

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: INTERSECTIONS OF VISION, PRACTICE,  
AND CONTEXT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
STUDENT TEACHERS AS READING  
TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS OF DIVERSE  
BACKGROUNDS.

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The well-documented achievement gap and common cultural mismatch between teachers and their students underscore the need for culturally responsive teachers. Students of diverse backgrounds need teachers whose visions of teaching reading result in high-quality educational experiences for all students. As teacher education programs strive for ways to support preservice reading teachers to be more culturally responsive, it is important to understand how a vision of teaching develops and then intersects with actual classroom practice of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds.

From a sociocultural perspective and using qualitative case study methods, this dissertation explored the visions of five student teachers as they taught reading to students of diverse backgrounds in the context of urban classrooms, including the district-mandated balanced literacy program. Through classroom observations,

interviews, and a review of documents, I examined the intersections of vision, practice, and context in the participants' development as reading teachers.

Additionally, I developed a checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies to assess the extent to which cultural responsiveness emerged in the five student teachers' vision and practice.

The five case studies strengthened research findings that previous attitudes and beliefs, educational experiences, and intercultural experiences (or the lack thereof) do influence the development of visions about teaching reading. The individuals experienced complex intersections as they made meaning of their student teaching experience. In the cross-case analysis, three major intersections of vision, practice, and context emerged: classroom management, teaching balanced literacy, and the students' cultures. The conceptual framework developed for this study showed that one of the intersecting elements of vision, practice, or context can be dominant for an individual, with implications of different models for teacher education. The data suggested that a context-dominant student teacher might be most likely to move toward cultural responsiveness. From a checklist of 25 strategies, limited use of culturally responsive strategies was found, suggesting that a diverse context alone does not necessarily lead to cultural responsiveness. Suggestions for strengthening preservice teacher preparation are provided.

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IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS  
AS READING TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS OF DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS.

By

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## **Dedication**

For my mother,

Esperanza Sierra Rodriguez.

She would have been so proud.

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The significant accomplishments in my life have all occurred because I have been fortunate enough to enjoy professional and personal connections with people who uncover my strengths and help support the expression of my best efforts. The completion of this dissertation is no exception.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

“If I’m planning to teach in the suburbs or in a small town,  
why do I need a field experience in an urban school?”

(Preservice Teacher, 2004)

Underlying the question by this preservice teacher is a narrow vision of teaching. The veiled assumption is that as a teacher candidate, one may choose to focus on a particular student profile or school context in learning to teach. The challenge before teacher educators is to understand how a vision of teaching, such as suggested in the above comment, intersects with practice in the real context of today’s public school classrooms.

Because of recent population changes, the student composition of many classrooms is also changing. Especially in urban areas, classrooms increasingly include students from diverse racial, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Au and Raphael (2000) used the term *students of diverse backgrounds* in describing students whose family backgrounds differ from mainstream Americans with regard to ethnicity, home language and social class. They clarified their definition of *students of diverse backgrounds* as follows: “In the United States, these students (a) are generally African American, Asian American, Latino/a, or Native American in ethnicity; (b) speak home languages other than standard American English; and, (c) come from poor or working class families” (p. 144). This definition is used throughout this dissertation.

But while the student population of our nation's schools is changing, the population of teachers remains demographically unchanged. Today's teachers, who are mostly White, middle-class women, are teaching ever-greater numbers of students of diverse backgrounds. In this scenario, a narrowly focused vision of teaching that includes only students with backgrounds similar to the teacher's is unlikely to serve the needs of students of diverse backgrounds. In the future, all teachers, regardless of their backgrounds, will need the knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach for diversity by providing equitable and high-quality learning experiences for all students.

Melnick and Zeichner (1997) have identified various issues that surround what is referred to as *teaching for diversity*. Although other types of diversity such as differing abilities or developmental levels may also exist in a classroom, Melnick and Zeichner defined *teaching for diversity* in terms of cultural diversity, which includes, race, social class, ethnicity and language, maintaining a focus on understanding and improving the "variety of arrangements and strategies currently being used to prepare a largely white, monolingual student teaching force to teach poor students of color who historically have been underserved, ill served, or inappropriately served by traditional teaching practices" (1997, p. 25). These are the students for whom preservice teachers are not being adequately prepared to teach, and they describe the types of students the five participants taught in their student teaching classrooms. That reality emphasizes the need for teacher educators to support preservice candidates as they develop their visions of teaching.

Evidence of the population changes has increased in the past three decades. Projections indicate that students of color will account for 57% of the school population by 2050 (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004), up from 22% in 1972 (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005). In the same time period, however, the teaching population has remained over 80% White and female (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993, 2006). Many of these teachers are likely to have had different lived experiences from students of diverse backgrounds (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004). Research suggests that teachers who lack a commitment to teaching for diversity may also contribute to the disparate achievement between White students and students of diverse backgrounds. As an example of that disparity, a recent national reading assessment indicated that 40% of White fourth-graders were at or above the “proficient” level, but only 12% of African American students, 16% of Hispanic students, and 17% of Native American students attained a “proficient” rating (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

In this introductory chapter, I present an overview of the problems associated with cultural differences between teachers and students and how those differences can result in unfavorable intersections of the student teachers’ vision and practice in the classroom context. After introducing the concept of vision and highlighting factors that can contribute to student teachers’ visions, I outline the purpose, setting, and significance of this dissertation study. I review the theoretical foundation that frames the study and then present a visual conception of the intersections among vision, practice and context used in this dissertation. Chapter One concludes with an overview of the dissertation.



## **The Problem of Teacher/Student Differences**

Differences between teachers and students are not inherently a problem. In practice, however, the cultural differences between teachers and their students can be problematic in several ways (Melnick & Zeichner, 1997). For example, differing cultural frames of reference may contribute to a disconnect between teachers and schooling on one hand, and students of diverse backgrounds on the other. Teachers and students may exhibit differing opinions about what constitutes authority, appropriate communicative style, or the appropriate role of *talking* versus *doing* (Delpit, 1995).

Similarly, Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2004) argued that with different cultural frames of reference from their students, teachers often find it difficult to function as role models who can bridge the differences between school and home. In literacy, for example, Heath (1983) found differences in oral and literacy traditions, including types and uses of writing, between African American and White communities in the Carolina Piedmonts. Zentella (2005) found that many Latino parents expected “teachers to sustain and expand the values of the home” (p. 176). Understanding differences between school and home may assist teachers in providing high-quality learning experiences for all students. Many preservice teachers, however, lack the intercultural experiences to move beyond their own cultural frame of reference. When they do, they may be better equipped to provide equitable and high quality educational experiences for students of diverse backgrounds.

Many preservice teachers prefer to teach students like themselves, or they regard some students as unteachable. For example, Pang and Sablan (1998) reported

that their sample of predominantly European American teachers showed ambivalence toward teaching African American students, and some teachers believed “there are those students whom no one would be able to reach” (p. 53). Terrill and Mark (2000) surveyed 97 teacher candidates, 89% of whom were White. They found that many preferred a student teaching placement with a majority of White students. Terrill and Mark also discovered differences in the preservice teachers’ expectations of students in urban and suburban classrooms.

Murrell (2007) acknowledged differences in the experiences and interests of students of diverse backgrounds in urban schools; however, he also pointed out the disturbing proliferation of scripted curricula and other examples of bureaucratic requirements that may be counterproductive to high-quality educational experiences for urban students of diverse backgrounds. Often, teachers must try to compensate for a mandated curriculum that provides no context for learning (Weiner, 1993). Given their lack of preparation for these and other institutional challenges, preservice teachers tend to avoid urban teaching experiences with students of diverse backgrounds.

In addition to having different expectations for students in different school contexts, other preservice teachers cannot or do not see diversity as a resource. For example, Tiezzi and Cross (1997) examined the beliefs of 48 preservice teachers about an urban field experience. They found that some preservice teachers believed students of diverse backgrounds in urban schools to be unmotivated, uninterested in education or having no support from home. Similarly, Bakari (2003) found statistically significant differences on a questionnaire subscale regarding willingness

to teach students of diverse backgrounds. The mean for preservice teachers from predominately White institutions was lower than for preservice teachers from historically Black colleges and universities. Bakari concluded that preservice teachers place little emphasis on using cultural diversity as a resource in the classroom. Preservice teachers, like those reported in these studies, may harbor the vision that some students are unable or unwilling to learn, thereby hindering their commitment to providing high-quality learning experiences for students of diverse backgrounds.

In their literature review, Cochran-Smith et al. (2004) confirmed findings that many teacher candidates regard diversity as a deficit, exhibit attitudes of lower expectations of students of diverse backgrounds, or simply choose not to teach in schools with students of diverse backgrounds. If preservice teachers who are placed in classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds have low cultural sensitivity or little ability to use the funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004) from students' backgrounds as classroom resources, these differing cultural frames of reference could negatively affect students' opportunities to learn. The attitudes, beliefs, and previous experiences preservice teachers bring to student teaching seem to play a major role in the development of their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds.

The need for commitment to teaching for diversity is well documented. Some preservice teachers are placed in urban schools with students of diverse backgrounds; however, it remains unclear how they come to develop a vision of teaching the students in their classrooms. The purpose of this dissertation is to shed light on the developing visions of five such student teachers and how they intersect with practice

and context. This dissertation presents the case studies of five student teachers placed in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. Using qualitative research methods and analysis, I studied the visions and the reading teaching practices of the participants in the context of student teaching in one urban school district.

### **Vision in Teacher Learning**

Prominent in recent conceptual literature on teacher learning is the construct of vision. For example, teacher learning frameworks described in Shulman and Schulman (2004), Feiman-Nemser (2001), and Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner (2005) all include vision as one of the dimensions. Specific to reading teacher education, Duffy (2002) and Turner (2006) concurred that visioning can support independent thinking in reading teachers and enhance practice.

The extensive work by Hammerness (1999, 2003, 2004, 2006) on vision underscores the usefulness of vision as a lens for studying teacher learning. Hammerness (2006) argued that teacher vision can function as a mirror with which to reflect on successes and the need for change. A vision of teaching provides a view from which inspiration may come and goals may be established, or it might hinder development of practice through the inability to adjust practice to the context of teaching.

Preservice teachers come to teacher preparation with different educational experiences. These previous experiences may also contribute to how they think about teaching, learning, and students of diverse backgrounds. Both K-12 educational

experiences and teacher education experiences can influence how preservice teachers envision teaching.

First, most teacher candidates have had personal experiences in classrooms as a student, what Lortie (1975) called the *apprenticeship of observation*. These classroom experiences are likely to supply a limited understanding of teaching because they are created from a student's point of view. The student does not enjoy an emic perspective of the motivation and intentions of the teacher's decision-making. Instead, s/he may acquire a superficial understanding of the teacher's actions. Second, teacher preparation experiences vary not only by program but also by student. Attitudes and beliefs preservice teachers bring with them may act as filters through which new knowledge is understood (Goodman, 1988; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992).

Some research suggests that intercultural experiences play an important role in preservice teacher learning about diversity (Ross & Smith, 1992; Sleeter, 2001; Smith, Moallem, & Sherrill, 1997; Valli, 1995) For, example, Smith et al. (1997) studied the autobiographies of preservice teachers to gain insight into "the life experiences of [preservice teachers] whose beliefs indicated a change toward greater equality" (p. 43). They found that although many preservice teachers' religious backgrounds contributed ideas of equality, their lack of intercultural experiences led to a simplistic or narrow view of diversity. In addition, one of the main factors contributing to change in the participants' beliefs was exposure to individuals of different cultural backgrounds. Thus, the intercultural experiences, attitudes and

beliefs, and educational experiences of preservice teachers may all influence their vision of teaching students of diverse backgrounds.

Drawing from several conceptions of vision described in Chapter Two, I define teacher vision as the images and expectations of their own actions, of their students, and of the school setting in which they are placed. These visions, I argue, develop out of the interaction of attitudes and beliefs, previous educational experiences, and intercultural experiences. In this dissertation, I use vision as a lens with which to view the learning of five student teachers and the intersections of their visions with classroom practice and context.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation study is to add to the understanding of how student teachers envision teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. I further aim to identify the intersections of vision, practice, and context that play a role in the student teachers' development as reading teachers. Focusing on reading instruction allowed me to discover where their visions and practices developed in relation to culturally responsive reading instruction, a third goal of the study. Using the construct of vision, I explored how five student teachers placed in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds came to understand the teaching of reading and the relationship of their visions to their enactment of reading instruction in the context of urban classrooms. I present my interpretation of the journeys of five student teachers as they struggled and succeeded, sometimes discouraged and sometimes elated, to teach reading to students of diverse backgrounds.

## **Research Questions**

In this dissertation, I address the following three overarching questions:

1. How do the participating student teachers characterize their vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds?
2. What are the intersections among vision, practice, and context for student teacher development as reading teachers?
3. How, if at all, do the characteristics of culturally responsive reading instruction appear in the student teachers' reading instruction with students of diverse backgrounds in an urban setting?

The research questions focus on the vision and practice of student teachers. I considered factors identified from the literature that could contribute to their visions, such as attitudes, beliefs, and previous experiences. The student teachers' responses also reflected the context of the classroom, school, and school district in which the field experiences took place.

By setting this study within the student teaching experience, I was able to explore how the participants' vision and practice of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds was realized within the classroom. Although the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor constitute important components in the student teachers' field experience, I focused on the student teachers in an attempt to understand the trajectories of their own vision and practice. I relied on feedback from university supervisors and cooperating teachers to corroborate evidence provided by the student teachers. This study builds on the wealth of literature on preservice teachers' attitudes and expectations of teaching students of diverse backgrounds, the

role teacher education has played in preparing teachers to teach for diversity, high-quality reading instruction for students from diverse backgrounds, including culturally responsive instruction, and teacher vision.

### **The University Setting**

The university teacher education unit in which the participants were enrolled is involved in a continuous effort to infuse issues of classroom diversity into the undergraduate teacher education program, to increase the experience with diversity for all teacher candidates, and to effectively prepare teacher education graduates to teach all children. One such effort is to provide every elementary education major with an early urban field experience. A general methods course was restructured to include activities focused on teaching for diversity, including a panel discussion by urban educators, reflective writings, and a two-day urban field experience. Tutoring and mentoring experiences with students of diverse backgrounds are also available and encouraged within the teacher education coursework.

From the cohort of preservice teachers who have participated in these educational experiences, six were placed in a nearby urban district for student teaching. From among those six, I studied five student teachers who were willing to share their visions of teaching students of diverse backgrounds and how their visions developed. I originally expected to select participants who had made a conscious choice to student teach in the urban district; however, I was limited by the small number of students. I wanted to study student teachers who had chosen an urban placement and understood that implied teaching students of diverse backgrounds because I thought that would increase the likelihood of seeing culturally responsive



teaching emerge in their reading instructional practice. My final participants consisted of two who were placed in the urban district counter to their stated choice, one who was open to the urban district but did not choose it, and two who welcomed the urban placement. Throughout the spring semester, 2007, I observed and interviewed the participants, spoke with their cooperating teachers and university supervisors, and evaluated documents, such as weekly written reflections by the student teachers, to gain an understanding of the intersections of the vision and practice of each student teacher in the context of an urban classroom with students of diverse backgrounds.

### **The School District Setting**

The unique context of an urban school district makes it an appropriate setting for this study. Howey (2006) pointed out that urban centers are more likely than rural or suburban areas to have large numbers of students of diverse backgrounds, families who live in densely populated settings with limited economic opportunities, and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Urban school districts are characterized by their complex administrative structure and large size. They are also likely to be under-funded. The major problem that results from these challenges and inequities is the high incidence of academic failure among urban students (Howey, 2006). These characteristics are present in the target urban district. Each participant was placed in a school and classroom with a large majority of students of diverse backgrounds. Because of the early field experience in this same district, all five student teachers had some previous conception of the nature of the schools and student population in the district. Therefore, the student teachers are assumed to have

developing visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds in urban classrooms.

### **Significance of the Study**

Many research studies have explored attitudes of preservice teachers about teaching students of diverse backgrounds (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Pajares, 1993), and some particular interventions in teacher education programs have been studied. Vision has also been studied in preservice reading teachers. The next step is to follow preservice teachers into student teaching and explore the intersections of vision, practice, and context in their development as reading teachers. Knowing that many preservice teachers enter their teacher preparation programs with deficit views of students of diverse backgrounds, it is important to learn how they characterize their visions of teaching reading and understand what factors contribute to their visions. Understanding the intersections of vision, practice and context could help inform the choices made by teacher educators in reading methods courses and early field experiences. Appropriate activities could help support the development of culturally responsive reading teachers.

