it's very much based on money. I feel the groups are very dependent on that. (Interview excerpt)

I was interested in Jackie's observation regarding the contrasting ways in which each community she had lived in seemed to define and respond to difference, and I sensed that these conflicting experiences added to the different ways Jackie thought about diversity.

Jackie reflected that, as a result of knowing and being friends with people different from herself, she was more open to and accepting of diversity. She believed this as contributed to her success in college and her future career as a teacher.

I feel that because I was introduced to such a wide variety of individuals...who have different cultural values than my own, I am now more accepting of the beliefs of other individuals. I feel that this was an important lesson that I needed to learn while in school, that I might not have learned if my family and I had stayed in [town]. What I learned from my friends that have a different culture background other than my own will continue to help me throughout my college career, as well as though my future career as an educator. (Educational Narrative excerpt)

In our conversations, Jackie further elaborated on her perspectives regarding diversity and how she planned to use them in her teaching. She emphasized that she planned to use seating clusters, as opposed to isolated rows of desks, to promote student interaction, and believed it would help students to learn both from and about each other.

I'm one of those people, I always like learning new things and I always like meeting new people and, you know, you can meet somebody who says they're from Africa but where in Africa? Like, what does that

specific area have that's unique and important?...Because you don't know much about where that person's from, and the more you know about what's important to them, the more you can tie that into your lesson plans.

(Interview excerpt)

I understood Jackie's identity, her stories to live by, related to education, community, and diversity entering our course as reflecting her contrasting experiences living and attending school in two different places. Each seemed to add additional layers to the ways in which Jackie thought about diversity in relation to herself. Jackie storied herself as someone who greatly valued opportunities to interact with and form personal relationships with those different from herself, as well as who looked forward to providing her students with similar opportunities and to use her knowledge to connect learning with students' experiences.

Community-based Field Experiences

University community. Prior to this community-based field experience, Jackie reflected on her perceptions of University Community as dilapidated and unsafe. She expressed how, despite enjoying the diversity found on campus, she was reluctant to venture into the surrounding community. However, after our experience, Jackie's perceptions of the community shifted as she came to value its historic significance and the interconnectedness of its residents. This experience encouraged Jackie to reflect on her perceptions and to revise them according to her new understandings. Through her telling and retellings, I came to understand how her experience both shifted and sustained her stories to live by.

In her reflective narrative written following this community-based field experience, Jackie storied how her perception of the community arose from multiple influences, and extended back prior to her attendance. She recalled how she initially decided to apply to the university because of its proximity to where she lived; the university was located off the same major highway that ran past her own community, making commuting daily between the two locations possible. However, family and friends expressed concerns about the community surrounding the university, concerns that Jackie thought back to when she visited the campus for orientation.

My family and friends questioned my decision to attend [the university] at first, because of the neighborhoods surrounding it. They told me horror stories about the “[University Community],” so they called it and how the individuals living in the area were very “sketchy” and “unsafe” to interact with...Upon my arrival at the campus, my family and I were told that we could park in the parking lot by the stadium, and as we were driving around the area I noticed a lot of older houses that looked like they needed to be fixed up. I also acquired a sudden feeling of uneasiness as I looked at the way the individuals in the area were dressed, most of the individuals were wearing bandanas, jeans and a white tank top. Prior to seeing individuals near [the university] wearing this type of clothing, the only thing I could relate their choice of dress to was that of a gangster from the movies I had previously seen. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Jackie further reflected that while she “enjoyed the amount of diversity [the university] had to offer” and “actually felt relatively safe on campus” shortly after beginning her

attendance, she continued to avoid the surrounding areas unless she was driving through them in her car. (Reflective narrative excerpt) Campus alerts added to her fears, as when she “would receive emails from our police department telling us about awful incidents that have occurred on campus, [she] automatically began to think it was because of the area in which [the university] was located” (Reflective narrative excerpt).

From these stories, I began to get a sense of what Jackie considered important influences on her perceptions of the community surrounding the university prior to our experiences there. It appeared that Jackie’s interest and desire to learn about those different from herself did not initially extend to this community and the people in it. I wondered if it was because, unlike the relationships she had formed through school, she had no personal connection to this place or the people that lived here. Her expectations prior to our experience seemed to contrast with her story already in place of welcoming the opportunity to interact with different people and learn about their lives and experiences. As I thought about this contrast, I was reminded how our identities, our stories to live by, show different facets depending on our situation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) I sensed this interaction differed from those Jackie had previously described, and I wondered to what extent her discomfort arose from feeling that, unlike previous interactions initiated in school, a familiar place, this experience occurred in an unfamiliar place. Additionally, I believed her unfamiliarity with and lack of connection to this community placed Jackie in a position of otherness; in this situation it would be Jackie rather than those she interacted with who would be perceived as different.

Reflecting after our visit, Jackie found her perceptions of the community and its residents shifted significantly. Her descriptions indicated that, contrary to her initial

observations, she viewed the residents as hospitable and invested in their community. She also saw the community itself as having important historic value. The contrast between her expectations and experiences prompted Jackie to reevaluate her own definition of and experiences with community.

My first experience was that everyone in this particular area of the [University Community] was very friendly and appeared to have a great sense of community. Our guide was very knowledgeable of the area and seemed to know everyone we ran into throughout our tour. We began by stopping at [a local middle school], which was the first location of [a local high school] in 1926. I was shocked to find that the school doesn't have a nurse, but was relieved to find that all of the student's parents volunteer to help out with this problem and take turns filling the role of the schools nurse...The students were very friendly and it appeared as though our guide knew the majority of individuals that we ran into throughout our tour in the school. As we were walking around the houses that have been constructed for young mothers and the [residential] duplexes our guide ran into even more individuals that he knew on a first name basis. I began to feel more at ease, because of how friendly the individuals in this particular area seemed to be. There were also a couple of parks in the area that we passed on our way to the [music venue], which was designed in 1939 by Lenard Gabert. The parks had anywhere from two to twenty individuals hanging out at the tables and playing on the playground toys as well, which I honestly don't see much of living in [my community]. This is

most likely because a lot of individuals here in my neighborhood don't know each other, so why would they allow their children to go outside and play at a park that they don't know the other individuals kids who are there also. After experiencing the social interaction between the individuals we met in the [University Community], I started questioning the definition of a community, as well as questioning my own community here in [my community]. When I was younger, there used to be children outside roaming the neighborhood most of the day. Now I am lucky to see any kids out playing on the toys and riding their bikes around the neighborhood, enjoying the same childhood I once had. The friendly individuals we saw throughout our tour were amazing and seemed to put us all at ease, but I was also fascinated with the history of the houses and the area as well...I hope that in the next couple of years, when I have students of my own there will be more groups involved in the preservation of the historical aspects of [University Community]. Regardless of how many individuals keep moving into the city, because history is something that needs to be preserved. So someday we still have something left to share with our own future students and the variety of cultures are also preserved (Reflective narrative excerpt)

Jackie reflected that, contrary to her perceptions of the community as potentially dangerous, those she encountered seemed friendly and welcoming, taking time to speak with our guide and interact with one another in the community's public spaces. I, again, noticed her emphasis on the importance of personal relationships. These interactions

seemed to prompt Jackie to reflect on her own community and how rare she believed similar occurrences had become there. Additionally, I sensed a shift regarding Jackie's perceptions of the community as dilapidated to that of appreciating its historic significance. I wondered if witnessing and learning about the community's historic origins and sites had captured her interest as a future social studies teacher. Jackie referenced awareness of issues the community faced, including lack of school funding and gentrification; however, she seemed to emphasize her admiration of the collective action taken by residents and community members to preserve and strengthen their community rather than the broader sociopolitical context underlying such issues. It seemed that in emphasizing the positive aspects of the organization and surrounding community, Jackie modified her initial story of this community in ways that sustained her entering stories to live by related to community and diversity. This community and its residents, though different, offered valuable opportunities to learn about diverse experiences and cultures of others.

Based on her experience, Jackie concluded that “ I came to learn that my expectations of the [University Community] were just huge misconceptions” (Reflective narrative excerpt). In her Final Narrative, Jackie suggested that other students might also change their perspectives if given the opportunity to experience the community in a similar way.

I've overheard some students at [the university] blame the individuals who live in [University Community] for students getting robbed on campus after sundown, but after my experience [there] I don't believe it at all. I feel that if the other students were to actually go out into the [University

Community] and get to know some of the individuals in the community, I'm sure they would feel the same too. The individuals that I had the pleasure of meeting while in the [University Community] were really nice and wanted to accomplish something that could not only be beneficial to themselves, but would also help their community as well. (Final Narrative excerpt)

By attributing her initial perceptions as misconceptions, I viewed Jackie as making meaning of her experience through restorying it in a way that enabled her to sustain her entering stories to live by related to community and diversity. I was interested to learn more about how Jackie accounted for her shifting interpretation when she later introduced the topic in a conversation about her course experiences.

In a conversation focusing on her experiences in the course, Jackie began by discussing our visit to this organization and the surrounding community, and reflected on how the experience encouraged her to question and reevaluate her perceptions. She expressed her belief that her initial attitude toward the community was predominately shaped by her previous experiences being “raised in a mostly well-off neighborhood” in which a high value was placed on the appearances of both people and their possessions (Interview excerpt). This assertion reminded me of earlier conversations in which Jackie emphasized the impact socioeconomic differences seemed to have in her community. It seemed that Jackie also recognized this influence on her perceptions when she reflected that “I think a lot of people are unable to trust the people that live around the area based off of typical stereotypes that they have...I mean, basically anything I thought about the people and the community around [the university] is wrong” (Interview excerpt). Jackie

also reiterated how media contributed to her perceptions regarding appearances by associating particular styles of dress with criminal behavior in both news and entertainment programming. She concluded, “so it’s a really bad stereotype and assumption to base that kind of thing on a person that’s dressed that way” (Interview excerpt). Again, I sensed that admitting that her initial perceptions were “wrong” enabled Jackie to sustain her story of valuing diversity and the opportunity to learn about those she viewed as different.

I encouraged Jackie to further elaborate on the basis for her shifted perceptions, and she emphasized the importance of experiencing the community first-hand and having the opportunity to personally interact with its residents.

I think talking to the tour guide and having the opportunity to have to actually discuss what it’s like living in [University Community] with the people that actually live there every day really helped. I mean the facts that, as we were going through the tour, we began to be more familiar with the area, it helped to calm our nerves and we were actually able to take to heart what the people were saying. I mean they care a lot about their community, and they’re trying to keep the history and ensure one another is taken care of. (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that these personal interactions enabled Jackie to connect to the community and humanize the people there as she recognized in them characteristics and aspirations that she also valued.

As Jackie retold and relived this community-based field experience, I understood how it had shifted her stories to live by. I believe that, through this experience, Jackie

awakened to the ways in which her initial perceptions of University Community and its members contrasted with how she had previously storied herself as valuing opportunities to interact with and learn about others. This encouraged Jackie to reflect on her perceptions, and ultimately revise them in ways that enabled her to sustain her identity and stories to live by.

Neighborhood center. Before this community-based field experience, Jackie reflected that her perceptions of the community surrounding the neighborhood center were that it would be located in an undesirable area of the city, and that the center itself would be a small building with limited functions. Jackie's perceptions again shifted as a result of her experience as she came to appreciate the sense of community the center conveyed, as well as the collaboration between the organization and local residents to ensure the voices of the community were respected. How Jackie storied this community-based field experience provided insight into how she continued to add to her entering stories to live by related to community and diversity.

In her reflective narrative, Jackie recalled how she had anticipated that this neighborhood center would be located in a "bad" part of town" as well as "that it was also going to be a small building that would be kind of like a food pantry" (Reflective narrative excerpt). She also questioned the input that local residents had in the establishment of the center and anticipated that it may have been "forced on the current community" (Reflective narrative excerpt).

However, Jackie reflected that, after reviewing class readings and resources related to the center and visiting it in person, she realized that "my original expectations were just huge misconceptions" (Reflective narrative excerpt). Jackie observed how the

appearance of the center and surrounding community contrasted with her initial expectations.

I was really surprised with the location and the surrounding area of the center, it wasn't anything like the neighborhood that I had imagined in my mind. I had originally imagined the location of the center to be in a "bad" part of town, which would also be surrounded by run down houses. Once again, my misconceptions and lack of knowledge about the area had misled me. The neighborhood was actually really nice, consisting of some apartment complexes, some older homes and new ones as well. I think the [neighborhood center] added some color to the other buildings in the area because it was painted with a variety of bright colors. It also gave off a great sense of community, as we walked through our tour many individuals said hello and individuals were at the park and walking around the center...(Reflective narrative excerpt)

As I thought about how Jackie storied her contrasting perception and experience, I was struck by the similarities between this story and her story about our previous community-based field experience. It seemed that Jackie's perceptions shifted according to each experience while her broader perspective remained less changed. It seemed experiencing communities different from those she had lived in remained an unfamiliar story for her.

Jackie recalled how she was impressed by the wide array of programs and services the community offered. She was particularly moved by the efforts made by the center to work collaboratively with local residents to accommodate their needs and

preferences. She referenced the lack of a fence surrounding the center, which was omitted based on input from the residents. She reflected “I personally like that the individuals constructing the center asked for opinions and input from the residents who already lived there before they constructed the center and didn’t just do what they wanted with the area” (Reflective narrative excerpt). Jackie also described the initiative of mothers in the community who had a busy street near the center closed and converted to a public space.

The Splash Park was also another neat feature that I really enjoyed. The input of mothers in the community was a really important contribution and influence in the construction of this project. The neighborhood mothers were concerned that the street running through the middle of the [neighborhood] center had too much traffic and could cause potential harm to the neighborhood children. So when the center was constructed, they blocked off the street and constructed a little water park consisting of multiple sprinklers that can be activated by a child by simply stepping on a button. I think this was a very great use of space and collaboration amongst both the individuals that constructed the center and the members of the community. (Reflective narrative)

I was interested in the emphasis Jackie placed on the collaboration between the center and community residents. It seemed important to her that the voices of the community be heard with regard to the development of the center. Jackie also shared her belief that, as a result of this, the center represented a strong sense of community, one that again prompted her to reexamine her own neighborhood. She suggested that that she felt a

greater sense of community here more than the “experience I am used to in [my community], where everyone keeps to themselves and remains inside their homes. To me, this does not give me a sense of community, because I don’t know anything about the individuals that live in my community (Reflective Narrative excerpt).

In one of our conversations, Jackie referenced this experience as memorable because of this collaboration present between the center and its surrounding community. She reflected that “going to [this neighborhood center], it was nice to see that it’s possible to include something new and something old. They could accommodate to what they needed in the area and the people who made the center were working with people already in the area” (Interview excerpt). It seemed that by emphasizing the collaboration and activism of the community, Jackie again interpreted her experience in ways that enabled her to sustain her stories to live by through finding characteristics of this community and its residents that she identified with as something to be valued and appreciated. I was again reminded of the similar ways in which she storied this and her previous community-based field experience.

As Jackie storied her experience at this neighborhood center, I saw how she relived a story similar to the one she told about her experience in the community surrounding the university. I wondered at the ways in which Jackie’s seemingly competing stories to live by intersected to prompt similar interpretations of these two experiences. Again, it appeared that Jackie had revised her initial perceptions in ways that sustained her entering stories to live by.

City high school collaborative. Before this community-based field experience, Jackie expressed that she was uncertain of what to expect going to City High School and

interacting with students there. While she believed that their status as magnet students ensured they were interested in attending the school, she was unsure of what the school itself would be like. After our experiences there, Jackie reflected that the school reminded her more of her own high school than she had anticipated. She also expressed that interacting with the students there and discussing their perspectives on educational issues had encouraged her to reflect on her own experiences as a student and consider them from a new perspective. Through the stories Jackie told, I sensed how these experiences added new layers of understandings to her entering stories to live by related to teaching.

In her reflective narrative written after our experiences at City High School, Jackie reflected that she was initially unsure of what to expect. While she anticipated finding students who were interested in the school's magnet program for teaching, she also anticipated that the school itself would be dated and "lacking the necessary materials needed for success" (Reflective narrative excerpt). In one of our conversations, Jackie attributed her perceptions to her lack of familiarity with urban schools.

It's just I've never really been to an inner-city school. I've always lived in rural areas and gone to schools that had an abundance of resources, whereas going to an inner-city school, I just didn't really know what to expect. (Interview excerpt)

It seemed that Abby's attributed her sense of unfamiliarity to a perceived contrast between rural and urban schools. I found it interesting that Abby identified her community, a suburb located in the metropolitan area of Houston, as rural, as well as her perception that rural schools had more resources than those in urban locations. I sensed

that, similar to our previous community-based field experiences, Jackie's lack of lived experience in urban settings continued to influence her to characterize urban communities, including their schools, as different and unfamiliar places. It seemed Jackie viewed "inner-city" schools as separate and distinct institutions. I wondered what other differences Jackie perceived between schools like City High School and those she had attended.

After our experiences with the students at City High School, Jackie recalled being surprised to find that the school, despite being significantly older than the high school she had attended, had similar architecture and design.

My first impression was that for a school that was built in the 1930's is still had a beautiful and well-kept historical look from the outside. I was surprised to see that [it] had the same floor layout as...the high school I attended...When we got to the classroom...I was relieved to see that the room had multiple computers in it. The teacher even had his own computer and a projector...(Reflective narrative excerpt)

However, Jackie later learned, through her conversations with Daniel, a student there, that students at City High School did not have access to either textbooks or lockers. Later, in class discussion, it also emerged that, similar to the middle school we had visited in *University Community*, City High School also lacked a full-time nurse. Jackie concluded that while her initial expectation regarding the availability of resources was partially confirmed, the school was much more like her own high school than she had anticipated. Jackie also recalled being impressed by Daniel and the considerations and preparations he had made for himself after graduation. She later shared with her

classmates how “amazed I was that [Daniel] appeared to have a very organized plan for his future, considering he was only a junior in high school” (Reflective narrative excerpt).

In her reflective narrative, Jackie expressed how valuable she found our experiences at City High School, and particularly how interacting with students there had provided her with insights she could use as a teacher.

I really loved having the opportunity to interview a current high school student. I think that he offered me a lot of valuable information that I hope to use when I have a classroom of my own...Overall, I really enjoyed our trip to [City] High School. The students were really nice and offered a lot of good suggestions that I, myself might have potentially overlooked. I think that this experience was very insightful because it allowed me to see a current student's views on his teachers and school, which provided me with alternative methods to deal with certain issues and problems, as well as classroom organization and classroom management. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

In one of our conversations following our course, Jackie reflected that it was these experiences interacting with students at City High School that she remembered most, and we discussed at length how she viewed them as having influenced her.

I think the most memorable [part of the course] had to be talking with the kids at [City] High School. They made me realize that I may have forgotten some things that are important to kids that are that age, that were important to me, that I've kind of forgotten about throughout the achievement of my higher education. (Interview excerpt)

Jackie further reflected on understandings that had emerged from these experiences. She observed that they had reminded her that high school students “are still at a point where there’s a lot going on, and a lot of the teachers may or may not take the time to figure that out” (Interview excerpt). To illustrate this, she recalled hearing about the experiences of one of the students during a class discussion following one of our visits to the school. This student was consistently late to class every morning because she had to drop both her mother and boyfriend off at work prior to driving herself to school. Due to her consistent tardiness, the student was routinely assigned Saturday detentions. Jackie expressed frustration with the situation and suggested that it was important that teachers make the effort and take the time to get to know and understand the many issues that their students face in their lives, both in and out of the classroom.