Much of the research on reading with students of diverse backgrounds focuses on instruction by classroom teachers (Au, 2006), bilingual literacy (Barrera & Jimenez, 2002; Christian, 1996; deJong, 2002) or literacy practices in the home (Heath, 1983; Zentella, 2005). The research literature on reading teacher education contains many studies about the organization, content, and structure of preservice programs, the reading habits of preservice teachers, or knowledge representation from a cognitive psychology perspective (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; Hoffman &

Pearson, 2000). Another line of research has focused on characteristics of effective classroom reading teachers (Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996; Pressley, Yokoi, Rankin, Wharton-McDonald, & Mistretta, 1997; Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002). Hoffman and Pearson (2000) argued that the issue of diversity in preparing reading teachers may be the most challenging but also the most important: “It is ...unacceptable that so many majority teachers possess so little knowledge about cultural and linguistic diversity. We [reading teacher educators] may not be the sole source of the problem, but we can and must be part of the solution,” (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p. 41). This study contributes to finding solutions for strengthening preparation of reading teachers for teaching students of diverse backgrounds.

This dissertation has set the stage for future exploration of the developing visions of preservice teachers and how those visions change from early in the teacher education program through the first year of teaching. For many teacher education programs seeking to strengthen their preparation of teachers for diversity, studies such as this one that explore cultural responsiveness will contribute to understanding what changes are needed. The checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies developed in this dissertation could provide a beginning for assessment or as a tool for preservice and in-service teacher reflection.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In this dissertation, the areas of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds, teacher vision, and sociocultural theory provide the framework through which I have analyzed my findings. In addition, I present a graphic representation of

my conceptions of the intersections of vision, practice, and context in student teaching.

### ***Teaching Reading to Students of Diverse Backgrounds***

In elementary classrooms, reading instruction is a major daily occurrence (Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996). How student teachers envision the teaching of reading could limit or enhance their ability to provide reading experiences that promote high achievement for students of diverse backgrounds. For example, drawing from the ethnographic work of Street, Au and Raphael (2000) argued that for teaching students of diverse backgrounds, viewing literacy as sociocultural practice allows for consideration of diverse background knowledge and literacy practices in diverse communities. Student teachers who consider valuable only reading such as that assessed by standardized tests, for example, or who hold deficit views (Irvine, 2003; King, 1994) may ignore other literacy practices from students' cultural backgrounds on which they might build in the classroom. As Au and Kawakami (1994) summarized the issue:

Typical practices that appear ineffective for students of diverse backgrounds are those that devalue the home language or dialect, rely too heavily on classroom recitation, fail to recognize community variations in styles of narration and questioning, and ignore peer group dynamics. Typical practices often result because teachers have underestimated students' abilities, which leads to a lowering of expectations and an emphasis on low-level skills rather than higher-level thinking (p. 23).

If student teachers do not draw on the knowledge and skills students bring with them from home, they could be limiting students' opportunities to learn in meaningful ways.

A number of strategies have been suggested for quality reading instruction for students of diverse backgrounds. Although multicultural literature may currently be found in many classrooms (Au & Raphael, 2000), the presence of such literature is not enough. In their review of research on literacy instruction, Raphael and Brock (1997) offered four observations they derived from literacy instruction research. The four characteristics of quality literacy instruction overlap with key characteristics of culturally responsive instruction (Au, 2006), and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). They are

- 1) Quality literacy instruction occurs in meaningful contexts.
- 2) Quality literacy instruction involves active student engagement in constructing meaning.
- 3) Quality literacy instruction requires teacher knowledge of a repertoire of literacy instructional strategies.
- 4) Quality literacy instruction involves dynamic and shifting conceptions of teachers' and students' roles in instructional encounters. (Raphael & Brock, 1997, pp. 29-30.)

Both Au (2006) and Gay (2000) confirmed the need for culturally responsive instruction to occur in meaningful contexts. By bridging the students' home experiences with those at school, curriculum and/or social process in the classroom can better reflect a context of learning that is meaningful to students (Au, 2006). An

example of curriculum change that aligns community funds of knowledge with achievement in school is the use of community bilingualism as a topic of written reports by English language learners (Moll, 1986). The use of “signifying” as a scaffold for teaching literary interpretation skills (Lee, 1995), and the talk-story structure that Au (1980) used in reading lessons with Hawaiian children are examples of classroom social process providing a meaningful context. Such culturally responsive instructional practices help students of diverse backgrounds achieve school-determined educational goals while drawing on the context of their home cultures for meaning.

As teachers make the effort to connect classroom learning to the lived experiences of their students, they enhance students’ ability to learn in meaningful ways. Students from culturally diverse backgrounds require diverse programs that vary according to their need (Gay, 2000). This culturally responsive instruction would require teachers to use a wide range of literacy instructional strategies and materials.

In the literacy research they reviewed, Raphael and Brock (1997) found that roles of teachers and students were viewed as dynamic rather than static. In culturally responsive literacy instruction, teachers include classroom processes that allow for participation in various combinations of large group, teacher- and student-led small groups, paired learning and individual and independent work time (Au, 2006). By moving away from a traditional teacher-dominated instructional pattern to one with a variety of participation structures, culturally responsive teachers allow more opportunities for meaningful learning to take place.

Research suggests that high-quality teaching for students of diverse backgrounds requires the same characteristics of any good teacher plus something more. It requires a vision of teaching that values students' culture and language, encourages high levels of school success for students of diverse backgrounds, and builds bridges for students between home and school. Culturally responsive teachers ideally celebrate diversity in all they do by aiming to correct injustices inherent in our present educational system (Au, 2006).

In light of research literature that highlights many preservice teachers who are unwilling or unprepared to teach for diversity or who hold a deficit view of students of diverse backgrounds, more research is needed to explore how preservice teachers come to envision teaching students of diverse backgrounds, particularly in reading. In this dissertation study, my focus has been to understand the role of various factors, such as attitudes and beliefs, educational experiences, and intercultural experiences in developing a preservice teacher's vision of teaching students of diverse backgrounds to read. This study also explored the intersections of vision, practice and context in student teachers' development as reading teachers with an emphasis on whether culturally responsive teaching emerged. In the following section, I highlight theoretical underpinnings providing a foundation for this work and present a graphic representation of my conceptions of the intersections of vision, practice, and context in student teaching.

### ***A Sociocultural Perspective***

This study draws on a sociocultural perspective as a way of framing the development of teacher vision and its enactment in student teaching practice. It

pertains to teacher learning as categorized by Cochran-Smith, et al. (2004), because it focuses on how a preservice teacher's vision of teaching develops and how that vision intersects with reading instruction in a classroom context with students of diverse backgrounds. In some literature, teacher learning has been characterized as participation in sociocultural activity (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa, & Goldsmith, 1995) or participation in a community of practice (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In contrast to thinking of learning solely as the cognitive processing of one individual, a sociocultural approach to understanding learning begins with the goal of explicating how human mental functioning relates to the cultural, institutional, and historical situations in which it takes place (Wertsch, delRio, & Alvarez, 1995), in other words, a *situated perspective* of learning.

The major characteristic that distinguishes the situated perspective is, according to Greeno (1998), a theoretical focus on systems beyond the behavior and cognition of an individual. As Cobb and Bowers (1999) articulated it, "A primary metaphor of the situated learning perspective is that of knowing as an activity that is situated with regard to an individual's position in the world of social affairs" (p. 5). Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) agreed that situation is not separable from learning but rather a part of what is learned.

A sociocultural perspective has framed some previous research studies on teacher learning (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999; Lee, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003; Stein, 1997). The very nature of sociocultural learning theory allows for the social or cultural context of learning to be considered part of the learning process. These characteristics made a sociocultural



perspective suitable for this study because I explored how preservice teachers developed a vision of teaching, given their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences and how that vision intersected in various ways with their teaching practice and the context of their student teaching. In addition, their reading instruction in student teaching took place in an urban classroom with students of diverse backgrounds, which mediated their learning to teach in particular ways.

Constraints of the context provided boundaries within which a participant learned more or less successfully to embrace the social practices of the classroom (Grossman et al., 1999) and address the contextual framework that surrounded them. Constraints are not necessarily negative in nature, but rather, work to provide structure. For example, the target urban school district mandates a balanced literacy program in all elementary classrooms. Although this would not be considered a negative structure, it nevertheless limits the kinds of instructional activities in which a teacher may engage. In this study, I examined the ways in which the student teachers' visions and practices intersected with areas of the context such as the district reading requirements, the cooperating teacher, and the students and their cultures.

### ***The Nature of Practice in Student Teaching***

From a sociocultural perspective, the delineations between vision, practice, and context are more fluid than perhaps in other theoretical frameworks. For example, Wenger (1998) defined the concept of practice as actions, in a historical and social context, giving meaning to what we do. He argued that all practice is *social* practice, which includes both what is visibly represented and what is assumed:

It includes the language, tools, documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specific criteria, codified procedures, regulations,...But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognized intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views” (Wenger, 1998, p. 47).

Wenger’s description of practice includes some portion of the local context. In student teaching, practice is the negotiation of meaning drawing on what came before (vision) and what is at hand (local context), creating a dynamic continuum surrounding vision, practice, and context. Practice is dynamic, especially for student teachers who are in a situation of learning in practice. Others have also contributed to defining and describing practice.

Hammerness et al. (2005) described the challenge of putting teaching into practice:

Developing an authoritative classroom presence, good radar for watching and interpreting what many different students are doing and feeling at each moment, and skills for explaining, questioning, discussing, giving feedback, constructing tasks, facilitating work, and managing the classroom – all at once – is not simple (p. 374).

The authors stated that effective decision-making about how preservice teachers understand a topic or how they learn best emerges within practice in the classroom context.

Hammerness (2006) also talked about practice as the instruction, activities and achievements a teacher is able to accomplish in the current context. For Hammerness (2006) and Hammerness et al. (2005), practice is seen as the decisions and actions a teacher makes in the act of teaching within a particular context. Assumed in both of these perspectives is that teachers care about their students' success and are driven to promote learning. This concept of practice goes beyond participation to include the motivation to help students progress in their learning.

Kennedy (2006) reported findings from a study of teacher practice, in which teachers identified six foci of their practice:

1. Covering desirable content
2. Fostering student learning
3. Increasing students' willingness to participate
4. Maintaining lesson momentum
5. Creating a civil classroom community, and
6. Attending to their own cognitive and emotional needs. (p. 205).

As in Hammerness (2006) and Hammerness, et al. (2005), the assumption within these concerns found by Kennedy (2006) is that teachers demonstrated a level of care and desire to promote learning. Buchmann (1989) also addressed this concept of practice, such as the practice of medicine, which goes beyond mere action to a level of care and quality toward the outcome. In this sense, some teachers who "go through the motions" without true regard for the benefit of their students are not "practicing" teaching.

In my discussion of *practice* and *context*, I distinguish between the immediate, local context and the larger contextual framework, which I later define as *context*. Although the lines between what portion of context constitutes a part of practice and what constitutes the broader contextual framework are somewhat fluid, I draw on Wenger's (1998) explanations of *alignment* and *constellation of practices* for understanding the difference.

Wenger (1998) described the local context of practice as an *alignment* that coordinates “energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises” (p. 174). The broader structure, for student teachers, is the established practice in their student teaching placement. This type of local context constitutes the student teacher's immediate interpretations of events and situations that result in the actions they take in the classroom. For a student teacher, practice includes not only the specific actions of the instruction but also the understandings she brings to the situation and the constraints defined by being a newcomer participating in another teacher's classroom. By this definition, the fluid lines between vision, practice and context are visible. For example, local context includes the anticipated role of a student teacher, or the pre-established classroom management or instructional framework in the student teaching classroom.

Embedded in the term *practice* in my model is this idea of local context. Unlike other views in which dimensions of context are singled out as independent variables to be separated and accounted for, a sociocultural view of local context is more fluid and integrated into the essence of social practice. Also embedded in the term *practice* are the immediate expectations and intentions that lead to action in the

classroom. Drawing from these many descriptions of practice, I define practice as the student teacher's actions and intentions to create an environment and activities that promote and advance student learning within the immediate context of teaching.

### ***The Context of Student Teaching***

As mentioned in the last section, contextual structures within the scope of local context or engagement (Wenger, 1998) are considered part of practice. For a student teacher, this would include the structure of the classroom already in place upon arrival. However, Wenger (1998) considered the broader contextual framework a *constellation of practices*, which could include many interconnected practices. For the student teachers in this study, these broader examples of context consisted of university requirements, district requirements, local culture, the experience and professional beliefs of the cooperating teacher<sup>1</sup>, parents and students, other professionals, and school resources. These examples constituted many of the coding categories that emerged from the data and define the contextual framework for the classroom teaching of these five student teachers. In this dissertation, I highlight the three most prominent contextual categories that emerged, which are the district balanced literacy requirements, the role of the cooperating teacher, and the cultural backgrounds of the classroom students. It is this broader contextual framework that I term *context* in this model of intersections.

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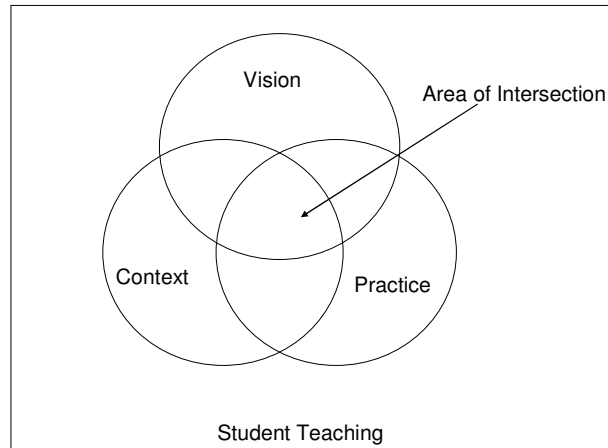
<sup>1</sup> The professional beliefs of the cooperating teacher are being divided between what she expects of the student teacher (local context as part of practice) and her own experience and beliefs as a teacher in the district (contextual framework or context).

### ***Graphic Representation of Vision, Practice, and Context***

A graphic representation of the intersection of vision, practice, and context for student teachers is useful for visualizing how each element intersects with the others.

A sample graphic is shown in Figure 1 for explanatory purposes. A graphic representation for each participant may be found in Chapter Five with the description and analysis of intersections.

**Figure 1. The intersection of vision, practice, and context in student teaching.**



The outer box represents the sociocultural context of student teaching. Each circle represents one of the three elements that intersect in student teaching: vision, practice, and context. Several assumptions are inherent in this model. First, the model assumes that all student teachers have a vision of teaching. Because of their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and their completion of coursework for an elementary education degree, I assume they have some type of vision of teaching. Practice is assumed because of the requirements of student teaching, and context is assumed because of the placements in elementary classrooms. The dynamic relationship among the three elements allows for intersections among them, which is where learning occurs for the student teacher. A larger area of intersection indicates more opportunities for learning.

The example of the model in Figure 1 shows all three elements as equal in size. Differences in the size of the circles indicate the relative importance of that

element for the student teacher. For example, if the vision circle is largest, the student is said to be vision dominant, that is, the student teacher's vision of teaching reading drives practice. If practice is dominant, the student teacher's actions and intentions in the immediate local context are more influential than the developing vision. If context is dominant, the vision and practice are shaped by the context.

In addition to differences in size of the circles, their positions relative to each other may also be different. In Figure 1, the circles overlap to show how influential each one is to the other two elements. For example, practice may be shaped by vision or context or both. Vision may influence practice and be influenced by the context. Context may drive vision and practice as well. The sample in Figure 1 illustrates a student teacher whose vision, practice, and context intersect evenly and influence the other elements equally.

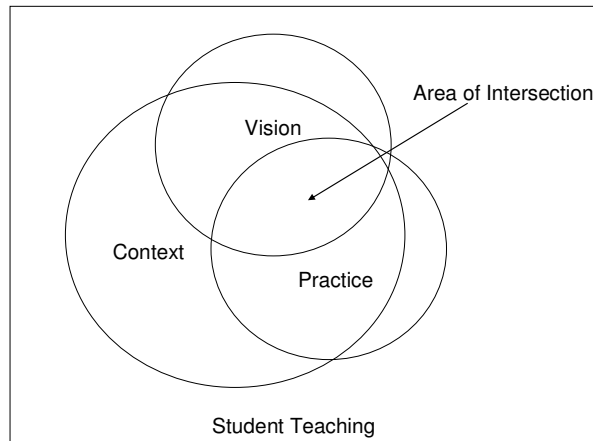
The space at the intersection of the three elemental circles identifies the area of intersection. Different configurations represent the dominance of one element over the other two, with different implications for teacher education. Dominant elements are discussed further in Chapter Five. A student teacher does not have only one area of intersection, but rather, many areas of intersection based on her experiences in the classroom. Each graphic representation captures one intersection or a holistic representation of intersections for an individual. These graphic models assist in displaying the tendencies for each student teacher as well as comparing the participants to a model of culturally responsive teaching.

Figure 2 shows a culturally responsive teacher. The circle representing context is the largest, indicating its dominance. The large areas of overlap show that context



shapes both vision and practice. The large area of intersection indicates greater opportunities for learning by the student teacher. The topic of culturally responsive teaching is discussed in Chapter Six.

**Figure 2. Intersections for a culturally responsive teacher.**



### **Dissertation Overview**

The well-documented cultural mismatch between teachers and their students makes preparing preservice teachers to teach students of diverse backgrounds imperative. To address the achievement gap, particularly in reading, students of diverse backgrounds need teachers whose vision and practice engender high-quality learning experiences that address the classroom and school context.

As teacher education programs continue to search for ways to better prepare teachers for diversity, it is important to understand how preservice teachers' visions of teaching students of diverse backgrounds develop and then intersect with the actual classroom practice of teaching reading. This dissertation extends current research in

the area of how teacher vision develops and its relationship to reading instructional practice. Using a sociocultural perspective allowed for analysis of each student teacher with unique attitudes and beliefs, and educational and intercultural experiences as they entered student teaching. Looking at how their visions intersected with classroom practice and the context of student teaching strengthens the understanding of how to support student teacher learning under varying circumstances.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters that examine the intersections of vision, practice, and context in the student teachers' development as reading teachers for students of diverse backgrounds. Chapter Two provides a review of the conceptual and research literature that frames this dissertation. First, the conceptual literature on teacher vision provides a lens through which to analyze how student teachers think about teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. To understand the factors that could influence a developing vision of teaching, the teacher education literature that addresses preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs, educational experiences, and intercultural experiences is reviewed. And finally, literature on culturally responsive teaching and on preparing culturally responsive reading teachers completes the foundation for this dissertation.

Chapter Three identifies the research tradition, methods, and types of analysis used in the study. Qualitative methods supported a multiple case study with individual and cross-case analyses of five student teachers from one undergraduate teacher education program placed in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. This chapter provides background information about the university

program, the district context and required balanced literacy program, and the profiles of cooperating teachers and students of each student teacher.

Chapters Four and Five offer detailed analysis of the individual case studies. Chapter Four focuses on the individual visions of the participants and the factors that influenced the development of those visions. Chapter Five presents a detailed analysis of the specific intersections of vision, practice, and context experienced by each student teacher. This chapter also relies on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter One to present a graphic representation of the intersections for each student teacher, including how one element can emerge as dominant over the other two.

Chapter Six looks across the five case studies to explore the major intersections that emerged in the experiences of all five student teachers. The intersections common to all participants were issues of classroom management, balanced literacy instruction, and students' cultures. The details of these intersections raise concerns about the importance of culturally responsive teaching and the type of reading teacher education that could contribute to its development. In conclusion, Chapter Seven summarizes the findings and introduces the implications of this study including recommendations for preparing reading teachers for teaching students of diverse backgrounds and suggestions for future research.

Understanding how student teachers' visions develop and change is important to improving their preparation, especially for teaching students of diverse backgrounds. As the capstone of teacher education, the student teaching experience plays a major role in the intersection of vision with practice and the context of the classroom. As Suzy declared,

When I got into my first reading class and learned about teaching reading, I had no idea! I thought it would be so easy, but it's not! I think my vision of teaching reading changes everyday because of my experiences in a real classroom" (Interview 1, 2/8/07).

In the next six chapters, I present my interpretation of the stories of five student teachers, the intersections among vision, practice, and context, and their development as reading teachers for students of diverse backgrounds.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

This dissertation draws from several areas of literature. First, the conceptual literature on teacher learning provides a lens of *vision* through which to analyze how preservice teachers think about teaching students of diverse backgrounds. Second, one area of literature on teacher education addresses the role of teacher education in preparing preservice teachers for diversity. This literature attends to the importance of attitudes and beliefs, educational experiences, and intercultural experiences and provides a foundation for understanding factors that might play a role in preservice teachers' vision and, ultimately, their instructional practice. Third, the literature on culturally responsive teaching articulates goals with which to recognize how far preservice teachers' vision takes them toward being culturally responsive to improve the quality of educational experiences for students of diverse backgrounds. Research on effective and high-quality reading instruction narrow the focus and provides a beginning point for culturally responsive instruction in reading. Finally, the literature on culturally responsive teaching looks more closely at practices that hold promise for excellent teaching for students of diverse backgrounds. These bodies of literature contribute to understanding the need for studying the visions of student teachers and the intersections of those visions with practice and context in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds.

### **Vision in Preservice Teacher Learning**

In this section, conceptual literature on teacher vision is addressed first, followed by related studies of perspectives and finally, recent studies on teacher vision.

### ***Conceptions of Teacher Vision***

The conceptual literature on teacher learning includes various conceptions of teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grossman et al., 1999; Hammerness et al., 2005; Hollingsworth, 1989; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). *Vision* is one of the dimensions included in these teacher learning frameworks. Shulman and Shulman (2004), and Hammerness, et al. (2005) argued that preservice teachers need a vision of teaching to guide their practice. Grossman et al. (1999) characterized vision as mediating learning about teaching. For preservice teacher learning, *analyzing beliefs and forming new visions* is one of the five central tasks identified by Feiman-Nemser (2001). Specifically for learning to teach reading, Hoffman and colleagues (Hoffman, Roller, Maloch, Sailors, Duffy, & Beretvas, 2005) reported the inclusion of a well developed *vision* as one common feature of excellent teacher preparation programs. As such, vision constitutes an important programmatic element for defining central ideals, values and ideologies for preservice teachers (Turner, 2006).

Shulman and Shulman (2004) described the development of *vision* as a goal and a standard with which to measure one's own thoughts and actions. For Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), "inquiry as stance" conceptualizes a vision of teaching that relies on teachers and preservice teachers to "envision and theorize their practice" by problematizing current educational practice (p. 289). Although Cochran-Smith and Lytle did not specifically call it *vision*, they argued that "teachers learn by challenging their own assumptions; identifying salient issues of practice; posing problems; studying their own students, classrooms and schools..." (p. 278). Hammerness (2006)

concurred that “like a mirror, teachers compare daily practice to their vision and recognize successes as well as identifying areas for improvement” (p. 3). In this context, vision could be described as the sociocultural connector that joins past experiences, present context and images of the future.

Hammerness (1999, 2003, 2004, 2006) characterized *vision* as images of what teachers hope could or might be in their classrooms and possibly in the greater community or society. In some cases, vision provides positive inspiration and motivation. For others, comparing their vision to their current teaching situation results in conflict between what they hope and what is real. According to Hammerness (2003), teachers’ visions can vary along three dimensions: focus, range and distance. Focus refers to how distinctly or clearly the vision is articulated. It can also refer to the particular area the vision encompasses. Range refers to how broadly or narrowly the area is considered. For example, a teacher may only envision her own classroom, but another teacher might envision her teaching as part of the broader community or system of education. Distance refers to how close or far the vision is to the teacher’s current involvement, such as daily experiences in the classroom.

Closely linked to these three dimensions of vision is the context in which the teacher is visioning, which constitutes whatever arenas are relevant to the teacher. By addressing context, it is possible to gain greater understanding of the circumstances under which teacher learning takes place, and vision changes practice. Duffy (2002) argued that visioning could be the key to outstanding teachers because “when teachers have a vision, they assume control over instructional decision making in order to achieve the mission” (p. 334). This dissertation explores how vision

developed in the early stages of teacher preparation, how vision changed through the student teaching semester, and the intersections of vision, practice, and context. It builds on previous studies of preservice teacher vision reviewed in the following section.

### ***Teacher Vision by Any Other Name***

Whether called personal theories, perspectives, or vision, how a preservice teacher views students and the teaching context is a lens through which to examine student teacher learning about diversity; however, I argue that the research on personal theories and perspectives is more limited, making the construct of vision appropriate for this study. In their PROTEACH program at the University of Florida, Ross, Johnson, and Smith (1992) assigned students a *personal theory* paper based in preservice teachers' autobiographical writings, including significant educational experiences. These personal theory papers are designed to help students articulate their implicit views on teaching and learning. The assignment of a theory paper does contribute to making preservice teachers' views of teaching explicit; however, that is its limit. It does not bridge from theory into classroom practice.

Some researchers have studied *preservice teacher perspectives* (Adler, 1984; Ginsburg & Newman, 1985; Goodman, 1985, 1988; Goodman & Adler, 1985; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984). Tabachnick and Zeichner defined teacher perspectives as the ways teachers think about their work and give meaning to these beliefs by their behavior in classrooms. Goodman (1988) wrote, "Teaching perspectives take into account how situations within classrooms are experienced; how



these situations are interpreted given the teacher's previous experiences, beliefs, and assumptions; and how these interpretations are manifested in behavior" (p. 121).

As part of a larger survey of student teacher beliefs related to six specific categories, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) interviewed and observed 13 student teachers over the course of their student teaching semester. The purpose of the research was to examine the sources of influence related to the development of perspectives and how perspectives changed during student teaching. The researchers found that student teachers were able to respond in unique ways to their student teaching experiences. Tabachnick and Zeichner argued that an individual teacher's classroom actions result from "a continual interplay between the intentions of individuals and institutional constraint" (p. 34). This research on teacher perspectives provides a beginning for understanding how teachers think about teaching; however, Tabachnick and Zeichner's study is broad, ranging across many subject areas. In studying teacher vision, a focus on one specific subject area helps pinpoint how a developing vision intersects with the instructional practice in the classroom. Tabachnick and Zeichner also looked only at the individual as a unit of analysis. This dissertation considers the student teacher within the teaching context as the unit of analysis, offering a more complex view of how vision, practice, and context intersect.

### ***Studies of Teacher Vision***

In the past decade, a few researchers have begun to study preservice teachers' visions of teaching. Hammerness' work (1999, 2003, 2004, 2006), for example, focused on "how emotion and cognition come together to shape teachers' learning and their decisions about their professional lives" (2003, p. 3). Hammerness (1999)

surveyed 80 teachers and interviewed 16, from student teachers to veteran teachers. They represented the secondary subject areas of English, history, mathematics and science. The author found that teachers' visions differed across three dimensions: focus, range, and distance. This work represents an important foundation in understanding teacher vision and its role in instruction and in the lives of teachers. However, it relies on data gathered only from secondary teachers – most of them with years of classroom experience. It is also important to understand how teacher vision develops for preservice teachers at the elementary school level. This dissertation study fills that gap.

Some research has paired *vision* with other constructs, such as identity, change, or philosophy and focused on a specific subject area (Letts, 1999; McLoughlin, 1998; Turner, 2006). In her study of undergraduate science methods students, Letts (1999) examined ways in which previous experiences in science shaped preservice teachers' orientations toward science and how they envisioned their emerging identities as science teachers. Using narrative inquiry, Letts explored three cases from the 27 students in the class. Her purpose was to understand "how these students use their past experiences to theorize about their future practice" (p. 6). The author found more differences than similarities among the three cases; however, she discovered that previous experiences with school science did influence the students' visions of their own future science teaching. This research is an example of examining how a particular factor contributes to teacher vision; however, a limitation of this study is that a short-term practicum accompanied the course. The author

acknowledged that the preservice teachers' visions were "yet untested in the classroom" (p. 27).

McLoughlin's (1998) phenomenological inquiry of one science student teacher explored the meanings the participant attached to her beliefs, intentions and actions in teaching and how they changed. In this case study, the researcher interviewed, observed, and reviewed documents of a student teacher she called Iris. McLoughlin reported the tensions between Iris' philosophy of reform and the more traditional school context in which she was placed. During her student teaching, Iris changed her teaching style from constant activity to occasional activity by students. She struggled with the boundaries defined by the accepted practices in her classroom, such as a traditional lecture format, and questioned her own goals, resenting the restrictions placed on her opportunities to teach in the way she envisioned. Iris learned that strategic compliance or avoidance of conflict was necessary for successful completion of her field experience. The author concluded that student teaching may provide opportunities to confirm professional images of teaching (visions) or those images may conflict with the context of the classroom or school. This study confirms that visions of teaching do intersect with practice and context in student teaching.

Turner (2006) studied 20 preservice teachers in the context of a reading methods course. Her teacher research inquired into her preservice teachers' visions of culturally responsive instruction using qualitative content analysis of course assignments. One assignment specifically asked students to articulate their vision or philosophy about teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. Turner found

that preservice teachers' visions were characterized by three dimensions: challenge, purpose, and action.

These three studies contribute to understanding the role of teacher vision in the development of preservice teachers for specific subject area instruction; however, they also have certain limitations. Only one (Turner, 2006) focused on elementary preservice teachers. Lett (1999) and McLoughlin (1998) did not acknowledge the issue of a diverse student population in contemporary classrooms. McLoughlin comes closer to articulating how a vision changes within the student teaching context; however, it focused specifically on science teaching. Although Turner did focus on reading with students of diverse backgrounds, she did not follow the preservice teachers into student teaching to determine how their vision might change in a classroom context. This dissertation study followed student teachers as they developed their vision and practice of reading instruction in the context of urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds.

### **Factors that Contribute to Teacher Vision**

Research on teacher learning and preparing preservice teachers for diversity suggests that two major factors contribute to teacher vision: 1) previous experiences, including K-12 classroom experience as a student, coursework in teacher preparation with varied pedagogical approaches, and intercultural experiences that might come from personal exposure to individuals of diverse backgrounds or field experiences within teacher preparation, and 2) attitudes and beliefs preservice teachers bring with them into teacher preparation. In this section I review the factor of experience with research on preservice teacher learning. In the following section on preparing teachers

for diversity, I discuss the factors of attitudes and beliefs as well as teacher education experiences with research examples that specifically discuss diversity.

### ***Prior Experiences***

Most preservice teachers have many years of classroom experience as a student. This prior experience in the classroom may contribute to their vision of teaching by giving them an unwarranted confidence in their understanding of teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2001) calls on Lortie's (1975) concept of the apprenticeship of observation to highlight the need for preservice teachers to "critically examine their taken-for-granted, often deeply entrenched beliefs so that these beliefs can be developed or amended" (p. 1017). Only then can new images of what constitutes good teaching and a strong commitment to the profession be developed (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Understanding teaching based on a student's perspective is quite limiting (Lortie, 1975). Although a preservice teacher might assume privileged knowledge of teaching based on having been a student, in reality, the claim is restricted in at least two ways. First, the special vantage point of a student allows for only superficial recognition of what a teacher's job actually entails. A student may only see the external trappings of the actual work. Second, the students' perceptions of the teacher's motivations and intentions are likely to be based primarily on their own imagination, since it is doubtful that students have access to the teacher's thought processes (Lortie, 1975). Lortie argued that "the apprenticeship-of-observation is not likely to instill a sense of the problematics of teaching – that students, because of the limits of their vantage point and empathetic capacity, will see it simplistically"

(Lortie, p. 65). This simplistic conception of teaching is likely to contribute to a simplistic vision of their own teaching.

Mary Kennedy (1999) also argued that preservice teachers base their interpretations and responses on a frame of reference developed as students. Research suggests that preservice teachers may espouse particular ideas about teaching but not necessarily act on those ideas (Kennedy, 1999). Acquiring knowledge for a new frame of reference may not provide the tools needed to actually respond. When preservice teachers have different cultural frames of reference from their students, simply recognizing differences may not necessarily result in cultural responsiveness in the classroom. Preservice teachers draw on their prior experiences to shape their vision of teaching.

Some case study research highlighted how previous images of teaching interact with educational experiences in teacher education (Denyer & Florio-Ruane, 1995; Dooley, 1998). Denyer and Florio-Ruane described the case of one preservice teacher. Her vision of teaching, reportedly shaped by teachers she had growing up, conflicted with the new images of teaching she was learning in a literacy methods course. The authors suggested that preservice teachers can go through a “painful process of transformation” (p. 542). New ways of interacting with students, such as “listening and learning from students and not merely to assess factual recall and compliance” (p. 542) may alter the vision of teaching. The preservice teacher struggled with the question *When am I teaching?* because her entering vision conflicted with her newly learned role with students.