Her teacher didn’t really work anything out with her, so she was always consistently in detention, which honestly is kind of, I mean if the teacher had taken the time to understand what was going on outside of school...if they really have something that is going on in their life that is significant like that, I think they should have been taking or at least making changes so that the student isn’t in D-hall every single Saturday because there’s really nothing they can do to get there on time if they have all that stuff going on and they only have one car...(Interview excerpt)

This story prompted Jackie to consider her own contrasting experiences as a student. She reflected that, given how she had been fortunate enough while growing up to have her mother see her to the bus stop every morning, she had not considered that high school students could have such responsibilities.

I never really thought about a student, who was the same age as I was, having the responsibility of, an adult responsibility of having to drive his or her parents to work...I guess that it was just kind of a new concept to me where a high schooler had so much responsibility in high school. I mean I worked when I was in high school but that was about it. (Interview excerpt)

I sensed from her retelling of these experiences how they added to Jackie's stories related to teaching. I was reminded of Jackie's entering stories with the importance she placed on pursuing a career in which she could help others, and I viewed this story as indicating ways in which she added to her understandings of how teachers could support their students. It seemed that Jackie added to her entering story to live by of wanting to support students by emphasizing the importance of knowing and considering how the lives of her students outside of school influenced their experiences in school. The retelling of this story further prompted Jackie to observe that a lack of such awareness and consideration by teachers of their students was a critical issue in education.

Meeting with the students from [City] High School also helped trigger some of my memories of some of my least favorite teachers. In combination of what they told me and experiences I've had, a lot of the problems with teachers not really being aware of all what's going on in a kid's life is really important. I understand that it may not be realistic to interview each student, but you could have a sheet and ask what significant things are going on in your life that may prevent you from being to class on time or completing your homework and requiring an

extension to complete stuff. I just think that getting to know your student is a lot more beneficial because then you're not completely oblivious to the fact that they have to drop their parent off. (Interview excerpt)

Jackie further connected these ideas to her own experiences as a freshman in high school, when she felt overwhelmed by the challenge of juggling several athletic and extracurricular commitments while maintaining her academic standing in multiple Pre-AP courses. She reflected that none of her teachers were aware of her overwhelming schedule, nor did any make the effort to become aware. Jackie ultimately chose to continue with her extracurricular commitments in music and athletics rather than take advanced courses because she valued the diverse experiences and knowledge they offered her; however, she indicated that, similar to the student whose experiences she described, she would have benefited from having teachers that took the time to learn about her situation and support her. It seemed that, as Jackie had reflected earlier, interacting with these students encouraged her to recall her own experiences and concerns as a student and reconsider them from her current perspective as a future teacher.

Similarly, Jackie shared how her experiences at City High School illustrated the importance, not only that teachers get to know their students, but also that they share their own lives with them as well. This understanding was emphasized through her conversation with Daniel, in which he expressed how having teachers that shared their lives with their students had a positive impact on both student-teacher relationships and the classroom environment. Daniel told a story about his favorite teacher from middle school, whom he admired because he shared stories of facing challenges as an adolescent and as an adult with his students.

[Daniel] felt the classroom environment immediately took a shift; it changed from everybody being uneasy and kept to themselves to being a warm and welcoming environment where people weren't afraid of being made fun of for having the wrong answer and they felt like the teacher was a lot more engaged in what they're wanting to do, in what the kids' goals are and what they're dealing with on a day to day basis. (Interview excerpt)

Jackie reflected how this story emphasized to her the importance of sharing her own experiences with her students.

I think it's really crucial for teachers to be able to show to their students that they're human beings as well, and that they've gone through the same kind of thing that they're going through right now, and that if they need help, they can come to you and they shouldn't be afraid to want to share anything with you. I mean, obviously there's certain things that we can or cannot help them with, but at least we know who to refer them to in the event they need to talk to someone else. (Interview excerpt)

Jackie also connected this story with one from her teaching observations.

At the first middle school I observed at, [the teacher] didn't share anything with her students. To her, her life was none of their business. To me, as an observer, if they know nothing about someone, it's just like why do I need to listen to them? Why do I need to pay attention? What value, what importance, what am I going to learn from this? It just brings up a lot more questions than it does answers...I mean I think if you can show them that

you've gone through some of the same things they have, and that you're sympathetic to some of the things that they do, they may be more receptive to the knowledge and information that you're trying to share with them. Whereas, if you completely close them off, they're going to be uncomfortable in your class and you just have a bad environment then because everyone is afraid to talk. They're afraid to say anything about themselves because they're afraid they'll be judged for it and that you won't care. (Interview excerpt)

The image of teaching and connecting with her students through sharing her own lived experiences with them remained a strong theme in the stories Jackie continued to tell.

Listening to Jackie describe how our experiences at City High School encouraged her to reflect on the issues students faced, as well on her understandings of how teachers should act, I began to sense how Jackie was gradually restorying her knowledge of teaching. I saw her adding to her existing stories to live by in new ways through her emphasis on building relationships with students by inviting them to share about themselves through sharing her own experiences with them.

City high school community snapshot. Prior to this community-based field experience, Jackie reflected how her expectations had shifted as a result of our previous experiences in communities. She expressed how she connected this experience with course resources discussing the history of the community, as well as emphasized her belief that knowing the community in which she taught was important for her success as a teacher. From her tellings and retellings of this experience, I understood how Jackie's

entering stories to live by related to teaching intersected with those related to community, education, and diversity.

Jackie reflected that her expectations of our Community Snapshot project were initially similar to those she had prior to visiting the community surrounding the university. However, she expressed that our previous community-based field and class experiences had shifted her perceptions.

Unfortunately my expectations prior to exploring [City High School Community] were similar to the expectations I had about [University Community]. Driving to University of Houston every morning, I briefly drive through an area that is known as [City High School Community]. From my own personal experiences while visiting various wards in Houston, I have acquired a completely different view of these communities than that of how I used to view them before taking this class. I used to think that most of Houston's wards were run down neighborhoods that consisted of a lot of crime. However, in conducting some research and reading about the [City High School Community], as well as having personal experience in the area, I have come to realize that once again my previous expectations were just huge misconceptions.

(Reflective narrative excerpt)

From this story, I sensed that Jackie had begun to rethink some of her prior assumptions regarding the local communities near the University. It appeared that Jackie entered this community-based field experience with a different perspective.

In her reflective narrative following our experience, Jackie recalled how exploring community revealed the income diversity among its residents. She connected this to course readings, which discussed the development of this historic community, and the changes it had undergone over time. Jackie expressed that this experience contributed to her understanding of local communities.

Overall, I really enjoyed having the opportunity to go out and observe yet another one of Houston's wards. I think that it allows individuals like me who have lived in the suburbs outside of Houston, the opportunity to be exposed to a completely different way of life (The city life). From my previous experience in [my hometown] a small town atmosphere is about the same as a large city's atmosphere in that everyone located within the community seems to know each other. Whereas while living in a suburban community I have felt completely isolated from my neighbors and other individuals living in my community. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I, again, sensed how our experiences encouraged Jackie to rethink her understandings of community. It seemed that, in some ways, Jackie found more similarities between these communities and her small hometown than in her current community located in the Houston suburbs. Jackie also connected this experience with teaching by recognizing the value of knowing the community in which she taught.

Our text book discusses how important it is for teachers to become more familiar with the community in which they teach in, which I feel is very important. After all, if I had started teaching in [local district] school, prior to taking this class and being allowed the opportunity to explore

various communities in Houston, I probably wouldn't be doing very well as a teacher. (Reflective narrative excerpt)

I was reminded of the increased significance Jackie seemed to place on knowing about her students' lives outside the classroom, and it appeared that she viewed learning about their community as an important part of understanding who her students were.

In one of our conversations following our course, Jackie shared how holding class at a local café prior to our exploration of the community had contributed to her enjoyment, and continued to remain a place she frequented with friends even after completing the course.

I really enjoyed going to [the café] because, once again, it got us out into the surrounding area, and it enabled us to see, in a sense, the same kind of community but a different kind of community at the same time. It allowed me to compare and contrast similarities and differences. (Interview excerpt)

Jackie also shared that, after the conclusion of our course, she had continued to frequent the café. She also reflected how this experience reminded her how recent trends of moving in rather than out of urban communities were reshaping them in ways that did not acknowledge their previous history.

I really think that the community snapshot project was interesting. I think it was a really an interesting thing to get to go through another community, to take a look at it, and get to talk to people that are living there. I think that seeing that old school really enabled me to make a connection to it. Now I can be like [City High School Community] has [the café] and a lot

of art displayed on its buildings. It's kind of a fusion of new and old...It's kind of interesting to see how an area can change over time. In particular, it made me remember how a lot of [these communities] are being torn down, and a lot of the history is being discarded because they're trying to expand the city area so that they can make it easier to commute but they have no care for the history or preserving it. (Interview excerpt)

It appeared that Jackie's experience enabled her to make personal connections to this community in ways that encouraged greater appreciation for it as well as recognize some of the issues that it and similar communities faced related to gentrification.

As Jackie storied this community-based field experience, I understood it as reflecting how her perceptions of local communities had gradually shifted. It seemed these experiences had provided her with opportunities to make personal connections to these communities and their residents that encouraged her to consider how where we live shapes how we live. I sensed these connections prompted her to rethink her prior assumptions that contrasted with the images she held of herself. These experiences added layers to Jackie's identity, her entering stories to live by related to teaching, community, and diversity.