Similarly, Dooley (1998) studied one preservice teacher he calls Scott. Dooley found that in a 10-week language arts field experience, Scott held images of teaching that conflicted with his experience in the classroom. Scott's vision of himself as a teacher included attributes of creativity and flexibility; however, the vision did not include the planning and organization to support effective practice in the classroom. His K-12 school experience provided a vision of the visible attributes of creativity and flexibility without revealing the underlying organization and planning that contributed to teacher effectiveness.

These two studies suggest that teacher vision does intersection with classroom practice. One limitation of these studies is the absence of context as part of the analyses. They both focused on vision and practice without addressing the role of classroom context. This dissertation study includes vision, practice, and context as they intersect in student teaching.

### ***Educational Experiences in Teacher Education***

One group of studies described preservice teachers' experiences in negotiating their teacher preparation and practice in the classroom (Boyd, Boll, Brawner, & Villaume, 1998; Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995; Weaver & Stanulis, 1996). Boyd, et al. (1998) studied preservice teachers in both university classroom and elementary classroom settings as they developed a meaning-based philosophy of language arts instruction. Their visions of teaching intersected with practice in the elementary classrooms to shape their decision-making. The university class time allowed the preservice teachers to articulate visions developed in the elementary classrooms.

Weaver and Stanulis (1996) described the case of one student teacher they mentored as cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The mentoring was collaborative in nature. The alignment of the university literacy coursework and the teacher's classroom practice contributed to a powerful student teaching experience. Although not without challenges, it provided opportunities for the student teacher to strengthen her vision of a workshop model of classroom reading and writing instruction.

In contrast, Bruckerhoff and Carlson (1995) described a student teaching experience marked by loneliness and fear. The student teacher resorted to survival techniques to complete the 10-week placement. Clearly, the contrasting experiences would contribute to visions of teaching that differ in many ways. Findings of these three studies suggest that the nature of the teacher preparation and the teaching context, particularly the cooperating teacher, provide educational experiences that can shape teacher vision.

### **Preparing Preservice Teachers for Diversity**

Over the past thirty years, university-based teacher education programs have undertaken, to varying degrees, the challenge of preparing preservice teachers for diversity in the classroom. Because of the cultural differences between most preservice teachers and the students of diverse backgrounds they are likely to teach, much of the teacher education research in this area addresses attitudes and beliefs. In addition, since the inclusion of a multicultural education requirement to NCATE<sup>2</sup> standards in 1987, teacher education programs have instituted course revisions and/or

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<sup>2</sup> NCATE is the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.



field experiences to meet those standards (Melnick & Zeichner, 1997). The research on preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs identifies the kinds of attitudes preservice teachers bring to teacher preparation and factors that may contribute to those views. Other studies examine particular course interventions and/or field experiences to determine whether particular methods assist in preparation for diversity. This literature provides a foundation for understanding additional factors that are likely to contribute to a developing vision of teaching.

### ***Attitudes and Beliefs***

In her review of literature on the role of attitudes and beliefs on learning to teach, Richardson (1996) reported that changes in preservice and in-service teachers' beliefs were influenced by the context of their teaching as well as their entering beliefs. Several reviewers of literature on preparing teachers for diversity confirmed the importance of attending to and, if necessary, challenging the attitudes and beliefs that preservice teachers bring with them into teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Grant & Secada, 1990; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Pajares (1992) argued that teachers' perceptions and judgments stem from prior beliefs and, in turn, contribute to classroom decisions that affect instruction. These findings suggest that attitudes and beliefs play a role in the developing vision of preservice teachers.

Several studies used survey methods to examine attitudes and beliefs of preservice and in-service teachers about diversity (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Dee & Henkin, 2002; Gilbert, 1997). For example, Gilbert (1997) explored the knowledge and beliefs preservice teachers have about urban students, schools and

teachers. Using a questionnaire developed by the author, Gilbert surveyed 345 mostly White, female, monolingual students in teacher education programs across five states in the south, southwest, and mid-west. Concerning urban students, the author found that preservice teachers characterized them as rebellious, rude, dangerous, victims of negative homes, and unwilling to learn. Their beliefs about urban teachers were more positive, and they reported a belief that learning about the culture and economic conditions of urban settings should be part of urban teacher preparation. This study contributes to understanding the kinds of attitudes and beliefs preservice teachers bring into teacher education, which contribute to their development of visions of teaching.

Using the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale previously created by the authors, Byrnes, Kiger, and Manning (1997) surveyed 191 in-service teachers across three states about their attitudes towards language diversity and linguistically diverse students. One of their findings was an association between experience working with language minority students and positive attitudes towards language diversity. Other results suggested that teachers with graduate degrees, formal training for teaching linguistically diverse students, and the region of residence were also associated with positive attitudes towards language diversity. The region associated with more positive attitudes was Arizona, a state with more cultural and linguistic diversity than the other two states, Utah and Virginia (Byrnes, et al., 1997). These findings point to educational and intercultural experiences as contributing factors in positive visions of working with language diversity.

Dee and Henkin (2002) surveyed 150 preservice teachers to assess their attitudes toward cultural diversity before a multicultural education course. The authors were concerned with the extent to which characteristics and experiences with which preservice teachers enter explain differences in attitudes toward conditions of diversity. They found that attitudes toward social interaction were most important. Interest in casual activities with culturally diverse individuals (for example going to a movie or dinner together) was associated with positive attitudes towards implementing diversity initiatives in the classroom. Participants with a diverse set of friends and interest in more personal activities (e.g., roommate or dating) tended to report even stronger agreement with the social value of diversity. Dee and Henkin concluded that “learning opportunities that support and reinforce certain social interaction attitudes appear to hold promise in terms of facilitating the development of positive attitudes toward cultural diversity” (p. 35). These three studies confirm that intercultural experiences can contribute to teacher vision.

Three studies (Bondy, Schmidt, & Johnson, 1993; Groulx, 2001; Weisman & Garza, 2002) surveyed preservice teachers before and after a specific teacher education program or course. As an example of these pre-post studies, Weisman and Garza (2002) surveyed 158 preservice teachers in a multicultural education course with a field work component in one university in California. Their purpose was to assess the attitudes toward diversity of preservice teachers enrolled in a multicultural education course. Questionnaires were administered before and after the course. The survey examined attitudes and beliefs about 1) general issues of diversity, 2) classroom practices regarding diversity, and 3) inequalities that exist in society.

Preservice teachers said they gained knowledge about different cultural groups that might be helpful in the classroom, and 90% of participants indicated that the course increased their awareness and acceptance of diversity. However, many participants maintained their views that lack of academic success among minority students is the fault of the students and their parents. The authors concluded that one course has limited value in improving attitudes about diversity.

Cook and Van Cleaf (2000) studied the effects of differing student teaching experiences on preservice teachers' perceptions of success in working with students and parents of diverse backgrounds. They found that preservice teachers in urban field placements with students of diverse backgrounds perceive themselves as better prepared to teach in diverse classrooms. Cook and Van Cleaf concluded that cross-cultural experiences contribute to teacher preparation for diverse classrooms. These survey studies confirm an association between previous experiences, especially with culturally diverse individuals, and preservice teachers' visions of teaching students of diverse backgrounds. However, they lack the fine-grained examination of how attitudes and beliefs interact with previous experiences. Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) pointed out that changes in preservice teachers' attitudes are not always in a direction desired by teacher educators. More research is needed to question how the previous experiences and beliefs of preservice teachers contribute to their vision of teaching.

### ***Course Interventions***

A large number of qualitative studies explored particular pedagogical methods (or one or more in combination with a field experience) for challenging preservice

teachers' attitudes about diversity. Causey, Thomas, and Armento (2000), Clark and Medina (2000), Johnson (2002), Richards (1992), Rogers, Marshall, and Tyson (2006), Smith, Moallem, and Sherrill (1997), and Swartz (2003) used autobiographical or other narrative writing. These studies provide insights into preservice teacher thinking about diversity. The autobiographical writing and discussions of those writings seemed to stir awareness in preservice teachers that may otherwise have been untapped. Especially when coupled with the intercultural experience of an urban field placement, authors found changes in preservice teachers' visions of teaching students of diverse backgrounds. Two examples are given below.

Smith, Moallem, and Sherrill's (1997) stated purpose was to understand the backgrounds and experiences of preservice teachers enrolled at a medium-sized university in the south-eastern United States. Students in two education courses participated in the study, which included writing an autobiography. Students received a model of how people might be socialized into oppressive beliefs and asked to apply the model to their own lives. Results of analysis showed that prior experiences, especially cross-cultural experiences played a role in the beliefs of the participants.

Clark and Medina (2000) examined attitudes of secondary education students in a course on language, literacy and culture. Their purpose was to determine how students' understandings of literacy and multiculturalism are mediated through reading and writing literacy narratives. Eight students analyzed the relationship between a text and their own reflections on personal identity. Positive attitudes resulted, and the authors identified shifts in the students' understanding of literacy and multiculturalism as well as new understandings of their own roles in teaching.

These studies suggest a connection between the course intervention and changing attitudes; however, the preservice teachers' new-found understandings were not followed into actual classroom practice.

Several studies offered preservice teachers opportunities for reflection (Causey et al., 2000; Harrington & Hathaway, 1995; Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 2002; Rodriguez, Sjostrom, & Alvarez, 1998). For example, in a literature methods course, Risko and her colleagues (2002) examined strategies used by preservice teachers to guide reflection. Using levels of reflection identified by Habermas, the authors discovered a pattern of students' using their personal experiences, beliefs, and values to guide their reflections. The authors expressed concern over the "role of prior knowledge and narrow visions of teaching and learning that often intrude or impede the taking on of new perspectives" (p. 165). Consistent with other research in this group using reflection to encourage preservice teachers change, these findings suggest that even with reflection, previous experiences are likely to influence the type of teacher vision that a preservice teacher develops.

A third group of studies researched classroom dialogue that challenges attitudes and beliefs (Causey et al., 2000; Rogers et al., 2006; S. A. Smith, 2002; Swartz, 2003). Causey, et al. (2000) used structured discourse to support preservice teacher learning in an urban field placement. Smith (2002) used discussion of multicultural literature to spark discussion about visions of teaching. Rogers and colleagues (2006) used dialogic narratives to understand how preservice teachers develop professional identities. Swartz (2003) provided an example of classroom discourse as an intervention that might contribute to stimulating preservice teachers

into challenging their preconceptions about diversity. The authors of these studies concluded that more than superficial attention to issues of diversity is required in teacher education courses in order to affect change. These studies suggest that long-term change of attitudes requires specific interventions over an extended timeframe. Short of such interventions, teacher vision is likely to be based on early attitudes and beliefs.

### ***Urban Field Experiences***

Studies that focus specifically on urban field experiences (Bondy, et al., 1993; Epps & Ganser, 1993; Fry & McKinney, 1997; Marxen & Rudney, 1999; Olmedo, 1997; Proctor, Rentz, & Jackson, 2001; Tiezzi & Cross, 1997; Valli, 1995) provide insights into the interaction of incoming attitudes and beliefs with actual classroom experience with students of diverse backgrounds. These studies reported mixed findings, however, as a group, they suggest that high-quality inter-cultural experiences can influence a preservice teachers' vision of teaching.

Valli (1995) studied nine White secondary student teachers placed in classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. Their responses to the cross-cultural experiences varied, and Valli found that both ends of the *If you don't see the color, you don't see the child/Teachers should be color blind* dichotomy can be problematic. Valli suggested the importance of cross-cultural experiences to open preservice teachers to questions of race and to reconstruct their visions of understanding teaching and students.

Olmedo (1997) is a good example of urban field experiences coupled with reflections that provided a basis for teacher educators to assess the preservice teacher

learning taking place. Comparing student journals and essays before and after an urban field experience allowed Olmedo (1997) to determine changes in preservice teachers' attitudes about diverse students and urban classrooms. The author's purpose was to challenge the deficit views held by many preservice teachers about urban schools and students of diverse backgrounds. The participants were 24 White preservice teachers from a large, urban university in the Midwest. Themes discovered by Olmedo (1997) in her preservice teachers' writings before beginning an urban field experience were

1. Discipline the unmotivated – the idea that urban students are not motivated to learn, leading to an overly controlled environment
2. Pity the victim – the notion that students of color from the city have so many problems from their environment, it is impossible for them to learn.
3. Be colorblind – the idea that teachers that “see only children” will be fair to all students, denying any need to differentiate instruction based on race, religion, or ethnic identities of students.
4. The system is the problem – the idea that teachers and students want to teach and learn, but they are hindered by institutional barriers.

Olmedo (1997) found that as the semester progressed, preservice teachers challenged their own previous assumptions and concluded that in urban settings, 1) children want to learn, 2) good teaching can happen in urban schools, 3) diversity exists even within ethnic and racial groups, and 4) being color blind is not good pedagogy. Olmedo concluded that the field experience coupled with appropriate coursework holds promise for helping preservice teachers challenge their assumptions about diverse students and urban classrooms.

Similar conclusions were drawn by Marxen and Rudney (1999) in a study of an urban field experience for rural preservice teachers. The one-week immersion in



Chicago included evening debriefings with course professors and collegial support, which helped preservice teachers overcome initial misgivings. Marxen and Rudney suggested that without the opportunities for reflection and debriefing, participants might have had trouble getting beyond their initial negative visions.

Even with opportunities for reflection, some preservice teachers' attitudes may not change through experience. Tiezzi and Cross (1997) explored the attitudes and beliefs about urban teaching by 48 preservice teachers and how an urban field experience supported or inhibited the preservice teachers' examination of their beliefs. The urban field placement was held during the initial teacher preparation course at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. The course included autobiographical and reflective writings, course readings about diversity, and the observation in urban classrooms. The authors highlighted the story of Patty, one preservice teacher, who had a very strong vision of teaching throughout the course. Patty's vision included idealized views of teaching and a desire to teach "white children because it is rumored that they are the smartest and easiest to teach" (p. 120). Clearly, Patty's attitudes and beliefs overshadow her experience in an urban setting. However, this experience took place during the first teacher preparation course in Patty's program. This study suggests that attitudes may not change even with urban field experience; however, the study did not follow Patty through her program to determine whether additional experiences might contribute to change. The different results in these studies suggest that factors not addressed may contribute to how preservice teachers envision teaching. For example, personal background, personal

characteristics, and the apprenticeship-of-observation are likely to contribute when they are in opposition to teacher preparation experiences.

This group of studies sheds light on the complex nature of dealing with changing attitudes and beliefs of preservice teachers. As a whole, they provide a wealth of knowledge of how teacher educators work to prepare their preservice teachers for teaching students of diverse backgrounds. However, the results of the studies are uneven. What is clear is that the various attitudes and beliefs, prior experiences and educational experiences influence how preservice teachers envision their role as a teacher, their prospective students and the schools in which they expect to teach. This backdrop of teacher education research confirms that multiple factors, some not within the control of teacher educators to change within a semester, interact in complex ways with the development of a preservice teacher's vision of teaching.

McCall (1995) looked at factors that might contribute to the vision preservice teachers have of teaching students of diverse backgrounds. She examined how preservice teachers understand multicultural and social reconstructionist ideas within a social studies methods course. McCall highlighted the findings from two students who were particularly open to multicultural education and the related course activities. Both students reported previous experiences of discrimination from their own backgrounds. McCall argued that the participants' backgrounds played a significant role in their visions of diversity.

Gay and Howard (2000) argued that teacher educators have a responsibility to prepare all teacher candidates for diversity in the classroom. Doing so would help minimize low expectations and unwillingness to teach students of color as well as

increase cultural sensitivity and the ability to use students' cultural resources in the classroom (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004). What is missing from the teacher education research for preparing teachers for diversity is an exploration of the relationship between preservice teachers' vision and classroom practice, specifically as it relates to culturally responsive reading instruction. From previous literature, three factors have emerged that seem to contribute to the visions of preservice teachers for teaching students of diverse backgrounds: attitudes and beliefs, educational experiences, and intercultural experiences.

### ***Literacy Teacher Education***

In the area of literacy, studies on preservice teacher learning also contribute to understanding how the context of teaching interacts with factors that contribute to teacher vision (Brock, Moore, & Parks, 2007; Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000; Xu, 2000).