Exiting Stories to Live By

Experiences with community, education, and diversity. Entering our course, I understood Jackie's stories to live by related to community, education, and diversity as shaped by her experiences growing up and attending school in what she viewed as two different communities. Jackie believed that, in moving from her small Midwestern hometown to a suburb in the metropolitan area south of Houston, her increased

interaction with those different from her enabled her to form relationships with people from diverse backgrounds. She felt this gave her a greater appreciation of diversity and storied herself as someone who enjoyed opportunities to meet and learn about people different from her. Further, she looked forward to using her knowledge of and experience with diversity as a social studies teacher; she saw herself encouraging students to learn from and about each other as well as using her own knowledge to create meaningful and relevant instruction. Through our community-based field experiences, Jackie encountered stories of communities that were unfamiliar to her. These experiences encouraged Jackie to reconsider assumptions she held and shifted her understandings in ways that allowed her to sustain and add to her entering stories to live by.

In her Final Narrative, Jackie reflected how beneficial these experiences had been in encouraging her to rethink her prior perceptions related to community and diversity.

In analyzing my experiences that I have had throughout this course, I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to actually get out and physically observe the communities that make up The Greater Houston Area. Personally, I would have never ventured off of campus in any direction by myself, because I was unfamiliar and uncomfortable with it. I'm really glad that I was offered the opportunity to experience such a unique and diverse city, as Houston. In visiting [University Community], the [neighborhood center], [the café], [City High School Community] and interviewing the students at [City] High School, I feel as though I became more informed and connected with the communities around the

[university]...From visiting the many places that we visited this semester, I also learned that not having a preconceived judgment of an area/group of individuals is very important, because they are most likely just huge misconceptions, and that actually getting out there and experiencing it for your self is very beneficial, informative and highly necessary for an aspiring teacher...Throughout all of our trips, I quickly began to learn what a real sense of community is, it's a group of individuals that want to help each other for the greater good of their community, which is a lot more than I can say about the "community" that I live in, in [community] Texas. In my neighborhood ("community"), I am lucky to see anyone outside of their house at any time of the day and there is little to no interaction amongst the individuals that live here, whereas, in many of the Greater Houston Communities, there was always a group of individuals that were out and about in their community. (Final Narrative excerpt)

From the restorying of her community-based field experiences, I saw how Jackie interpreted them in ways that shifted her understandings related to community and diversity that enabled her to sustain and add to her entering stories to live by. She reflected how these experiences encouraged her to rethink her perceptions, thereby shaping new personal knowledge about community and diversity. I saw how, through these experiences, Jackie connected with communities that had previously been unfamiliar to her and found value in them. I viewed these shifts as ultimately enabling Jackie to sustain her entering stories to live by of valuing diversity and of wanting to share her knowledge and appreciation for diversity with her students.

In our conversations following a year later, I asked Jackie to reflect on her experiences from our course. She expressed how important she found our community-based field experiences in providing her with opportunities to construct new personal knowledge, as well as how unique such experiences were compared to other education courses she had taken.

There aren't really a lot of field-based courses where it's easy to go from the classroom to something you're trying to show or make a point about. I'm definitely happy I took the class because it's a lot more important in my opinion to actually get hands-on experience than it is to sit on your butt in a classroom and have somebody preach to you and be like this is what its going to be like, and its always been like this, and its always going to be like this, and it's just interesting to me that a lot of education classes preach that you need to take the road less traveled but yet they're taking the one that's been traveled so many times that nobody can even get a feel for the road untraveled (laughs). Like it's kind of grown over with tons of plants and whatever else you can put there to make kids avoid it, but I just think that if they want teachers to be able to think out of the box and get them to think more critically, they need to set a better example. They need to allow kids to do more field-based classes like the one you were teaching and the professor needs to actually back it up and be like, hey we're going to do this as a class in case anybody's uncomfortable or, you know, I want to make sure you get the most out of this...and I honestly think it puts me ahead of the game cause I knew a little bit more

about the area as opposed to being in my own little bubble, living in [my community] and traveling [the interstate] up to [the university] every morning, staying on [the] campus, and then going home. (Interview excerpt)

From this, I sensed how unique and meaningful Jackie had found our community-based field experiences, and the ways they had contributed to her personal knowledge. Jackie also reflected on how she had come to value the opportunity to go beyond what she was familiar with, and how these experiences had added to her knowledge in ways that prompted her to rethink her previous understandings.

Getting the opportunity to kind of step out of what was familiar to me to something that was different or not so familiar with me was definitely a nice change...I mean it was just really nice to have a class that was structured around not just getting you used to the community around where you're going to be teaching and where you go to school, it also gave me time to reinvent myself and figure out different things about the area in which I'd been going to school for almost four years and knew nothing about. I think it enabled me to be more informed and it reminded me that not everyone is on the same equal playing field that I think they are...(Interview excerpt)

Jackie's reference to how these experiences reminded her "that not everyone is on the same equal playing field" interested me and I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by this. She referenced an article related to white privilege we had read in our course as well as issues related to gender biases and racial profiling from a course she was

presently enrolled in that focused on social stratification. Her connections made me think that, although a year had passed since our course, Jackie continued to consider it in relation to her current experiences regarding these issues.

I saw Jackie as interpreting her community-based field experiences in ways that encouraged her to rethink her understandings regarding community, diversity, and education and create new knowledge related to these ideas. Through encountering stories of community that were unfamiliar to her, Jackie awakened to ways in which her perceptions contrasted with how she storied herself in relation to diversity. These contrasts encouraged her to consider difference, diversity, and community in new ways. Through these experiences, Jackie felt she was able to connect to these communities, by interacting with their members, in ways that enabled her to see familiarity and value in them. In what were once unfamiliar and even intimidating spaces, Jackie now saw interconnectedness, activism, and cultural and historic significance. While I believe Jackie continued to view diversity primarily in terms of difference, I sensed a shift in her perceptions that allowed her to sustain her entering stories to live by of valuing diversity by adding new layers of understandings to old stories. Jackie continued to story herself as someone who valued diversity and learning about people different from herself, values and knowledge which she hoped to convey to her students.

Going to teach. Entering our course, I saw Jackie's identity, her stories to live by, as reflecting her desire to help and share her knowledge with others, as well as of her image of a teacher who connected to and supported student interests. Jackie interpreted her experiences in our course as adding to her understandings of the importance of learning about students and using that knowledge to connect to them and provide relevant

instruction. Her stories also reflected an increased emphasis on sharing her own life and experiences with her students. Her exiting stories reflected how her shifting understandings related to community and diversity informed her personal practical knowledge of teaching.

During our conversations following our course, Jackie and I discussed how she believed her community-based field experiences had impacted her teaching. She reflected that, through these personal experiences, she had gained practical knowledge that would benefit her in her daily practices.

I would definitely say it's more valuable than a lot of other education classes that I've taken. You can only be didactic and preach for so long, but until somebody actually gets out and is able to experience what's going on in the world, it just really doesn't make that much difference, in my opinion. I'd started my first semester of student teaching before I moved and realistically I wasn't sitting there going what's Vygotsky gonna want me to do, or what's Piaget going to want me to do for this. I was sitting there instinctively going off of what I knew I needed to do, and I felt like, you know, I could actually use the experiences of my community-based education class to make an impact. (Interview excerpt)

As I listened to Jackie, I was reminded of the distinction between knowledge for teachers and teacher knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). It seemed that Jackie felt the experiential nature of the course enabled her to internalize her learning in a way that made it “instinctual” rather than remaining theoretical and separate from her personal knowledge. However, Jackie also reflected on how course elements supported

interpretation of her experiences in ways that encouraged her to add new personal knowledge.

Because of the way our group discussions were structured, I really liked it. Because we not only go to talk amongst a group with our peers that we were sitting with on a day-to-day basis, but we also got to share our feelings about it as well, and in doing so I feel like I may have adopted some of my classmates' views and opinions on certain things whereas normally I'd be like, "No, I'm going to stick to what I believe in, I'm not going to change my opinion because you say you feel one way about it and I say I feel another way about it." It's definitely nice to be able to take away different views cause if kids are sitting there thinking there's only one right way to do things...I think it's like there's only one right answer when really there's more than one way to do the same thing, it just involves like a lot of critical thinking. I feel like if kids are exposed to group conversations where they have to think critically and they have to be more open and accepting of other people's views, I think it's a lot better for them in the long run. I think it would lead to them having less stereotypes potentially...I think as a social studies teacher especially, it's important to get across that there's more than one way to do things
(Interview excerpt)

It appeared to me that, while Jackie emphasized the importance of our community-based field experiences in adding to her personal knowledge, she also valued how class discussions encouraged her to think about her experiences and perspectives in new ways.

Further, she indicated that this approach was something she planned to incorporate in her own teaching as a way to encourage her students to critically think and reflect on their own knowledge and experiences. The importance of connecting to students' lived experiences in ways that encouraged them to personally relate to content, as well as think critically about their understandings emerged as themes in the stories Jackie told about her student teaching experience.

In our conversations, Jackie expressed how she thought her community-based field experiences influenced her teaching. From the stories she told, I began to sense how her experiences added to her personal practical knowledge and reflected her shifting stories to live by related to teaching.

Jackie described how, while she had initially been hesitant to explore areas unfamiliar to her, our course experiences encouraged her to become familiar with the community surrounding her student teaching placement school.