Grossman et al. (2000) studied beginning teachers from their last teacher education year through their first years of teaching as they taught writing. They used group interviews, classroom observations and document review as data sources. The researchers found that teacher education did provide conceptual tools the teachers needed to teach writing, such as the importance of ownership, concepts of scaffolding, writer's workshop, and process writing. These broad concepts for teaching writing, however, were not accompanied by the necessary practical tools, or specific strategies, for implementation in the classroom. Grossman and colleagues suggested that the acquisition of broad conceptual tools helped preservice teachers create a vision for teaching writing. Instructional practice, however, requires concrete

strategies. They found that more practical tools were acquired in the second year of teaching, and that the context of teaching could support or hinder continued learning by the new teacher. This study underscores the need to understand the intersections of vision and practice in learning to teach in particular contexts.

In her case study of three preservice teachers in a literacy methods course, Xu (2000) used autobiography, case study writing, and field experience with reflection to examine issues of diversity. In her methods course, Xu used strategies that foster respect for cultural, linguistic, and life experiences of students. Xu found varying changes in preservice teachers' perceptions of students of diverse backgrounds related to their own backgrounds. The participant she calls Betty, for example, developed new visions of teaching literacy to students of diverse backgrounds:

Elsie's notion of teaching literacy was applied generally to all students but not specifically targeted toward diverse students. Lena viewed a student's primary language as an obstacle to her literacy teaching. Unlike Elsie and Lena, Betty had developed a view of literacy teaching for diverse students with an emphasis on the roles of teachers and schools (Xu, 2000, p. 525).

Most recently, Brock, Moore, and Parks (2007) studied preservice teachers' responses to literacy needs of students of diverse backgrounds. The research questions asked what topics preservice teachers discuss when debriefing literacy instruction and what the preservice teachers' conversations reveal about their enactment of literacy with these students. Data sources included written lesson reflections and field notes from observations. By providing guided reflection opportunities after seven small-group literacy teaching events, the

researchers/instructors were able to scaffold their students' learning and determine how effectively the course readings and activities were supporting preservice teacher learning in their practicum. Brock and colleagues (2007) found the two teams differed in their enactment of literacy instruction across three dimensions:

- 1) Knowledge about children as individual learners
- 2) Knowledge of relationship between learners and lesson content/structure
- 3) Knowledge of selves as teachers.

One of the teaching teams more effectively enacted literacy instruction for their students of diverse backgrounds through what the authors termed *contextualization*, defined as depending on classroom context to inform and affect strategic implementation of literacy instruction (Brock, et al., 2007). The major discussion in this article surrounded the researcher/instructor's perceived failure of her preservice teachers who had unsuccessful literacy teaching experiences and failed their students of diverse backgrounds. However, pertinent to this study is the parallel between contextualization and cultural responsiveness. The preservice teachers who were successful displayed a consistent "interplay between learner, the instructional moves of the teacher, the subsequent response of the child, and the modification of instruction...." (Brock, et al., 2007, p. 911). Interesting in these findings is that the differences between the more successful and less successful teaching teams were apparent to the researchers early in the study, pointing to the possibility that personal characteristics might be a factor.

Barr, Watts-Taffe and Yokota (2000) argued that traditional definitions of teaching may be called into question in the changing context of increasingly diverse

classrooms. Teacher educators need to remain open to new ways of responding to their students just as classroom teachers must. These studies suggest that factors such as personal characteristics, prior knowledge and experiences of all kinds may contribute in complex ways to a teacher's vision; however, the relationship between vision and context and how they mediate classroom instruction in student teaching remains to be researched.

### **Teaching Reading to Students of Diverse Backgrounds**

I turn now, away from preservice teacher learning, to research on the teaching of reading in elementary classrooms. Many points of intersection exist between what characterizes effective reading instruction in general and reading instruction effective with students of diverse backgrounds in particular. As the research suggests, some characteristics of or strategies used by teachers who are effective in teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds could also be characterized as culturally responsive.

### ***Literacy Practices in Elementary Classrooms***

What constitutes effective literacy instruction in primary classrooms has been a subject of study during at least the last four decades (Pressley et al., 1996; Stahl, 2002). In determining the characteristics of effective literacy practice, many research studies have explored either the effectiveness of whole language programs or that of programs based on phonemic awareness, phonics, and letter-sound association (Pressley et al., 1996). More recent studies have surveyed classroom literacy teachers to determine precisely what methods effective teachers use. The literature on literacy

instruction includes large-scale survey research (Pressley et al., 1996; Pressley et al., 1997) and smaller scale observational studies with data from classroom observations and in-depth interviews (Topping & Ferguson, 2005; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998).

Working from the premise that expert teachers would understand literacy instruction in a way that less-expert teachers might not, Pressley and colleagues (1996) asked reading supervisors to nominate effective teachers of literacy in their school districts. The nominated teachers, from all sections of the country, were asked to identify 10 specific instructional practices they used for three groups of readers: good, average and weak. Following the initial survey, the participants received a second survey consisting of categories developed from the 300 practices identified in the preliminary survey. Teachers were asked to measure the frequency of their use of each of the instructional practices on a seven-point Likert scale from *never* to *several times daily*. Of the 135 teachers first contacted, 113 completed the first survey, and 86 kindergarten, first, and second-grade teachers completed the second survey. Responses covered six areas: 1) learning environment, 2) teaching processes, 3) the teaching of reading, 4) the teaching of writing, 5) motivation, and 6) accountability. Findings are summarized below.

Teachers reported print-rich classrooms. They had classroom libraries, chart stories and poems, posted word lists, signs and labels, and learning centers for reading and/or writing. The classrooms included stories read to children daily, stories told to students, and stories on audio and video tape for children to enjoy. Teachers reported

the use of modeling not only of reading but also of comprehension strategies, the writing process, and their own love of reading and writing.

Various methods of grouping were reported, including whole-group, small-group, individual instruction, and individual seatwork as part of literacy instruction time. Few teachers used a traditional three-group approach. Teachers claimed sensitivity to their students' differing learning styles, adjusting instruction to accommodate them and identifying and teaching a mini-lesson at the moment they needed it. Teachers reported using themes to integrate reading across the curriculum and providing extension activities. In the area of phonics and other skills, most teachers reported teaching them in the context of authentic reading and writing activities but did report some use of games and puzzles to teach isolated skills or provide practice.

For vocabulary building, most teachers reported helping students develop new vocabulary in the context of reading and writing. Teachers used varied reading and reading-related activities, including shared reading, big books (less as grade level increased), read-alouds to other students and adults, poetry, trade books, basals, silent reading (more as grade level increased) discussions of stories and literature, and book sharing. Outstanding children's literature, some poetry, and a little expository material comprised most of the text read. Use of basal readers varied, as did the use of phonics practice books (less as grade level increased).

Students in these teachers' classrooms reportedly wrote stories and responses to readings along with some journaling and poetry writing. Use of the writing process increased with grade level increase as did teaching of conventions of writing. Only



30% of teachers reported using the computer in the teaching of writing. Teachers encouraged motivation for reading and writing with their students. They collected portfolios as well as assessing comprehension. Teachers also reported regular communication with the child's home about literacy.

These authors (Pressley et al., 1996) related their findings to previous research to substantiate the survey results. Given that outstanding teachers use such a diverse array of strategies and techniques, Pressley and his colleagues called on teacher education to equip preservice teachers with an understanding of how to use many approaches and strategies to balance their literacy instruction. The authors identified some limitations of the study. For example, they conceded that surveys provide information that is somewhat detached from real experiences in the classroom, so the authors designed an observational study of first-grade classrooms to look in-depth at literacy practices as they actually occurred. Adding a more in-depth analysis of observed classroom practice is helpful for understanding how specific classroom contexts might affect teaching and learning.

The Pressley research group undertook an observational study of nine first-grade teachers (Wharton-McDonald, et al., 1998). Four suburban school districts with little racial diversity participated in the study. Rather than relying on input from outstanding teachers alone, this study examined instructional practices in classrooms of teachers considered either exceptional in promoting literacy among students or more typical or average at helping students gain literacy. The sample began with ten teachers, and nine completed the study. Researchers used observation and student achievement to determine which teachers belonged in the outstanding category. As

the classroom observations and interviews progressed, researchers evaluated the reading levels, writing levels, and engagement of students in each class and designated the teachers in three achievement groups. The characteristics of high achievement (outstanding) teachers were compared to characteristics of the other teachers.

Interestingly, the classrooms contained many similarities irrespective of the teacher's effectiveness as determined by student achievement. All or most of the nine classroom teachers used some direct instruction in phonics skills and made trade books available in the classroom. All teachers modeled a love of reading, and most used writing process techniques, spelling programs, and some worksheets. Many teachers arranged classrooms in similar ways, with grouped desks and a larger table for small group activities with the teacher. All but one teacher used positive reinforcement, and every teacher showed caring behaviors toward their students and promoted contact with parents.

The three outstanding teachers, however, differed in specific ways from less effective teachers. They consistently demonstrated high levels of the following characteristics: "Instructional balance, instructional density, extensive use of scaffolding, encouragement of self-regulation, thorough integration of reading and writing activities, high expectations for all students, masterful classroom management, awareness of purpose of practices" (Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998, p. 127). Because of the complexity of the teaching and learning in a first-grade classroom, the authors were not surprised that effective practice requires many strategies. These outstanding teachers demonstrated practices and beliefs consistent

with a balanced approach to literacy. Balanced literacy is mandated in the urban district that constitutes the context of this dissertation study and is consistent with guidelines for culturally responsive reading instruction (Au, 2006). It is consistent with guidelines but not sufficient. Culturally responsive literacy instruction is effective teaching plus “something more.”

A limitation of the Wharton-McDonald, et al. (1998) study is the lack of diversity in the student population. The context of the school and school district policy may be factors in determining to what extent a teacher implements a balanced approach to reading instruction. In these four school districts, specific policy was not uniform and in some cases unclear. In this dissertation study, the urban district has a mandated curriculum of balanced literacy. Whether the “something more” that constitutes cultural responsiveness emerged in the vision and practice of the five student teachers is discussed in Chapter Six.

### ***High-Quality Literacy Instruction***

In their review of research in literacy instruction, Raphael and Brock (1997) derived four characteristics of quality literacy instruction:

1. Quality literacy instruction occurs in meaningful contexts.
2. Quality literacy instruction involves active student engagement in constructing meanings.
3. Quality literacy instruction requires teacher knowledge of a repertoire of literacy instructional strategies.
4. Quality literacy instruction involves dynamic and shifting conceptions of teachers’ and students’ roles in instructional encounters (p. 29-30).

These four characteristics synthesize how research reports on the “knowledge and beliefs about literacy instruction, about the roles of teachers and students, the content we teach, and the contexts in which teaching and learning occur” (Raphael & Brock, p. 29). These four characteristics suggest a connection between the quality literacy instruction identified by Raphael and Brock and *effective reading instruction* as described by Pressley and colleagues. The research on effective teachers of literacy includes *meaningful contexts*, such as using themes to integrate reading across the curriculum, providing extension activities, and the use of outstanding children’s literature and stories written by the students themselves. Effective reading teachers *actively engage students in constructing meaning* through authentic reading activities.

Unlike more traditional teacher-centered classrooms, the classrooms of these effective teachers encouraged a more constructivist environment. As student teachers develop visions of teaching reading, it is important to determine whether their visions include characteristics of cultural responsiveness beyond those included in and associated with effective or high quality reading instruction – the elusive “something more” that identifies a culturally responsive reading teacher.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Various terms have been used to identify concepts of teaching based on attention to students’ culture, such as *culturally appropriate*, *culturally congruent*, and *culturally compatible* (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Gay and Howard (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002a, 2002b) used the term *culturally responsive teaching* to identify similar concepts. Ladson-Billings (1998) argued that of these various terms, only *culturally responsive* suggests a dynamic step toward bridging the divide

between home and school cultures because it relates the cultural divide not only to differences in language patterns but also to larger social and institutional inequities. A number of studies highlight effective teaching practices for students of diverse backgrounds (Au, 1980; Irvine, 1990; Jimenez & Learning Point Associates, 2005; Lee, 1995, 2001; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004).

In this section, I begin by describing some of the major contributions to this area of research. In many cases, the studies have contributed to theorizing about an appropriate instructional stance taking students' culture and language into account. These researchers have studied teachers and articulated a variety of characteristics in common for culturally responsive instruction.

Ladson-Billings' (1994) ethnographic work with successful teachers of African American students highlighted many aspects of the teachers' knowledge, dispositions and practices. This research contributes to the propositions articulated in her emerging theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. Here, I focus on three dimensions of culturally relevant teaching practices: 1) how teachers structure their relationships not only with their students but also with their community, 2) how they help students create knowledge, and 3) how they perceive themselves and their students. Ladson-Billings found that successful teachers of African American students connect with all their students in ways that encouraged a community of learners. They encourage students to work together cooperatively and be responsible for one another rather than compete with each other. The relationship between teachers and students flows beyond the classroom and into the community. Ladson-Billings found conceptions of knowledge in these successful teachers that represent a

continuous cycle of creation and recreation. Rather than considering students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, these teachers draw from the prior cultural knowledge of students.

Irvine (1990) identified some strategies associated with high achievement for students of color, such as attention to aspects of ethnicity that could inform instruction, adherence to characteristics of good teaching identified in teacher effectiveness research, elimination of tracking, cooperative learning with heterogeneous grouping, and enhancing parental involvement in their children's academic achievement. Irvine describes the uneasy relationship between teachers and students as a lack of *cultural synchronization*. Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2001) has characterized teaching to address the needs of diverse students as *culturally relevant pedagogy*. In designating her emerging theory as *culturally relevant*, Ladson-Billings (1998) built on Villegas and Lucas' assertion of social inequities but also on Irvine's (1990) broad based work that rejects a cultural deficit model and calls for "committed, caring, dedicated, well-trained teachers who are not afraid, resentful, or hostile and who genuinely want to teach at these schools" (p. 124). Three areas of concern frame Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy: student achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998, 2001). These three criteria for student achievement are the goals of a culturally relevant teacher, but what must a teacher be and do to create those accomplishments with students?

Other research on culturally responsive instruction has been reviewed by Au (2006), including her own work on the use of "talk story" with Hawaiian children.

She addressed a question that concerns teachers whose classrooms hold students from different cultures rather than just one. How can a culturally responsive teacher attend to each of the different cultures represented? Her answer was that “culturally responsive instruction does not involve duplicating home and community settings in the classroom [but rather] combining elements from the students’ home cultures with elements typical of the classroom and academic learning” (Au, 2006, p. 116). She argued that although principles of good teaching may be widely applicable, culturally responsive teachers choose good pedagogical practices, such as tapping prior knowledge of students or building positive relationships with students, as they apply to the particular cultural backgrounds of students. For example, the best approach to building a positive relationship with a student from one particular background may be entirely different from how to achieve the same goal with other students. Teachers must have visions of teaching that include attention to the needs of each child in the context of his/her cultural background.

### ***Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers***

Villegas and Lucas (2002a, 2002b) articulated six characteristics as a model for preparing *culturally responsive* teachers. Those characteristics are (a) sociocultural consciousness, (b) an affirming view of diverse students, (c) recognition of self as a change agent, (d) understanding of knowledge construction, (e) knowledge of one’s students, and (f) use of instructional design based on students’ prior cultural knowledge. Developing a sociocultural consciousness begins with a teachers’ examination of her own identity and responses to the reality of inequitable schooling and that “differences in social location are not neutral” (Villegas & Lucas,

2002b, p. 22). A teacher who exhibits an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds facilitates students' ability to maneuver within the dominant societal structures to ensure their success under current power differences while accepting their language and experiences as valuable.

Villegas and Lucas, after Fullan, see "change agency as a moral imperative" (2002b, p. 24). As teachers recognize and embrace the political nature of schooling, they may work for changes to the current inequitable conditions. Viewing knowledge from a constructivist perspective, knowing about students, and designing instruction based on students' cultural backgrounds assume that a teacher values the knowledge brought from a student's background as a basis for new learning. Moll and Gonzales (2004) term the wealth of knowledge embedded within communities *funds of knowledge*, which deserve attention as the valuable assets they represent. As teachers tap students' prior experiences and knowledge, they help build bridges between the cultural knowledge from students' lives outside school to new material introduced at school (Villegas & Lucas, 2002b).

These six characteristics overlap in their usefulness for supporting students in the three areas addressed by Ladson-Billings (1995, 1998, 2001). A teacher who is conscious of the sociocultural factors that influence students' achievement in school, who affirms each individual and her ability to learn, regardless of background, and who identifies as an agent of change, is likely to work toward a high-level of academic achievement for all students. Likewise, a teacher who understands the constructive nature of knowledge, who knows who her students are and how they learn best, and who is able to tap into prior knowledge brought by students, may be



expected to design instruction that allows for infusion of culturally relevant activities and references rather than requiring a rejection of the students' own cultural references and communication styles. And finally, a teacher who recognizes the inequities inherent in social structures, who recognizes herself as a change agent and who knows her students may provide students with opportunities to critique the institutional decisions that affect their lives. The goal of teacher educators must be to encourage the development of visions of teaching reading that include these culturally responsive attributes.

### ***Culturally Responsive Reading Instruction***

In arguing for culturally responsive reading instruction, Au (2000) pointed out the need for equity and excellence particularly in student literacy achievement. Prominent in the search for equity and excellence is culturally responsiveness. She argued that building on students' home language and culture is needed, especially when students of diverse backgrounds suffer a mismatch between home and school cultures. Au (2000) clarified the idea that culturally responsive instruction does not mean exactly reproducing home literacy situations but rather connecting to the patterns of participation and values of the home culture. She reported positive results when

... teachers accepted and built on students' home language; structured interaction with students in a manner consistent with their home values; kept expectations high and focused on meaning-making rather than lower level skills; recognized that storytelling and question answering may take different

forms in different cultures; and capitalized on students' ability to learn from peers (p. 838).

Au expected teachers' visions to lead them to address students' needs by choosing high-quality, effective practices and using them as appropriate, given the students' cultural backgrounds. Findings from research using culturally responsive literacy instruction confirmed the value of cultural responsiveness in teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Lalik, Dellinger, & Druggish, 2003; McCarty & Dick, 2003; Turner, 2005).

In their review of literature, Au and Kawakami (2004) analyzed five groups of studies on what they termed cultural congruence. The categories were 1) dialect speakers, 2) participation structures, 3) narrative and questioning styles, 4) ESL students, and 5) peer groups. The authors pointed out effective and ineffective practices for students of diverse backgrounds. Effective practices included taking students' home values and communication styles into consideration and creating a composite classroom culture that emphasized flexible arrangements for teacher/student collaboration.

In their longitudinal study of teachers, children, and families, Lalik, et al. (2003) proceeded from an emancipatory stance. That is, they "intended to assist all our informants in gaining strategy and influence so they could more effectively develop and achieve their own life purposes" (p. 76). Teachers in this study worked to make the curriculum inclusive of children's home cultures. The authors found six themes through their interviews with children.

1. Children collected treasures from their cultures,

2. Family members were seen as knowledgeable elders,
3. School curriculum crossed into home space,
4. Curriculum linked present to past experiences of students and families,
5. Curriculum encouraged ancestral pride,
6. The future was seen as an arena for possible optimism and flexibility.

Lalik, et al. concluded that the children appreciated the connection of literacy learning in school to their home cultures, and the teachers were able to enact curriculum that successfully combined the literacies of home and school.

McCarty and Dick (2003) reported on a curriculum project in a Navajo community school. The authors described the development of multicultural curricula as “both a critique of colonial education and a proactive, pro-Navajo bridge to English and the wider world” (p. 105). Local stories important to the culture of the community provided the foundation for interdisciplinary study. Positive results occurred on both local and national achievement measures. Second, teachers came to understand how to incorporate a view of literacy learning as construction of meaning rather than simply acquiring skills. “As teachers reenvisioned their literacy potentials and those of their students, teachers simultaneously empowered themselves and created the conditions whereby students and their families could do the same” (p. 118).

In looking specifically at high quality reading instruction for African American students, Turner (2005) studied one European American third-grade teacher she called Jane. The teacher was selected by district administrators, school counselors, and principals as outstanding in promoting the literacy of African American students.

Turner found that in addition to maintaining characteristics of teachers generally considered effective, Jane also addressed the social and literacy needs of her African American students. Three pedagogical strategies assisted her in meeting the needs of her students:

- Enact a “border crossing curriculum” by changing the physical classroom environment and curriculum to encourage interaction between students of differing backgrounds.
- Make “transparent” the strategies and skills of good readers by teaching the “codes needed to participate fully...within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors” (Delpit, 1995, p. 45).
- Use literature to make cross-cultural connections by including meaningful use of multicultural literature and reading activities that highlight the personal stories of diverse classmates.

By creating an atmosphere and expectation of high achievement for all her students coupled with culturally responsive strategies, Jane was able to orchestrate effective reading instruction for African American students (Turner, 2005). Jane clearly had a vision of high-quality educational experiences for her students, which she enacted in the classroom. The extent to which this vision of teaching reading develops in student teachers’ practice is one focus of this dissertation study.

## **Conclusion**

“It’s a catch – 22 situation: I need the methods course in order to student teach, but it is only after student teaching that I feel capable of properly discussing and thinking about the issues in a methods course” (Barr et al., 2000, p. 466). This

teacher reflection, quoted by Barr, et al., brings into focus the thread that binds together these different areas of research literature: vision in preservice teacher learning, preparing preservice teachers for diversity, and teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds in culturally responsive ways.

First, the catch-22 situation is a good metaphor for the issue of how attitudes and beliefs interact with experience to create a vision of teaching. Preservice teachers come to teacher preparation with a myriad of attitudes and beliefs from their families, their schooling, and other experiences in their background. From those early understandings, preservice teachers begin to develop a vision of what teaching is and what teachers and students are and do. As they traverse teacher education, their visions interact with new experiences and ideas about the world of teaching. As in the quote above, they may make sense of their course learning only after student teaching, or something in the student teaching experience may confirm or dispel their previous vision. The research results are mixed, and few studies report results over time, suggesting that different students develop visions that may remain or change at anytime. The cycle of learning and visioning what could be in their classroom (and perhaps beyond) does not stop with completed coursework or graduation. The research on teacher vision begins to address how preservice teachers develop and articulate their ideals and core values that will influence how they see themselves, how they see their students, and how they see the school contexts in which they will teach. This dissertation study builds upon this foundation and moves a step further by exploring how preservice teachers develop their vision, what factors contribute, and how their visions intersect with practice and the context of student teaching.

Second, a student teacher needs “the methods course to student teach.” That is, preservice teachers may use the course interventions, such as those suggested in research, to equip themselves for classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. Issues of diversity are woven into the strategies and practices that create culturally responsive teachers. The participants of this study accepted student teaching placements in culturally diverse classrooms. What particular set of experiences and beliefs contributed to their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds? What are the intersections of vision, practice, and context in student teacher development as reading teachers?

The research literature on preparing preservice teachers for diversity and teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds provides a foundation on which to understand how preservice teacher learning could support the development of a vision of culturally responsive reading instruction. Preservice teachers typically learn the characteristics of effective literacy instruction in their course work. What would account for the emergence of cultural responsiveness?

Given the complex nature of teacher learning, the intersection of attitudes and beliefs with many different experiences, and the teaching context of diverse classrooms, how preservice teachers think about teaching, learning, students and school settings could lead to a vision of culturally responsive reading instruction. Using qualitative case study methods, this dissertation builds on the theoretical and empirical work presented to understand the intersections of vision, practice, and context that might lead to culturally responsive reading instruction for students of diverse backgrounds.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this dissertation study is to examine the vision and practice of five student teachers placed in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. I relied on the research questions and my conceptual framework to help determine effective ways of collecting and analyzing data. My goal has been to understand the vision and practice of student teachers within the context of their student teaching classrooms. I wanted to learn the nature of their visions of teaching reading, how their visions might change over the course of student teaching, and what factors contributed to the initial visions and to those changes. I also wished to understand what intersections exist among vision, practice, and context in the student teachers' development as reading teachers for students of diverse backgrounds. Finally, I was interested in whether or not characteristics of culturally responsive teaching emerged in the student teachers' practice in the context of urban classrooms.

In this chapter, I describe the approach to research used in this study, the role of the researcher, the specific types and methods of data collection, and the data analysis process that helped my understanding of the data I gathered. I begin by describing the overall design of the study and how the site and participants were selected. Next, I clarify my role as a qualitative researcher to lay the groundwork for how data were collected. I then discuss the specific methods used for discovering answers to my research questions, and finally, I explain the process I used for coding and analyzing the large body of qualitative data collected.

## **Research Design**

This research study is in the interpretive tradition (Stake, 1995) and used case-study methods. Much of the reading teacher education research has addressed the organization, content, and structure of preservice programs, the reading habits of preservice teachers, or knowledge representation and use from a cognitive psychology perspective (Anders, et al., 2000). Other research has focused on characteristics of effective teachers (Pressley et al., 1997; Taylor et al., 2002). In order to get at student teachers' vision and practice in reading instruction, a more holistic approach was needed. Because the varying situational conditions cannot be known in advance or controlled (Stake, 1995) and more concern is given to understanding the individuals being studied, a qualitative case study was an appropriate choice.

By situating this study in a sociocultural framework, I was able to address the intersections of teacher vision and reading instruction in the context of urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. Sociocultural theory allowed for understanding the learning experiences of the student teachers given their particular backgrounds, classroom experiences, and interactions with children and professionals in their particular schools. Rather than separating the participants from the context as social science has traditionally done (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), the setting of student teaching incorporated both "cognitive and motoric actions and the external environmental and objective features" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 73). The use of qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations and document review provided the means with which to understand how the student teachers' visions and practices



intersected with the context of their student teaching. Finally, a checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies was used to gauge whether culturally responsive teaching emerged in the practice of the five student teachers.

Some researchers have begun to explore *teacher vision* as a way of understanding their perceptions of the ideal classroom (Hammerness, 2003) or of culturally responsive reading instruction (Turner, 2006). This study focused on the vision and classroom experience of student teachers as they learned to teach reading to students of diverse backgrounds. I used qualitative case study methods to answer the “how” and “why” questions related to the process the participants underwent in their development as reading teachers (Yin, 2003). Some questions of interest were how the student teachers characterized their vision, how particular factors contributed to their understanding of reading instruction with students of diverse backgrounds, and why they made particular instructional decisions in teaching reading in the classroom.

A qualitative approach to research also allowed for a fine-grained, holistic examination of the vision and reading instructional practice of student teachers in urban classrooms. My focus was a deep exploration of the relationship between the vision and practice of teaching reading within the context of urban classrooms. Richardson (1996) argued that “an understanding of a teacher’s practices is enhanced by research attention to both beliefs and actions through interview and observation” (p. 104). In studying this group of preservice teachers’ vision and practice, I observed them in their student teaching placements while engaged in reading instruction,

interviewed them extensively, and analyzed their written reflections throughout the student teaching semester to learn how vision, practice, and context intersect.

A multiple-case design supported an intensive examination of several examples of a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2003) and allowed for each participant to be treated as an individual unit of analysis. The student teachers were asked to provide their own perceptions of how their vision and practice of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds developed and then changed in the context of urban classrooms. I chose participants from among student teachers in one teacher education program who were placed in elementary schools with culturally diverse student populations.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

Creswell (2003) reminds qualitative researchers of the importance of identifying “personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study” (p. 200). As a previous adjunct faculty member in the target teacher education department, and currently through my work as a grant manager in the College of Education, I have been involved with this teacher education program for a number of years, giving me a somewhat emic perspective of the culture of the university and teacher education program. I have served as a university supervisor of student teachers and have taught both a foundations course and a general methods course for elementary education majors; however, none of the participants was ever a student of mine.

Although such a close connection to the research setting could allow for bias and a desire to portray results in a favorable light, my university responsibilities in

recent years have kept me separated from the daily activity and decision-making within the teacher education department and allowed me to focus my attention on issues of diversity as students move through the program. Part of my current job involves assisting with placement of preservice teachers in early field experiences in the nearby urban school district and encouraging many of the same students to participate in a mentoring program for urban middle-school students.

Because I have taught in the department and now see the changes being made, I am optimistic about the learning of preservice teachers about diversity; however, I also recognize that efforts must continue to improve the preparation of teachers for diverse classrooms not only at this university but in many teacher education programs across the nation. The importance of understanding how student teachers envision and then enact teaching students of diverse backgrounds to read is a necessary part of the development of high-quality teacher preparation programs.

My role while observing in classrooms may be described as *observer as participant*. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) described a continuum of participant observation from *complete observer*, in which the subject of study is unaware of the researcher, such as when a psychologist watches children from behind one-way glass, to *full participant*. Next to *complete observer* on the continuum is *observer as participant*, in which the researcher is clearly an observer but has some contact with the participants. Glesne and Peshkin described their own role as *observer as participant* in a research study: "...for a semester we were primarily observers, taking notes from the back of a classroom. We did not teach; give advice; or assist teachers, students or administrators" (p. 40). My observations were similar.

The participants and their students knew I was there and why; however, I had no responsibility for supervising the student teachers and did not participate in classroom activities. Occasionally, a child in a class approached me to ask a question (usually about my digital recorder), which I answered briefly and then returned my attention to observing and taking notes. The primary data collection was done through interviews; however, classroom observations added to the corroborative evidence (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

As the only researcher on this study, I conducted all interviews, observations, and document review; therefore, the problem of inter-rater reliability was not an issue. To guard against bias and ensure internal validity, Creswell (2003) suggests several strategies, which I used. To clarify researcher bias, I articulate here my positionality with regard to the university, the school district and the participants. I relied on an MS Word document form as my observation guide, which included separate areas for field notes and observer comments. I also used multiple data sources to corroborate evidence, such as interviews of student teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of lesson plans and reflective memos from student teachers to their university supervisors. Interviews with university supervisors and cooperating teachers also provided additional data sources for building “a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, p. 196).

Another strategy for ensuring internal validity was member-checking, which allowed for determining the accuracy of findings and helped validate key observations. One example is related to the initial vision statements by the participants. After I had cleansed the initial interview transcripts in which the vision

statements were discussed, I created for each participant a chart of major points in his/her vision statement. Before the next interview, I e-mailed the charts to participants and asked them to verify my understanding of their statements. Then during the following interview, we clarified any areas they felt did not correctly reflect their own views. In the final interview, I again provided the participants with their initial vision statements to help them articulate where and how their vision of teaching reading had changed. Finally, using rich, thick description of participants' backgrounds, student teaching settings, university program experiences, classroom contexts, and reading instruction all provided a window into the experiences of the participants as they lived them.

### **Participants and Setting**

In choosing the participants and setting for this research, I purposefully selected (Creswell, 2003) five student teachers who were enrolled in a particular teacher education program and who were placed in a particular school district for student teaching. In this section I describe the university program, and school district and participants that comprised my choices for conducting this research.

#### ***The Teacher Education Program***

In choosing a site for this dissertation research, several considerations were important. First, I wanted to study student teachers who are demographically similar to many preservice teachers, that is, rural or suburban, working or middle-class European Americans. The participants attended a university that reports 94% of teacher candidates as White, and 88% female in elementary education. Secondly, I

wanted a university teacher education program whose faculty, like many reported in the research literature, was striving to improve their program of preparation for teaching students of diverse backgrounds. The chosen university is in the process of developing and articulating how issues of diversity are integrated into the entire program. This study will support the understanding of how students finishing the program perceive their role in teaching students of diverse backgrounds.

The teacher education department is part of a state-owned university located in a small town surrounded by farmland and small communities. It is 40 miles from a small city of 50,000 with a metropolitan population of approximately 150,000. The university has a student population of approximately 6,600 undergraduates and 1,000 graduate students. Although some students come from other states and countries, the majority of students at this university are from within the state, and all of the participants are in-state students.

Of the 302 full-time faculty members, close to 90% have terminal degrees in their field, and all classes are taught by faculty members and not graduate assistants. In teacher education, this also means that student teachers are supervised in the field by faculty members who are likely to have taught them in classes. Although some student teachers are supervised by part-time adjunct professors, all the participants were supervised by one of two full-time, tenure-track faculty members.

The student/faculty ratio is 20 to 1 throughout the university. University brochures confirm a commitment to diversity by fostering “an organizational culture that celebrates multiculturalism and diversity.” The university reports as a goal the desire to “ensure that students receive an education that prepares them for the

challenges of a global society with its diverse beliefs, attitudes, and ways of thinking.”

The elementary education program is one of 52 academic programs offered. It is a four-year, undergraduate program leading to a Bachelor of Science in Education degree. Like many teacher education programs, the curriculum includes general education requirements (including a diversity requirement), professional elementary education courses, a minor or area of concentration chosen from among 18 possible areas, and clinical field experiences including observation and participation in teaching.