I think that, you know, they say to use real life experiences to get the kids' attention and I really honestly was, like, "Oh yeah I can do that" and then had I not really, I guess I was kind of shy in a sense of not wanting to get out and go experience things for myself before the class. But once you know, everyday I'd get up and drive on [the interstate] to get to school and I wouldn't go anywhere else. I'd lived in Texas for thirteen years and I hadn't really gone anywhere just from Point A to Point B or in my area, so I really had no idea what it was really like to go anywhere else. But when I was starting my student teaching I drove around the area that was near the school where I was gonna be teaching at, and I came to realize that a lot of

the kids were growing up in the same kind of environment as what I grew up in, and a lot of them didn't have that reality of "Oh other people are different from me," so me actually getting out and realizing that they had that same kind of attitude that I did, I hoped to impact them by going through and teaching them that other places are different and you can't just judge a book by its cover. (Interview excerpt)

It appeared that Jackie believed that, by familiarizing herself with the community surrounding her school, she gained insight into her students' lived experiences that benefited her teaching. Additionally, I viewed her emphasis on discussing issues related to diversity in ways that encouraged her students to rethink their assumptions as reflecting how her added knowledge shifted her stories to live by. Jackie went on to retell an experience from her student teaching related to these ideas, in which she encouraged students to think about diversity by considering the ways in which preconceptions influenced their perspectives of people.

I asked them how do you think I grew up and they were just like, "Oh well you're wearing professional clothes and decent shoes; you look like you could be a rich person." I was like, "I am far from rich." You know, I mentioned to them that I had grown up in a small town in [the Midwest] for a while and there was little to no diversity and having to discuss diversity with them was interesting because a lot of them had different ideas of what it was like. A lot of them expected that because I was from a town that had 100 to 200 people that I was going to, like be a farmer, so we joked around about that and then I told them about my experiences

while in school because they wanted to know a bit more about me.

(Interview excerpt)

From her story, I sensed how Jackie had added to her understandings of difference and diversity, as well as her desire to provide students with opportunities to consider their own understandings of these ideas. As I listened to Jackie, I was reminded of earlier conversations related to our experiences at City High School in which Jackie expressed how her interactions with David had emphasized to her the importance of sharing her own life and experiences with her students. It seemed that Jackie had added these ideas to her personal knowledge of teaching. Again, I sensed how her stories to live by had gradually shifted to reflect her new understandings related to connecting to and building relationships with her students. Jackie also storied how she saw herself as combining her understandings in a lesson about the contrasting landscapes of the North and South prior to the Civil War.

So in combining the two it was easier for me to relate what they were learning in class to something that was more feasible for them to understand and more close in relationship than some of the other things we were discussing. At one point we were discussing the war and I was like “Okay, so if one of you guys is on this side of the street,” and I used the street name, “and the other group is on the other side, then who’s going to have more resources than the other group?” We were talking about the Civil War and the North and the South and one side of the road had, like, a McDonald’s, a Wal-Mart, a car wash, and all this other stuff and the other side had like a bunch of houses and not really many of the food places or

anything to get food or clothing so the kids were like, “I want to have the side with the Wal-Mart!” and I was like, “Well that’s kind of a good thing to have because it has clothing and food and all that other stuff,” and it was just really nice to be able to use a real-life experience to explain that the kids could actually understand because it’s current and they know what I’m talking about as opposed to a lot of people were like killing each other in the past...(Interview excerpt)

I sensed from Jackie’s story how her course experiences influenced her personal practical knowledge of teaching and reflected the ways in which she had both shifted and sustained her entering stories to live by. I viewed Jackie as positioning herself as a teacher interested in learning about where her students came from and then using that knowledge to create relevant and meaningful instruction.

From her stories, I sensed the ways in which Jackie’s exiting stories to live by reflected how her interpretations of her course experiences informed her personal practical knowledge of teaching. In the stories she told, I saw Jackie as adding to her stories to live by of a teacher who connected with her students the importance of learning about students’ lived experiences, as well as that of sharing her own experience with them. Her stories also reflected her shifted understandings related to diversity, and her desire to promote similar considerations by her students. Her emphasis on using student experience and knowledge to create connections and promote critical thinking and discussion also indicated to me how Jackie realized the image of teacher as curriculum maker in her practice by co-constructing learning with her students.

Summary

Another aspect commonly present in a triptych is the combination of seemingly disparate elements to provide an overall impression, often a surprising reaction. In this way, the collective presentation of Abby, Hande, and Jackie's individual stories also acts as a larger triptych. Each entered our course with unique experiences and knowledge that shaped their identities, their entering stories to live by. These stories, in turn, shaped their interpretations of their community-based field experiences, as reflected by the varied ways in which they storied and restoried (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) their understandings related to teaching, community, education, and diversity throughout the inquiry process. Through story telling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) of their student teaching experiences, I gained a deeper sense of how participants' personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988) and stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999) shifted in unique ways that influenced their developing practices as they transitioned to classroom teaching.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESONATING RESPONSES

We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share. It is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are. (Greene, 1995, p. 1)

Introduction

This inquiry explored how three preservice teachers interpreted their community-based field experiences as part of a community-based education course, focusing on how these interpretations shifted their teacher identity, stories to live by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) and shaped their personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) guided by a critical qualitative approach, I sought to illustrate how participants made meaning of their experiences in ways that informed their teaching and learning knowledge and practices. By tracing (Keyes, 2012) and through storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) our experiences, I sought to provide layered and multiple perspectives of the ways in which community-based field experiences can encourage consideration of issues related to community, education, and diversity in ways that promote and support teaching for diversity. By following participants into their student teaching, I hoped to add an additional dimension to literature and research that addresses the potential and limitations of community-based field experiences in teacher education to shape preservice teachers' knowledge and practices in classroom settings. As I engaged in this inquiry with Abby, Hande, and Jackie, resonances emerged among their stories as preservice teachers and my own as both teacher educator and researcher. These echoed in ways that encouraged me

to consider issues related to community, education, and diversity in new ways alongside participants as we co-constructed interpretations and made meanings from our experiences. These resonances reminded me of the complexities of teaching for diversity. Through them, I saw illustrated my personal experiences, including successes and challenges, as a teacher educator and curriculum maker.

Resonating Responses

Experience and Education

The importance of experience in education remained a strong theme throughout the inquiry (Dewey, 1998). During my research process, I was continuously reminded that continuity and interaction shape experience, thereby shaping education. That Abby, Hande, and Jackie each entered and exited our course and inquiry with unique and personal knowledge and perspectives revealed the ways in which their experiences reflected their individual storied lives. Each brought unique perspectives related to community, education, and diversity that influenced how she interpreted her community-based field and course experiences, as well as how these interpretations were translated into teaching and learning practices. Even entering this inquiry with an understanding of the importance of experience in shaping knowledge and identity, I remained fascinated by how shared experiences were interpreted in personal ways that were expressed in unique stories. I saw this exemplified by how each participant shared her own interpretations of both our community-based field experiences, as well as the ways in which her course experiences shaped her teaching practices. Exploring participants' lived experiences to gain a sense of their entering stories to live by emphasized the ways in which prior experiences inform current and future experiences, creating an

experiential continuum. It also accentuated the importance of acknowledging and addressing prior experiences and knowledge, as well as considering future experiences to structure and facilitate educative rather than miseducative experiences. Attending to shifts in the personal practical knowledge and stories to live by reflected the progressive and cumulative nature of experience. The social quality of experience was evident throughout the community-based field and course experiences as participants interacted with communities and one another. Throughout the inquiry, I was reminded of how professional teacher identities are shaped by personal experiences and knowledge. As participants reflected on connections they made among their community-based field experiences and prior understandings, I understood the importance that providing an experiential basis for considering complex issues had on extending ideas beyond theory into practice.

It was sensing the centrality of experience in shaping understanding that initially led me to structure our course around a series of community-based field experiences. Through these, I sought to facilitate personal experiences that provided opportunities to critically analyze and discuss issues related to community, education, and diversity. While Abby, Hande, and Jackie all indicated that they derived meaning and value from these experiences, and that they shaped their knowledge related to community, education, and diversity, these experiences were not equally educative. All participants discussed their experiences in University Community and at City High School and its surrounding community at length in both their coursework and in our conversations. That these were often what participants first referenced when we discussed our course indicated that these were meaningful experiences that they continued to view as important in shaping their

knowledge and understanding. Abby and Jackie both viewed their experiences in the community surrounding the university as a catalyst for rethinking their perspectives on the community and its residents in ways that also prompted them to consider broader sociopolitical contexts related to education and society. For Abby particularly, this experience seemed to promote critical reflection on how her own upbringing and socialization had resulted in biases that she recognized as detrimental and prompted her to become more conscious about recognizing and addressing personal dissonances regarding diversity. All participants expressed that they particularly valued their experiences collaborating with local high school students, and each reflected how discussing educational issues with them had encouraged them to reconsider their own understandings, as well as prompted new considerations and insights related to education and diversity. In each of these experiences, I sought to position the community and its members in ways that illustrated the valuable knowledge and resources they possessed, as well as how these could be used in teaching and learning practices. In contrast with my previous, more service-oriented, experiences, I found that these community-oriented experiences, in general, provided opportunities for deeper and more critical consideration of issues related to community, education, and diversity. I viewed these community-based field experiences as connecting to the broader sociopolitical context of education in ways that encouraged participants to appreciate the importance of community related to students' educational experiences, as well as to reflect on how their own practices incorporated these understandings. Through these approaches, I sought to ensure that these community-based field experiences provided a depth of learning that went beyond a

focus on service to appreciating the value of community as a resource, as well as promoted consideration of issues related to education and diversity.