The entire program of teacher preparation is guided by a conceptual framework focusing on teaching, scholarship and service. The preservice teacher-as-learner is at the core of the framework enveloped by a teaching-learning environment that highlights reflection, diversity, knowledge, practice, and assessment throughout the program. Surrounding the learner and teaching-learning environment is a wide variety of professional influences, including diverse community and school field experiences, standards, and professionalism. One requirement of the program is 30 self-initiated hours of experience in classrooms or other work with students such as tutoring or mentoring in rural, suburban and urban settings.

The stated goal of the professional program is to develop active, engaged, life-long learners who continue to grow in knowledge and build on their experiences long after leaving the university setting. The key characteristics provided by the framework are reflection, assessment and decision-making.<sup>3</sup> In the context of this

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of confidentiality, the university website from which this information was gathered is not identified.

framework, approximately 90 student teachers each semester are assigned to their capstone field experience in surrounding schools. Districts that accept student teachers include nearby rural schools, suburban schools, and the urban school district 40 miles from campus.

Although a number of universities might have made an appropriate site for this research, this university was a good choice for several reasons. First, the teacher education unit of this university has been engaged in developing the preparation of its teacher candidates for diverse student populations and is interested in how student teachers understand their role in teaching students of diverse backgrounds. The dean and associate dean of the college that includes education provided access to the student teachers. Also, the participants have previously participated in some, although limited, coursework focused on diversity and various field experiences with students of diverse backgrounds. All five participants completed 16 weeks of student teaching in elementary classrooms in four schools of one urban school district.

### ***The Urban School District***

The target school district is located in a small city in a mid-Atlantic state. Although the surrounding areas more than double the population, the city itself has a population of approximately 50,000 residents. The city school district is an urban community with a lower socioeconomic status than the surrounding areas, with eighty percent of the households considered low-income. Seventy-five percent of the students in the district qualify for free or reduced lunch. The city school district has a high drop-out rate. According to 2002 figures<sup>4</sup>, only 35% of students entering ninth

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics are reported on the school district website, which, due to confidentiality, is not identified.



grade eventually graduate, and attendance figures are low as well. While recognizing that other types of diversity exist in various classrooms, students in these urban classrooms represent cultural diversity as defined by Melnick and Zeichner (1997): “poor students of color who historically have been underserved, ill served, or inappropriately served by traditional teaching practices” (p, 25).

With more than fifty-percent of its students scoring in the lowest quartile on state assessments in math and reading, the district was designated an “empowerment district” in 2000. Since then, new administrators have begun to address district programs to increase student achievement. The school buildings in the district are also in the process of renovation, with approximately 85% of schools refurbished in the last five years.

As part of the renewal of academic programs, a balanced literacy curriculum has been mandated throughout the K-8 schools in the district. A Balanced Literacy Implementation Team was instituted to oversee program performance, professional development, and assessment of a comprehensive balanced literacy approach to the teaching of reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and listening. Because my focus is the content area of reading instruction, I chose a district with well-articulated requirements and expectations for their teachers, which provided a somewhat consistent context for all five student teachers.

### ***Balanced Literacy in the School District***

According to the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, the district decided in 2002 to implement what they termed a balanced literacy program rather than a basal reading program. She explained the program title: “We started out

calling it comprehensive literacy, but it was changed to balanced literacy because we wanted to emphasize the balance between comprehension and decoding skills in the implementation of the five elements from Reading First and NCLB.” Although they were concerned that it would be more difficult for teachers in the short term, the committee was convinced it would be better for students:

Teachers were using a variety of materials and methods. They were teaching to the middle kid. There was almost no grouping, and lots of kids were falling farther and farther behind. The main component of balanced literacy addresses kids’ individual needs by using assessments to guide instruction, and that’s what we wanted. (Asst. Superintendent Interview, 5/24/07)

The district administrators created a multi-year plan of implementation with specific components to be instituted each year. Professional development workshops by outside consultants were attended several times a year by all K-8 teachers, instructional facilitators, reading specialists,<sup>5</sup> and building principals. Common materials were provided to each school, including resource books for each teacher, classroom libraries with leveled books, and school bookrooms with instructional resources as well as sets of leveled books for guided reading. Since that initial outlay by the district, individual schools have added other resources requested by their teachers.

Although it may appear that teacher autonomy was sacrificed in favor of a mandated, scripted reading program, the intention of the district administration is to scaffold the teachers in their instructional expertise:

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<sup>5</sup> Every school has an instructional facilitator and at least one reading specialist who provide on-site support to teachers.

Becky – Would you characterize the curriculum as scripted? Does the district intend for it to be scripted?

Asst. Superintendent – Not at all. It very much depends on teacher training and teacher decision-making and assessment. Our challenge is that some teachers want black and white answers, and we can't give that to them. We do struggle with those teachers who want someone else to make their decisions for them; however, we do have teachers who understand that they have to make decisions based on students' needs. My goal is to pull some of these resources away and say you don't have to use them. For example right now, *Text Talk* is required. Ideally we want teachers to make decisions based on students' needs, the gradual release model, you might say. We are creating a month-by-month guide for using each resource so that all teachers cover certain things. We need the consistency in this district because we have 40% transient rate among students within the district. My dream, however, is to trust teachers to use assessments to make their own decisions. (Interview, 5/24/07)

Although the assistant superintendent did not characterize the program as scripted, at least one of the cooperating teachers complained about the lack of flexibility, and the month-by-month guide being developed is seen by some teachers as more scripting. This difference of perspective may be due to the broad vision of the district administrators, who must consider the whole range of teachers in the district compared to the more focused classroom vision of these teachers who have been selected as mentors to student teachers.

### *The Cooperating Teachers*

The six cooperating teachers have teaching experience varying from five to 28 years; however, all of them have done all or the majority of their teaching in this urban district. The five original cooperating teachers, all female, included four European American teachers and one African American teacher; however, when Joseph changed placements in week nine, he moved from Ms. B<sup>6</sup> (African American) to Ms. T (European American). Unfortunately, Ms. B, Joseph's first cooperating teacher, did not return my phone calls or e-mails, and I was unable to gather data from her. Table 1 shows the placement and teaching experience of cooperating teachers.

**Table 1**  
*Cooperating Teachers, Grade Placements, and Schools*

Cooperating Teacher (Student Teacher)	Grade	School	Years Teaching	Years in Urban District
Ms. S (Hunter)	2	Walters (K-3)	5	5
Ms. R (Sylvia)	5	6 <sup>th</sup> Street (K-8)	8	8
Ms. Y (Suzy)	1	Walters (K-3)	15	15
Ms. M (Sarah)	3	6 <sup>th</sup> Street (K-8)	8	8
Ms. B (Joseph – 1 <sup>st</sup> )	3	Pendleton(K-8)	28	28
Ms. T (Joseph – 2 <sup>nd</sup> )	6	Earl (K-8)	18	16

Each cooperating teacher brought her own particular understanding of how to implement the district-mandated balanced literacy program; however, two teachers had mostly positive feelings about the change, and three teachers were more

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<sup>6</sup> The cooperating teachers are identified by Ms. and a last-name initial; however, they are not the actual initials of the individuals in order to preserve confidentiality.

ambivalent but for differing reasons. Ms. Y (Suzy) and Ms. T (Joseph) each had 15 or more years of teaching experience, so they had experienced teaching in the district using the *Open Court* basal reader series for a number of years. They were both positive about the change to balanced literacy because it pointed to consistency within the district. For example, Ms. Y commented, “It was positive because it gave a uniform direction to the district. Also, I didn’t particularly like the *Open Court* Basal series we were using” (Interview, 5/2/07). Ms. T concurred: “I thought it was a good change – positive. At least we knew everyone was going to do the same thing” (Interview, 4/2/07). They both commented on the time constraint to include everything expected but agreed that resources and support were provided by the district.

The other three teachers ranged in experience between five and eight years. All three had learned about balanced literacy in their teacher education programs, but they expressed ambivalence about the mandated balanced literacy program. Ms. S (Hunter) agreed it was a good move but considered the program “too scripted.” Ms. R (Sylvia) commented that she had already been using literature circles in her classroom, so that aspect was positive. Ms. M (Sarah) had always done what she considered a balanced literacy program but felt the district provided “no clear idea of how to implement” the program. All three expressed concern over a lack of adequate resources and professional development for appropriate implementation. The two more veteran teachers seemed happy to change because either they did not like the previous series or they looked forward to new consistency within the district. The other three teachers were more skeptical perhaps because they were unsure how the

district would provide resources and support teacher professional development long term.

### ***The Student Teachers***

The participating student teachers completed the capstone experience of their undergraduate teacher education program during the semester in which data collection took place. Participants were chosen because they had been placed in an urban classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. They were also chosen because they had 16-week placements in the target urban school district. Of the five participants, two (Sarah and Sylvia) had expressed interest in student teaching in an urban classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. Suzy did not indicate a preference but expressed a willingness to student teach in the district; however, Joseph and Hunter both requested other placements and reluctantly accepted their placements in the target urban district. The differences in the participants' preferred choice of placements provided the possibility for comparing the outcomes for each student teacher given their particular stance toward teaching students of diverse backgrounds in an urban classroom. The three female and two male participants all majored in Elementary Education.<sup>7</sup> Four of the participants were Reading minors, and one was an Early Childhood minor. Four participants each spent the entire 16-week placement in a single classroom, while one participant (Joseph) spent eight weeks in a third-grade classroom and eight weeks in a sixth-grade classroom in two schools

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<sup>7</sup> I originally planned to have four females and one male to recreate the approximate percentages by gender found among teacher education students. I began with four females and two males, planning to choose between the two male participants; however, one of the females did not participate due to her placement in kindergarten, outside my grade-level focus. That left three females and two males, so I accepted all five.

within the district.<sup>8</sup> A sixth student teacher was in the initial selection pool; however, she was placed in kindergarten. Because the expectations and requirements for literacy instruction proved to be very different from those for grades one through six, she was not included in the study.

Each student teacher was provided with a consent form outlining the purpose of the research, the responsibilities of both the researcher and the participants, how the confidentiality of all participants' responses would be handled, the voluntary nature of participation, and the possible risks and benefits of participating. Because I expected to informally interview cooperating teachers and university supervisors, they also received consent forms to sign. The identities of all participants, as well as their representative institutions, have been concealed by using pseudonyms and by maintaining confidentiality regarding the research study.

In anticipation of the study, I gained approval for classroom access from the deputy superintendent of the urban school district, who scheduled the necessary meeting for final district approval. She also communicated to the principals and cooperating teachers when and why I would be in their buildings and asked for their support. Because of my previous work with the district, the principals knew me, and the teachers were familiar with my name as related to field placements for the university. In the first two weeks of the semester, I visited each classroom, met the cooperating teachers, explained the purpose of the study, secured their informed

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<sup>8</sup> Historically, the university has allowed two types of student teaching experiences. Some student teachers spend eight weeks in two different schools and some spend 16 weeks in one classroom for a more in-depth experience. Currently, most students choose the latter; however, among some university supervisors, disagreement exists regarding which model provides the best preparation.

consent, and gave them a copy of Ladson-Billings' book, *Dreamkeepers* to express my appreciation.

All six classrooms (two for Joseph) served students of diverse backgrounds, the majority of whom were from low-income families. Table 2 displays the demographic make-up of children in each classroom.

**Table 2**  
*Demographics of Children in Student Teaching Classrooms*

Student Teacher	Total #	Boys	Girls	Af. Amer.	La-tino	Asian	Cauc.	Bi-racial	Free lunch	ESL
Hunter	23	48%	52%	39%	48%	4%	0%	9%	100%	39%
Sylvia	16	37%	63%	94%	0%	0%	6%	0%	94%	0%
Suzy	21	62%	38%	48%	33%	19%	0%	0%	86%	29%
Sarah	20	30%	70%	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%	90%	40%
Joseph	19	74%	26%	85%	5%	0%	5%	5%	100%	0%

I met with six elementary student teachers placed in the urban district for 16 weeks to present the purpose and focus of the study and to ask for their participation. All six agreed to participate; however, as state above, I decided to withdraw my request from the student teacher placed in kindergarten. Two participants were male, and three were female, all European American, between the ages of 21 and 23, who grew up within 100 miles of the university. Table 3 describes the five participants.



**Table 3**  
***Backgrounds of Participants***

Name <sup>9</sup> (Gender)	Grew Up (self-report)	Hometown (Census Stats.)	SES (self-report)	Minor	School	Grade	Took TCH 255* *	Reported Experience w/SDB***
Hunter (M)	Rural	Pop. 2,016 White = 98.5% MHI*: \$34,595	lower- middle class	Early Child- hood	Walters	2	no	Some
Sylvia (F)	Rural	Pop. 3,141 White = 97.1% MHI: \$28,549	middle- class	Reading	6 <sup>th</sup> Street	5	yes	very little
Suzy (F)	Rural	Pop. 2,689 White = 94.7% MHI: \$40,562	middle- class	Reading	Walters	1	no	Some
Sarah (F)	Suburban	Pop. 56,348 White = 51.8% MHI: \$29,770	upper- middle class	Reading	6 <sup>th</sup> Street	3	yes	extensive
Joseph (M)	Rural	Pop. 2,562 White: 97.7% MHI: \$34,970	upper- lower class	Reading	Pendelton Earl	3 / 6	yes	Some

*\*Median Household Income    \*\* Multicultural Issues & Strategies    \*\*\*Students of Diverse Backgrounds*

## **Methods**

At the beginning of the student teaching semester, I gathered background information and a vision-of-teaching-reading statement from each participant using an initial questionnaire. The background questionnaire provided family information with which to frame each participant's subsequent responses in the interviews and helped situate their student teaching experiences within their own personal, cultural

<sup>9</sup> Names of participants and schools are pseudonyms, which are used throughout.

and educational backgrounds. The first interview was conducted within the first three weeks of student teaching before the participants were engaged in full-time teaching. Then, throughout the spring, 2007 student teaching semester, I interviewed, observed reading instruction in classrooms, and reviewed documents such as weekly reflections and lesson plans. These activities provided multiple data sources for exploring how the participants envision teaching students of diverse backgrounds to read and the relationship between that vision and their instructional practice in the context of an urban classroom. Table 4 indicates the actual number of interviews, classroom observations, and reflections reviewed by participant.

**Table 4**  
***Student Teacher Data Collected***

Participant	Interviews	Reflections Reviewed	Classroom Observations
Hunter	5	11	3
Sylvia	4	7	4
Suzy	5	12	4
Sarah	6	12	5
Joseph	5	13	3 <sup>10</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>19</b>

Informal interviews with cooperating teachers and university supervisors added to the data and contributed to a more complete picture of the student teachers' practices. I interviewed each cooperating teacher and university supervisor once during the semester. At the end of the semester, I sent each cooperating teacher and

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<sup>10</sup> All three observations of Joseph occurred in his second placement.

university supervisor a questionnaire asking for feedback about the extent to which their student teacher had demonstrated the use of a list of culturally responsive indicators. Both university supervisors and four of the five cooperating teachers returned the questionnaire.

The teacher education department chair provided me with access to the College Live Text system required for every education major. With the permission of each student teacher, I had read-only access to all portfolio entries submitted throughout the teacher education program. I selected and copied reflections that seemed to contribute to understanding each participant's initial vision and understanding of teaching reading. At the end of the semester, the students submitted their IMPACT statements<sup>11</sup>, and again, I copied and reviewed pertinent segments.

To add to my understanding of the broader contexts of the student teachers' experiences, I reviewed documents describing the university teacher education requirements, student teaching course syllabi, and school district website information about the mandated Balanced Literacy program. When I had a question about a document, university teacher education faculty or the school district assistant superintendent for curriculum provided answers to my questions by e-mail or informal face-to-face conversations.

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<sup>11</sup> The state department of education requires all students applying for certification to provide evidence of impact on student learning. To satisfy this requirement, student teachers submit the following assignment: "The essential feature of the process is a core of activities, relevant to the teaching context, in which the candidate takes responsibility for a significant unit of instruction, and: **Judges** prior learning by undertaking a pre-test or alternative assessment; **Plans** instruction based upon the prior assessment; **Teaches** the instructional plan; **Assesses** by conducting a concluding post-test or alternative assessment; **Analyzes** the results of the concluding assessment, e.g., documents the student learning that occurred at individual and/or group levels, including explanations of results from students who learned more or less than expected, and results from subgroups; **Reflects** on changes in one's teaching that could improve results."