Though interpretations and meaning making of these field experiences varied widely, reflecting the individual identities of participants, resonances also emerged among participants that provided insight into the valuation and impact of each. In our conversations, each participant expressed the importance of our community-based field experiences in enabling her to connect to issues and ideas related to community, education, and diversity in ways that solidified them and made them tangible. Abby expressed that it was primarily through these “real life” community-based field experiences that these issues became “real” and she “internalized” understandings related to them (Interview excerpt). I saw this exemplified in Abby’s stories through her reflections on how factors such as school resources, nutrition, and testing could materially influence educational experiences, as well as in her emphasis on the importance of considering the unique identity and experiences of each student. Her teaching stories reflected how these understandings translated into practices that foregrounded student consideration, both personally and academically, as being a central aspect of teaching. Hande also reflected that our community-based field experiences provided opportunities that went beyond “dry information” that enabled her to “see, touch, and experience” for herself (Interview excerpt). She interpreted them in ways that related to her previous experiences living and schooling in diverse contexts. I saw this reflected in her continued considerations of how identity and experience influence students’ learning, as well as how knowledge of these can be used as resources by teachers to effectively communicate and collaborate with students. From her stories of

teaching, I saw an increased focus on constructivist approaches to teaching and learning that emphasized student understandings and interests, as well as the importance of recognizing each student as an individual engaged in personal learning and development. Jackie similarly expressed how our community-based field experiences provided “hands-on experience” that she found more meaningful and relevant than other courses that focused primarily on theory. I saw this reflected in how these experiences encouraged her to consider broader influences on student learning, as well as to connect to the communities we visited in ways that prompted her to view community as a resource. Her teaching stories demonstrated how she applied these understandings in her practice through learning about the local community and using her knowledge to connect with students, as well as to emphasize teaching and learning interactions based on discussion and collaboration. From their stories, I came to understand how our community-based field experiences enabled participants to connect to and internalize their learning in ways that they felt were distinct from other teacher education courses, as well as that enabled them to translate their understandings into their teaching and learning practices.

Each participant expressed that our community-based field experiences shaped her teacher knowledge and identity in unique ways that went beyond traditional teacher education courses that did not offer opportunities to connect learning with personal experience. Often these connections emerged in ways that I could not have fully anticipated, such as how both local schools we visited lacking full-time nurses prompted discussions related to education and equity, or how individual experiences shared by City High School students encouraged consideration of multiple and varied issues related to community, education, and diversity. However, it was only through these community-

based field experiences that such localized and contextualized discussions became possible. Without the personal connection these experiences afforded, many of these perspectives and issues may have remained theoretical and intangible. Experiences that provided greater opportunities for personal interaction with community members, such as those in the communities surrounding the university and a local high school, appeared to be viewed as most significant. These provided participants with chances for direct dialog and discussion with community members that promoted a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and understanding. By touring the community surrounding the university with someone who lived there and was active in it, students were privileged to an insider perspective that could speak to the history and strengths of the community that enabled them to connect to it and view it as a resource. Similarly, dialoging with local students provided opportunities to directly share perspectives and experiences in ways that promoted new understandings and appreciation of students' identities and interests. Reflecting on what made these particular experiences memorable enabled me to understand the importance of facilitating community-based field experiences that promoted dialogue and reciprocal exchange among participants, and the ways in which these interactions made experiences meaningful. Even within the constraints of a single course, I found that field experiences that positioned communities as resources and their members as knowledgeable, as well as provided opportunities for dialogue and discussion among participants could meaningfully impact understandings in ways that shaped teacher knowledge and practice.

The stories Abby, Hande, and Jackie told of and related to their experiences indicated how cross-cultural community-based learning can serve as educative

experiences in teacher education for preservice teachers to consider important ideas related to community, education, and diversity (Sleeter, 2008c). Such experiences provide opportunities for promoting and developing excellent teaching of diverse students. However, inclusion of field experiences alone is not enough to ensure this. This inquiry resonates with literature and research that indicates that sustained engagement, along with supportive theoretical learning and opportunities to analyze, discuss, and reflect on these experiences strengthens the impact of community-based field experiences (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Sleeter, 2008c). Participants consistently referenced the structure and resources from our course as valuably supporting their interpretation and meaning making of their field experiences, and I understood how our community-based field experiences could not be separated from broader course experiences. Resources such as course readings, websites, and media provided context to our field experiences as well as located them in a broader sociopolitical context that enabled connections that extended beyond the local. I viewed this as essential in offering ways to connect what admittedly were limited experiences to larger issues related to community, education, and diversity. The incorporation of narrative and discussion provided opportunities for students to analyze and reflect on their personal experiences in ways that tied them to broader considerations, and participants expressed that these opportunities were valuable in enabling them to derive meaning from their experiences. Both class and field experiences contributed to the ways in which Abby, Hande, and Jackie added to and shifted their personal knowledge and stories to live by as teachers. The emphasis on the structure of both field and course experiences reminded me of the importance of acknowledging that community-based education should be viewed as an ongoing and in-

depth process that requires care consideration, analysis, and reflection in order to facilitate experiences that promote new and critical understandings rather than stereotypes.

Through this inquiry, I understood ways in which more sustained and integrated approaches to our community-based field experiences that focused on realistic, reflective, and reciprocal exchanges could have strengthened them (Stachowski & Mahan, 1998). Such emphases shifted understandings from savior mentalities towards communitarian and social change views (Boyle-Baise, 2002), promoting experiences that moved beyond a service focus and provided opportunities for more in-depth learning. I saw these goals most recognized in our experiences with City High School students and their community, though there was certainly space for additional depth and extension. In future courses, I would like to extend interaction beyond reciprocal discussions and include opportunities for students from each institution to work collaboratively. I see potential in such collaboration to more directly address community issues in ways that could deepen understandings as well as provide preservice teachers with valuable experiences in community activism that they could carry with them into their practices. I recognize the limitations associated with superficial community experiences that risk confirming rather than disconfirming stereotypical perceptions (Sleeter, 2001). However, I continue to see potential in experiential interactions in communities beyond the classroom, when supported with class structure and resources, to personally connect teacher education students with ideas and issues related to community, education, and diversity. While I viewed Abby, Hande, and Jackie as interpreting their experiences in ways that encouraged them to rethink and add to their understandings of these considerations, I

recognize that the extent to which this occurred was less than I would have liked or believe is needed. I continue to consider ways in which I can meaningfully incorporate community-based field experiences into my teacher education curriculum, especially within single three-credit hour courses.

Narrative in Education

Closely connected to the importance of course experiences was that of a narrative approach to telling stories (Cutri, 2012). In various ways, each participant expressed the importance of having time and space to tell, listen, and retell their stories of experience. Class discussions provided opportunities to do this in ways that promoted resonance (Conle, 1997) among participants that encouraged them to restory and reinterpret their knowledge and experiences with new possibilities. Participants referenced the importance of sharing their experiences in these discussions in providing new understandings related to their community-based field experiences. Reflective narratives provided a similar opportunity and lent a greater degree of temporality and privacy to the process of interpreting and making meaning of experiences. Abby reflected that the emphasis on narrative writing and discussion made the class feel like a “two-way conversation” and contributed to a classroom climate that supported sharing and the consideration of multiple perspectives (Interview excerpt). She also expressed how composing her autobiographical and reflective narratives encouraged her to reflect on her own understandings in ways that provided new insights, such as realizing how her upbringing had influenced her perceptions regarding urban communities and their residents. Jackie shared that the emphasis on collaborative discussions prompted her to consider viewpoints that she may not have considered otherwise and inspired her to adopt

a more critical perspective. For Hande, the emphasis on reflection and discussion encouraged her to further consider the importance of privileging student thinking and perspective in her own teaching in an effort to being with what students know and understand. These experiences reinforced my belief in the importance of thoughtfully structuring and supporting community-based field experiences to promote interpretations that expand initial understandings in new and critical ways. I view such opportunities to retell and relive stories of community-based field experiences as essential in promoting the reflection and analysis needed to encourage thoughtful and critical consideration of the complex issues related to community, diversity, and education (Sleeter, 2008c). I see the composing and sharing of narratives of experience as an effective approach to supporting community-based field experiences in ways that encourage students to further personally connect to and derive meaning from them.

However, throughout our course experiences, I also often felt a tension related to narrative authority (Olsen, 1995; Olsen & Craig, 2001). Research and literature related to teacher education for diversity frequently observe that attempts to encourage students to rethink their understandings of diversity and equity are often met with resistance. I view issues of resistance and narrative authority as closely connected. Analyzing the reflective narratives of participants, as well as my own course journal, I became aware of the tensions often present among stories told and written throughout our course by students and myself. Frequently, either in class discussions or writing, I hesitantly navigated the extent to which I imposed my stories onto theirs. Usually these tensions related to ways in which I wanted students to reconsider or extend their thoughts about the sociopolitical context and implications of issues we addressed. These tensions emerged again as I

engaged in my inquiry. In both settings, more often than not, I found myself privileging their voices over my own. I worried that, if overly forceful in perspective or language, I risked the teacher knowledge I regularly observed being created and embraced by students giving way to knowledge for teachers being resisted or rejected by them. Participants reflected a shared appreciation for the classroom community we established in which they felt their contributions were encouraged and valued, as well as how this influenced their own approaches to teaching and learning. I recognize that a stronger voice or, ideally, more voices may be needed to foster the awareness and commitment required to enact broadly transformative educational approaches that explicitly seek to counter hegemonic institutions and practices that continue to perpetuate dominant power structures and systems of inequity. I continue to struggle with this tension.

Complexities of Teaching for Diversity

Through this and other tensions, I was reminded throughout the inquiry of the complexities related to teaching for diversity. I viewed Abby, Hande, and Jackie as interpreting their community-based field and course experiences in ways that added to and shifted their personal practical knowledge and stories to live by related to community, education, and diversity. However, these changes were neither uniform nor pervasive, but occurred in unique and personal ways. This reflected the individualized understandings each had of these ideas. Yet resonances emerged among these that provided insight into participants' as well as my own understandings toward teaching for diversity.

In the stories Abby, Hande, and Jackie told about their student teaching experiences that they felt reflected their learning from our course, I saw a common

emphasis on the importance of teaching and learning through caring relationships (Ayers, 2004; Gay, 2010; Noddings, 2012). These relationships built on knowledge of students to acknowledge and address academic as well as social needs in ways that promoted and supported personal learning and growth. In this regard, each participant demonstrated aspects of culturally responsive teaching related to learning about students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Abby shared how her experiences encouraged her to consider more carefully the unique identity and experience of each student. The stories she told of how her course experiences influenced her teaching were about building relationships with her students that acknowledged their need for a caring and empathetic teacher who encouraged them to share their life experiences, as well as how these relationships led to improved academic achievement. Hande expressed a desire to center her teaching on considerations of student understanding and interest, as well as to use her knowledge and relationships with individual students to promote their academic growth. I find how her attempts to live this vision of a caring and responsive educator were dismissed as unreasonable and unnecessary as reflecting broader trends and issues in education. Jackie used her knowledge of the community in which her school was located to connect with students, and also cultivated interactions with them that were based on mutually sharing and discussing experiences. In all of these stories, I understood ways in which each participant acknowledged and addressed students' identities and experiences in responsive approaches to teaching and learning that reflected understandings that had emerged through their course experiences.

Additionally, in Hande's and Jackie's stories, I saw the ways in which this knowledge and care informed constructivist approaches to learning that built on student

knowledge and interest (Sleeter, 2008b; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In her stories of teaching, I understood Hande as emphasizing the importance of promoting and supporting student understanding by approaching teaching and learning math through students' knowledge and perspectives. She continually encouraged students to share their reasoning, viewing their thought processes as the most important consideration in her teaching. Additionally, she also sought to incorporate opportunities for students to move beyond rote learning to math that involved problem-based learning and incorporated interdisciplinary connections with art to connect with students' interests. Jackie used her knowledge of students' lives and experiences to connect them with social studies concepts, as well as encouraged sharing and discussion of ideas as a basis for teaching and learning. These observations led me to view both as shifting towards images of teachers as curriculum makers interested in co-constructing teaching and learning with their students (Craig & Ross, 2008). I view this image as necessary to and imbedded in multicultural and culturally response teaching. This image recognizes that curricula are neither static nor neutral, and that acknowledges the active role both teachers and learners contribute to it (Ladson-Billings & Brown, 2008). Emphasizing teachers as curriculum makers in teacher education can promote the development of strong teachers of diverse students. Community-based education can support this by emphasizing the importance of considering and incorporating knowledge of students' identities, experiences, and interests into approaches to teaching and learning, as well as provide teachers with resources for connecting education to students' lived experiences.

The stories shared by participants indicated to me that each desired to facilitate instruction at a generative model of learning that emphasizes collaboration among

students and teachers (Wink, 2010). However, I saw less evidence of transformative models. Abby shared how she recognized the detrimental impact stereotypical attitudes related to ethnicity and achievement had on students' images of themselves, as well as on overall classroom climate. She reflected that course experiences had prompted her to become more conscious of this and to encourage her own students' awareness as well. Jackie related how she hoped to use discussion and critical analysis to encourage students to move beyond assumptions based on outward appearances. Both shared how these emphases stemmed from community-based field experiences that had encouraged them to rethink their own assumptions related to these issues. Though these stories reflected greater recognition and attention to sociocultural awareness, these were limited to specific instances and more generalized concerns related to stereotypes and assumptions. While certainly encouraged, these practices did not reach transformative approaches to multicultural and culturally responsive teaching (Banks & Banks; Gay, 2010, Sleeter & Grant, 2007). I viewed this as reflecting both my own approach to our course, as well as a need to extend opportunities to develop the knowledge and practices necessary for such approaches across courses and programs. Interestingly, my personal approach to emphasizing the importance of learning about students and using this knowledge to build caring relationships and classroom communities that recognized and embraced students' diverse identities, experiences, and interests seemed to provide an additional lens through which community-based field and course experiences were framed. While participants appeared to benefit from and value these emphases, I continue to see a greater need for attention to developing critical considerations of sociocultural awareness. These experiences affirm that teacher education for diversity cannot be limited to a single

course or components across courses, but similar to multicultural and culturally responsive teaching in schools, must be pervasive, and a philosophical basis for education (Sleeter, 2001). By more exposure to and different perspectives on ideas and issues related to teaching for diversity, preservice teachers are more likely to develop the knowledge and commitment necessary to enact transformative teaching and learning. Community-based field experiences should be used to support infusion rather than additive approaches to teacher education for multicultural and culturally responsive teaching and should be part of a broader institutional focus on diversity.

Teaching and Learning through Community

Finally, community-based education can serve as a basis and model for connecting classrooms and communities. While many teachers may, unfortunately, be restricted in their abilities to regularly bring their students beyond the four walls of the classroom, community-based education emphasizes the enduring importance of community in education and provides suggestions as to how to incorporate considerations of community into teaching and learning. Through their community-based field experiences, Abby, Hande, and Jackie each expressed how they had shifted their knowledge and practices as teachers to reflect their understandings of the importance of students' identities and experiences beyond the classroom. For Abby, this meant personally connecting with students about lives and issues both inside and outside of school in ways that demonstrated care for them as individuals, as well as promoted an inclusive classroom community. Hande sought to use her knowledge of students' experiences and understandings to communicate and collaborate with them in ways that encouraged them to view their ideas and contributions as valuable, as well as to connect

learning to personal and social interests. Jackie came to view community as a valuable resource in her teaching that prompted her to explore unfamiliar areas in an effort to better understand where her students came from and to use that knowledge to connect students with issues and each other. In each of these stories, I understood how our community-based field experiences encouraged participants to consider ways in which considerations of community could be transferred into the four walls of a classroom in ways that promoted and supported student diversity.

Conclusion

I chose to focus on three preservice teachers believing that it provided the opportunity of seeing big (Greene, 1995) by burrowing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) into the unique and personal stories of Abby, Hande, and Jackie as they interpreted and made meaning of their course experiences. Inquiring closely into their narrative lived experiences and perspectives provided me with valuable insight as both an educator and researcher in ways I would not have been privileged to without this intimacy and depth. Though these are unique stories, they are representative of the stories that other preservice teachers and teacher educators live as they co-construct teaching and learning experiences, interpreting them in ways that shape their personal practical knowledge and shift their stories to live by. By broadening (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) through the consideration of our stories in relation to research and literature focusing on preparing strong teachers for diverse students, I see big (Greene, 1995) the ways our experiences reflects those of others also engaged in similar enterprises. I view this inquiry as contributing to understandings of the implications for integrating community-based field experiences into teacher education in ways that promote the development of responsive

teachers. Moving forward, I hope to continue following the experiences of Abby, Hande, and Jackie as they transition into teaching positions to see how our course, along with other experiences, continue to shape their teacher knowledge and identity. And so, I exit this inquiry as I entered it, with imagined possibilities for the future.

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Appendix A Course Syllabus

Community Based Education University of Houston Fall 2012

Instructor: Christine Beaudry
Email: cebeaudry@uh.edu
Cell: 281.XXX.XXXX
Office: FH 230
Office Hours: Tuesday 1-4 pm or by appointment
General Teacher Education inquiries: teachered@uh.edu

Required Texts and Readings:

Rios, F., & Stanton, C. R. *Understanding multicultural education: Equity for all students*. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: R&L Education.

Additional readings and resources will be posted weekly on Blackboard.

Course Website

Available via Blackboard Learn – to access:

Login to UH Blackboard Learn

http://www.uh.edu/blackboard/learn_index.html

You will need a valid UH student ID number. Correspondence concerning this course can be posted via Blackboard. Email is UH's official form of communication. Emails directly to the instructor should be sent to the instructor's UH email address from a student UH account.

Course Description

This is a field-based course that introduces curricula and instructional methods of utilizing cultural and scientific community resources. It offers an opportunity to model transforming and empowering pedagogical praxis. The idea is that the participants will engage in a critical constructivist endeavor to examine current issues in community education. The members of the class will therefore construct meaning as a community of learners as the course progresses. It is suggested that the first weeks serve as introduction to deconstructing the foundations and concepts related to community education while the remainder focus on engaging in and reflecting on community-based field experiences.

Course Objectives

This course will allow students to develop awareness of the following themes, and the role they play in teachers' and students' perceptions, understandings, and behaviors in societal contexts.

Prominent themes addressed will be:

- teaching and learning
- multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching
- school and community connections
- local to global connections

Course Components

This course includes a combination of field experiences, reflections, in-class activities and discussions, a collaborative community project, and individual and group presentations. The following components are vital to the successful completion of this course:

- Community-Based Field Experiences
Students will participate in a variety of community-based field experiences that will include visits to community organizations, schools, and other locally relevant places. Meetings with representatives from those institutions will be arranged when possible. These experiences encourage students to engage and become involved in local community organizations and activities, and are designed to promote connections and discussion regarding community, education, and diversity. After each field experience, students will compose a reflective narrative about their experiences.
- In-class Discussions and Active Participation
Students will be responsible for actively participating in class activities and discussions. Many of these will emphasize community and multicultural education issues and how they relate to teaching and learning considerations.
- Autobiographical Narratives
Students will write three narratives throughout the course (Personal, Educational, and Final). These narratives encourage students to reflect on their own educational and life experiences connected to the issues and themes discussed throughout the course. These narratives provide opportunity to reflect and personally make meaning of course ideas and experiences.
- Class Reflection Journal
Students will maintain a reflection journal throughout the course related to the issues and themes addressed. These reflections will be based on activities, readings, and class discussions. These reflections encourage students to begin to respond to course ideas and experiences by organizing their thoughts and impressions.
- Classroom Observation Journal

Students will write five classroom observation reflections related to the issues and themes addressed throughout the course. These reflections will come from the time students spend in the schools observing teaching and learning. These reflections encourage students to begin observing examples of community-based and multicultural education in the classroom. These are one-page reflections that will be turned in at the end of the semester.

- Community Snapshot Project and Presentation

In groups, students will investigate a neighborhood in a community local to UH and visually document their findings. Individual members will submit a reflective narrative, and groups will facilitate a presentation during class. The guidelines for this project will be posted on Blackboard.

- Collaborative Community Project

Students will collaborate with local high school students on an interview project about their educational experiences. This project provides preservice teachers with valuable student perspectives on effective teaching while also offering high school students the opportunity to learn about college experiences and the process of becoming an educator.

Assessments and Grades

This is a graded course. Grade distribution is calculated from the total accumulated points of learning products and participation and is based on the following 500-point scale.

<i>Numerical Grade</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Course Point Equivalent</i>
95-100	A	470-500
90-94	A -	450-469
87-89	B +	435-449
84-86	B	420-434
80-83	B -	400-419
77-79	C +	385-399
74-76	C	370-384
70-73	C -	350-369
65-69	D	320-349
60-64	D-	300-319
Below	F	299 and Below

Assignment Summary	Possible Points Available	Actual Points Received
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Narrative	50	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Narrative	50	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reflection Journal	50	
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Observation Journal	25	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community-Based Field Experience Reflective Narratives (3 at 25 pts. each)	75	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Snapshot Presentation and Reflection	100	
<input type="checkbox"/> Final Narrative	100	
<input type="checkbox"/> In-Class Discussion and Online Participation	50	

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE	500	
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Additional Course Policies and Procedures:

The following information is designed to help the class run smoothly. The instructor reserves the right to make additions and adjustments to the syllabus as necessary.

Statement on Course Materials:

Some of the writings, lectures, films, or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

Grades of Incomplete:

In general, students will not be allowed to take an Incomplete in this course. If you find you do have a legitimate reason for needing to take an Incomplete (see University of Houston catalog), please talk with me as soon as possible.

Cell Phones:

Please turn off your cell phone or place it on silent mode/vibrate during class.

Academic Honesty:

Students are expected to abide by the university's academic honesty policy in all matters concerning this course. (<http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html>). In particular, plagiarism, "Representing as one's own work the work of another without acknowledging the source," whether intentional or unintentional, will not be tolerated.

Academic Accommodations:

When possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, we will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Please call the Center for Students with DisABILITIES at ext. 3-5400 for more assistance.

Community Education | Fall 2012

Week	In-Class	Assignment
Week One August 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Review syllabus • Social identity activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce Personal Narrative
Week Two Sept. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Personal Narratives • Multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Personal Narrative on Blackboard • Read Ch. 1-2 from <i>Understanding Multicultural Education</i> • Introduce Educational Narrative
Week Three Sept. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings on Blackboard
Week Four Sept. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Educational Narratives • Community and education • Community-based education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Educational Narrative on Blackboard • Read Ch. 3-4 from <i>Understanding Multicultural Education</i>
Week Five Sept. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based field experience: University Community • Please wear appropriate clothing for outdoor walking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings on Blackboard • Introduce reflective narratives
Week Six Oct. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss University Community experience • Discuss Community Collaborative project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ch. 5-6 from <i>Understanding Multicultural Education</i>
Week Seven Oct. 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based field experience: Neighborhood Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit University Community reflective narrative on Blackboard • Assigned Readings on Blackboard

Week Eight Oct. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Neighborhood Center experience • Finalize questions for Community Collaborative Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Ch. 7-8 from <i>Understanding Multicultural Education</i>
Week Nine Oct. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Collaborative Project • Please wear clothing similar to observation attire • Follow-up discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Neighborhood Center reflective narrative in Blackboard • Assigned Readings on Blackboard
Week Ten Oct. 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Community Project • Please wear clothing similar to observation attire • Follow-up discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings on Blackboard
Week Eleven Nov. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Snapshot • Please wear appropriate clothing for outdoor walking • Follow-up discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings on Blackboard • Introduce Final Narratives
Week Twelve Nov. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONLINE CLASS (NCSS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings on Blackboard • Work on Community Snapshot presentations and reflective narratives
Week Thirteen Nov. 21 Fall Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO CLASS 	
Week Fourteen Nov. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Snapshot presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Classroom Observation Journals on Blackboard • Submit Community Collaborative reflective narrative in Blackboard • Assigned Readings on Blackboard

Week Fifteen Dec. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Snapshot presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit Class Reflection Journals (one document) <u>in class</u>• Assigned Readings on Blackboard
Finals Week Dec. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Narrative presentations and discussion• Wrap-Up and celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit Final Narratives on Blackboard

Community Links

Events

Houston Press

<http://www.houstonpress.com/>

kuhf events calendar

<http://www.houstonpublicradio.org/events/>

Houston Chronicle Entertainment

<http://www.chron.com/entertainment/>

Spacetaker Events

http://www.spacetaker.org/special_events

Organizations

Museums and Public Art

Project Row Houses

<http://projectrowhouses.org/>

Alley Theatre

www.alleytheatre.org/

Aurora Picture Show

<http://aurorapictureshow.org/pages/home.asp>

Children's Museum

www.cmhouston.org/

Contemporary Arts Museum

<http://www.camh.org/>

Health Museum

www.mhms.org/

Holocaust Museum

www.hmh.org/

Museum of Fine Arts Houston

www.mfah.org/

Menil Collection

www.menil.org/

Blaffer Gallery
www.class.uh.edu/blaffer/

The Station
www.stationmuseum.com

City Artworks
<http://www.cityartworks.org/home.asp>

Diverse Works
<http://diverseworks.org/>

FotoFest
www.fotofest.org/

Schools as Community Centers

Communities in Schools
<http://www.communitiesinschools.org/>

Citizen Schools
www.citizenschools.org/

Alliance for Multicultural Community Services
www.allianceontheweb.org/

Amigos de las Americas
<http://www.houstonamigos.org/>

Neighborhood Centers
<http://www.neighborhood-centers.org/en-us/content/Neighborhood+Centers.aspx?gclid=CP-BnMiHp7ACFWLktgodhx46Yw>

Culture

Houston Institute for Culture
<http://www.houstonculture.org/index.html>

Generation One
<http://www.generationone.net/>

Preservation Houston
<http://www.preservationhouston.org/>

MECCA

<http://www.meca-houston.org/>

Writers in the Schools

www.witshouston.org

Young Audiences Houston

<http://www.yahouston.org/>

Environment

Habitat for Humanity Houston

<http://www.houstonhabitat.org/>

Houston Arboretum and Nature Center

<http://www.houstonarboretum.org/>

Houston Wilderness

<http://houstonwilderness.org/>

Environmental Institute of Houston

<http://www.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/EIH/>

Bayou City Preservation

www.bayoupreservation.org/

Project Wild

<http://www.projectwild.org/>

Ecotone

<http://www.ecotoneworld.com/>

Trees for Houston

<http://www.treesforhouston.org/>

Urban Harvest

<http://www.urbanharvest.org/>

Appendix B

Sample Interview Questions

Teaching and Learning Community:
An Inquiry into Experiences in a Community-Based Education Course

First Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your early experiences growing up in your family.
2. Tell me about your early experiences with school and community.
3. Describe the schools you attended growing up.
4. Describe the communities in which you were raised.
5. Tell me about the relationships you saw between your family, home, and community.
6. Tell me about the relationships you saw between your school, community, and diversity.
7. What did you learn from these experiences related to teaching and learning?
8. How do you define community?
9. Describe what community means to you.
10. What types of things do you do to create the kind of community you've described?

Second Interview Questions

1. Tell me about the relationships you see among community, education, and diversity.
2. Describe how you see community being related to teaching and learning.
3. Tell me about how you build or plan to build a sense of community in your classroom.
4. Talk about how you connect or plan to connect your classroom and students to community.
5. Describe the curriculum resources you use or plan to use and why.
6. Tell me about the instructional strategies you use or plan to use and why.
7. Tell me about the classroom management strategies you use or plan to use and why.
8. Describe how you communicate or plan to communicate with students, parents, and community members and why.
9. Tell me about how you think community members and resources should be involved in a school.
10. Tell me about how you think they should be involved in teaching and learning.

Third Interview

1. How would you describe Community-Based Education to someone who hasn't taken it?
2. Tell me about your expectations prior to taking the course.
3. To what extent did your expectations change throughout the course?
4. Tell me about what aspects of the course were most memorable for you and why.
5. What did you enjoy most about the course and why?
6. What might you change about the course and why?
7. Describe how you would compare this course to other you have taken.
8. Tell me about your expectations prior to engaging in community experiences during the course.
9. Tell me about a day in the community that most stands out for you and why.
10. What did you learn from your community experiences?
11. To what extent do you think your perceptions have changed as a result of your community experiences?

Fourth Interview

1. Tell me about your student (and beginning) teaching experiences.
2. Tell me about your relationships with students, mentors, other campus teachers, administrators, parents, and the wider community.
3. Tell me about the successes you have encountered as a student (and beginning) teacher.
4. Tell me about the challenges you have encountered as a student (and beginning) teacher.
5. How were you able to navigate your way through those challenges?
6. What did you learn from Community-Based Education that has been most relevant to your student (and beginning) teaching experiences?
7. Describe how you've implemented what you learned in Community-Based Education in your student (and beginning) teaching.
8. How do you think your community experiences impact your knowledge of teaching and learning?
9. How do you think they impact your practice?
10. In what ways did your Community-Based Education course experiences prepare you as a teacher?
11. In what ways do you still feel you need more knowledge or preparation?