### *The Interviews*

Five interviews of each student teacher were planned using a general interview guide approach (Gall et al., 2003; Patton, 1990). Although standardized interview questions might have made responses of the participants more consistent, they would also have constrained the flexibility of the interview, and a major goal was to understand the individual perceptions and experiences of each student teacher. All interviews with the student teachers were digitally recorded. I also took extensive notes on my laptop computer, which facilitated transcription. Once transcribed, the recordings were erased.

Within the body of my interview notes, I used brackets to distinguish my comments or questions from the participant's responses. As noted in Table 4, some differences occurred in the actual number of times I interviewed each participant. For example, I only interviewed Sylvia four times because after Observation Two, her cooperating teacher was not available to cover the class, and I had a meeting scheduled later that day, preventing me from waiting for her until after school. We agreed to combine the questions from that observation with the next interview. In contrast, Sarah invited me to observe her one additional time to see her interdisciplinary unit on The Rainforest, so I conducted an additional interview after that observation of Sarah.

The Initial Interviews lasted between one hour and one and a half hours depending on the participant. The Final Interviews lasted between two hours and two and a half hours. For their convenience, all five participants decided to hold the initial and final interviews in my office at the university after school or on the weekend.

Since these two interviews were extensive, I agreed, reasoning that they would be more comfortable away from the time pressures of the school setting. In addition, none of the schools could provide us with a private, quiet space in which to conduct a long, recorded interview. To show my appreciation, after the initial interviews, I treated the participants to dinner. After the final interview, I presented each participant with a book store gift card wrapped as a graduation present.

Each interview began with the topics and questions on the interview guide. For example, Interview One began with a conversation about the vision statement they had submitted. After establishing the details of their visions of teaching reading, I explored possible factors that helped generate their visions. I probed for details of their up-bringing that might have contributed to their vision and questioned them about their university teacher preparation. They shared their experiences with individuals of diverse backgrounds, their apprehensions of student teaching in an urban district, and their optimism about their student teaching experience.

In subsequent interviews, most of which occurred at their schools after an observation, I explored the relationship between the participants' vision statements and their enactment of reading instruction with students of diverse backgrounds. I began each of these interviews with questions raised during the recent observation and asked about their decision-making regarding materials used for reading instruction. In these interviews, I also asked questions about their students, the students' families, how they viewed the support or lack of support from the university and school district, and about their understanding of the balanced literacy program they were expected to implement in the classroom. After each interview, I transcribed

and cleansed the data and completed a Contact Summary Form to summarize the interview, list follow-up questions, and note my impressions and early interpretations. Also part of the final interview was the checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies, which each participant completed.

Throughout the semester, I brought up issues related to the students' cultural backgrounds and how that might influence how and what they taught, but I did not introduce the term Culturally Responsive or Culturally Relevant teaching specifically because I did not want to influence their practice or encourage them to assume I was looking for a particular pedagogy. I was very conscious that the student teachers saw me as knowledgeable about teaching so I avoided displaying, with my face or my words, judgments regarding their decision-making about reading instruction. Once the interviews were completed, I agreed to give them my feedback about their teaching. All five student teachers seemed at ease confiding in me about their lack of confidence and insecurity in some aspects of their experience, probably because they understood that my role in no way included evaluation of their work.

### ***The Classroom Observations***

Because of the gradual entry of student teachers into classroom responsibility, I scheduled my observations after the first three weeks of the student teaching experience to give the participants time to adjust to their surroundings and gain knowledge of their particular school, classroom, and students. Likewise, because the final two weeks of student teaching consist of the student teacher relinquishing responsibility for the classroom, I completed all observations by the 14<sup>th</sup> week.

Three observations were initially planned for each participant; however, after observing some student teachers early in the semester before their full-time teaching, I decided to observe them again toward the end of the semester during full responsibility. Due to scheduling difficulties toward the end of the semester, I was unable to observe two of the participants a fourth time. Hunter's class participated in a school-wide nutrition program on the day I was to observe, which I did not learn until arriving at the school. Joseph had an emergency appendectomy at the end of the semester and was excused from student teaching early. In contrast, Sarah invited me to her classroom one additional time to observe her interdisciplinary unit on the Rainforest.

As the only researcher, I adopted the stance of *observer as participant* (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1998) in which observation activities are known to the group but discrete. I observed from a seat at the back of the classroom and took notes in much the same way a university supervisor would unobtrusively conduct a classroom observation. Because the participants were student teachers, they were expecting classroom observations by their university supervisor and prepared their students for visitors. My observations took on the same general pattern, and I was able to schedule my observations on different days from the supervisors' observations so as not to overwhelm the student teacher or the children. Since the children were aware that their student teacher would have observations, my presence was not unexpected, and for the most part, they ignored me. I asked them no questions and had no direct contact with them as part of this study. They were not considered participants. Except for the digital audio-recording of instructional conversations

between the student teacher and classroom students, no responses from children were recorded. After cleansing my observation notes, the recordings were erased.

All observations took place during the district-mandated 90-minute literacy block. I focused my observations and field notes on what I saw displayed in the room that pertained to reading instruction, actions and interactions among student teacher, children, and (in some instances) cooperating teacher, and the details of the student teacher's reading instruction. I made notes about my impressions and recorded them separately on the observation guide on my computer. Along with my reflections, I noted follow-up questions about the observation to ask at the next interview. After each observation, I reviewed the Indicators and Strategies of Culturally Responsive Teaching checklist at the end of the observation guide and made inferences about what I had observed. These notes helped with interpreting what I had seen in the classroom.

Stake (1995) reminds case study researchers while observing to concentrate on the central issues to the study but also be prepared for "unanticipated happenings" that might reveal other interesting aspects. One unanticipated issue revealed in the observations and confirmed in interviews was the uneven and somewhat disparate understandings among the student teachers of what balanced literacy means. This interesting issue is described in Chapter Six.

### ***Review of Documents***

I collected and analyzed written reflections the student teachers routinely sent to their university supervisors as well as lesson plans for the days on which observations took place. I also accessed each student teacher's College Live Text



electronic portfolio, which included reflective writings from earlier courses and a unit plan from student teaching demonstrating impact on student learning.

The written reflections were designed to describe their teaching experiences to the university supervisor on a weekly basis. Participants were asked to e-mail their reflections to me as well, and most required frequent reminders to do so. In the end, different participants shared differing numbers of reflections, noted in Table 4. I reviewed each reflection as I received it, making notes for follow-up questions in subsequent interviews. Analyzing these reflections provided another way of examining the teaching vision of the participants.

The richest analysis from this review came from looking at the entire series of weekly reflections from each participant and discovering the patterns that spanned the entire semester or changed as the semester progressed. For example, all five participants consistently commented on the issue of lack of adequate time in the teaching schedule. For Hunter, the issue of expecting structure but not being able to achieve it developed, and for Sarah, her gradual loss of some idealism was apparent in her reflections.

The written lesson plans from observation days proved to be limited in their value. They did reveal what student teachers deemed important enough to include in their reading instruction during planning; however, because the observations took place well into the semester, only block plans were required by the supervisors and cooperating teachers.<sup>12</sup> Some questions on subsequent interviews were based on early analysis of observation data, interview responses, written reflections and lesson plans.

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<sup>12</sup> In this university teacher education program, full, detailed lesson plans are required for all assignments in methods courses; however, once student teaching begins, the supervisor and

In order to carefully address research question three, I developed a checklist of seven indicators of culturally responsive reading instruction identified by Au (2006). I matched each indicator (numbered) with classroom strategies (lettered) that make that indicator observable in the classroom (Au, 2000; Gay, 2000). This checklist was important in understanding how characteristics of culturally responsive teaching did and did not emerge in the reading instruction of the five student teachers. Appendix A contains each indicator with its corresponding strategies.

Each student teacher, university supervisor, and cooperating teacher was asked to complete a checklist of the above strategies indicating if they were consistently used sometimes used, or never used. I requested the completed checklist several times, but Suzy's cooperating teacher did not submit her checklist, and her data are missing. Appendix C contains the complete data display of the strategies reported as "sometimes used" and "consistently used" for each student teacher. It shows a comparison of strategy use reported by the student teacher, cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and researcher. More discussion of this checklist and results are found in Chapter Six.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis began according to the categories suggested by the research questions and the conceptual framework. Qualitative data analysis is a process closely linked to data collection, so early data analysis concurrent with data collection allowed for collecting new data to fill in gaps (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman,

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cooperating teacher have the discretion to determine when a student teacher may begin writing thumbnail sketch-type lesson plans that fit within the "blocks" on a weekly lesson plan sheet. The common timing for beginning block plans is when the student teacher gains responsibility for teaching most subjects during the day.

1994). I reviewed field notes and interview transcripts as soon as possible to determine how they contributed to answering the research questions. I also created personal memos to capture initial analysis and interpretation of the data as well as ideas of how data collection should proceed (Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I began the descriptive coding of vision statements based on topics found in the vision questioning by Hammerness (2006). Initially, I included an “other” category in anticipation of topics not already described; however, after evaluating the items in the “other” category, I determined that they would all fit appropriately within one of the categories already established. I used member-checking in the first interviews to verify that I had captured the student teachers’ visions as they intended.

For Chapter Four, I relied on the background information provided by the participants, transcripts of Interview One and the vision statements of each student teacher to describe their visions and background profiles. I manually coded patterns of responses based on categories from previous research, such as attitudes and beliefs and previous educational and inter-cultural experiences.

In Chapter Five, I explored the relationship between the participants’ vision statements and their enactment of reading instruction and examined the intersections among vision, practice, and context. To find the intersections, I used the NVivo-7 qualitative data analysis software to manage all data. After importing all interview and observation transcripts into NVivo-7, I reviewed each document and coded the chunks of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) I interpreted as intersections. Using the query function in NVivo-7, I retrieved all intersections and sub-coded them according

to categories that emerged. For example, three specific aspects of the context were most often a part of the intersections: the students' cultures, district balanced literacy requirements, and the cooperating teacher. A list of all intersection sub-codes is found in Appendix B.

After analyzing the data for each participant, I used cross-case syntheses to help make my study more robust (Yin, 2003). Chapter Six reports on the three major intersections for all five participants: classroom management, teaching balanced literacy, and the students' cultures and relates those intersections to the question of culturally responsive teaching.

### **Summary**

Using qualitative, multiple-case study methods, I explored the visions and practices of five student teachers in teaching students of diverse backgrounds to read. Data collection began with an initial questionnaire to gain background and demographic information on each participant including a statement of their initial vision of teaching reading. Then, over the student teaching semester, I made classroom observations and interviewed the student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors, and collected documents for analysis, such as weekly reflections and lesson plans. I developed a checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies to help assess the extent to which cultural responsiveness emerged in the student teachers' practice. In analyzing data, I began with categories suggested by previous research and then looked for other categories that emerged from the data. NVivo-7 qualitative data analysis software assisted in managing all data. By looking at the visions and practices of these student teachers, this

dissertation study contributes to understanding how the participants' visions intersected with their practice of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds in the context of urban classrooms.

The next three chapters contain individual and cross-case analyses of the visions, practices and context of the participants. Chapter Four profiles the student teachers and their developing visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. Chapter Five analyzes the intersections of vision, practice, and context based on the conceptual framework, and Chapter Six reports a synthesis of the three major intersections across the five cases.

## **Chapter 4: The Student Teachers and their Visions: Influence, Development, and Change**

This chapter highlights individual case studies of the five student teachers and their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. The focus of Chapter Four is how the participants characterized their visions of teaching reading for students of diverse backgrounds at the beginning of student teaching. Building on that vision statement, I explored what part attitudes and beliefs, previous educational and inter-cultural experiences played in shaping their visions, and what other factors contributed to their visions.

From a sociocultural perspective and based on previous research and my conceptual framework, I expected to discover for each participant, a distinct way of understanding his or her role in teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds based on attitudes and beliefs, previous experiences, interactions with students and cooperating teachers, and the context of student teaching. I did find a complex interplay of background, experience and personal characteristics that shaped how these student teachers envisioned teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. The “personal mission” (Duffy, 2002, p. 336) underlying decisions by each student teacher surfaced more for some participants than others.

Duffy (2002) used visioning with preservice teachers to accomplish two goals: 1) to promote teacher consciousness of the ambiguous nature of (especially) literacy teaching so they would be able to “respond appropriately when teaching equilibrium is disrupted” (p. 336), and 2) to encourage creativity in responding to the need for adaptation of instruction according to student needs. For the participants of this study, inviting them to articulate their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse

backgrounds before and after student teaching allowed me a glimpse into the development of their goals for their students and themselves as teachers.

For these five student teachers, similarities and differences appeared both in how beneficial their visions were to their practice and to some extent in the constellations (Hammerness, 1999) they inhabited. I begin by narrating the stories of the five student teachers and their background experiences that influenced the development of their visions of teaching reading. Each profile includes a discussion of how the visions changed in the course of student teaching in a diverse classroom. Next I discuss the Hammerness (1999) framework with which I analyzed each vision statement and narrate Sylvia's vision statement as an example of a clearly articulated vision. Then, Tables 5, 6, and 7 display the key elements expressed in all five participants' initial vision statements and responses to follow-up questions in the first interview. Finally, I analyze the vision statements across all five cases to highlight common issues that emerged. The vision statements were prompted by the following questions:

What does it mean to you to be a good or effective reading teacher in a culturally and/or linguistically diverse elementary classroom? How do you envision yourself as the ideal reading teacher for students of diverse backgrounds? Describe your role, what you do, classroom environment, materials you use, what role the students play in learning, what role parents play, and other characteristics of the classroom or school setting that you find important to your image.

The interpretation of these stories of five student teachers is mine – a snapshot of people, experiences and personal thoughts based on what they shared with me in writing and through interview responses. I used an interview guide that included the same topics for all participants; however, particular questions resonated more with some individuals, inviting more probing, so the amount of detail presented differs according to the emotional attachment they felt about the topic and what they were willing to share about their experiences. I am aware that my questions may have opened the participants to reflections about their lives and teaching they might otherwise not have considered (Stake, 1995). However, I present each case as one analysis of their complex stories through thick descriptions and quotes. My goal was to capture the context of their thinking about diversity and reading instruction as their student teaching experiences unfolded.

### **Hunter – In Need of Structure**

I always wanted to make a difference. I wanted to be someone special. I feel like a teacher is where that's at. I always see these people who make it- superstars, and they get all the credit. I feel like a teacher is the person that should get the credit from specific people. It's rewarding to me.<sup>13</sup>

Hunter Wallace<sup>14</sup>, a 23 year old White male from a small town flanked on two sides by mountains, recalled wanting to be a teacher as early as the fifth grade. From the beginning, he was drawn to younger students and decided to major in Elementary

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<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all student teacher quotes in this chapter are taken from Interview One, between February 1 and February 8, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout for participants, schools and other locations.



Education and minor in Early Childhood Education. “It's not just that at that age they're still easy to mold. But when they get older, some of them put up that brick wall, and when they're younger; it's a lot easier to get through to them, I think.” Being a positive influence in the lives of young children motivates Hunter, but he also wants to receive credit for his work. His goals after teaching in a primary classroom for a few years are to become a special education teacher and then an elementary school principal.

Hunter is an avid outdoorsman. He learned to hunt and fish at a young age with his dad and like many in his community, holds traditional family views. His mother works, but his father is the primary bread-winner. He is engaged to be married after graduating and has always expected to return to his hometown and school district to teach and start a family.

Growing up in a small, all White, middle-class community<sup>15</sup> with both parents, Hunter was the middle child of three. He was identified as “gifted and talented” in the first grade, and his mother encouraged in him the expectation of going to college. Hunter joined the Army at age 18 in order to have his college expenses paid and is the first in his family to attend college. He remains in the Army Reserve and reports one weekend a month for military duties.

Hunter considers himself an organized person who likes structure and order: “I’m very organized. I think it’s the military coming out in me. Sometimes the classroom I’m in right now can get a little chaotic. I don’t know if it’s because I came in, and the students have been testing me.” The issue of organization and structure

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<sup>15</sup> See Table 3 in Chapter Three for census statistics on the hometowns of each participant.

came up again during the interview. We were discussing his first impressions in the urban school.

It was a shock. It's a lot different from the setting I'm used to. It seemed like a lot of chaos. Kids were running around in the halls, a lot of bullying... The first thing I thought, wow, this is going to be a challenge. I come from a military background, and I've been in the military for six years now, and I'm used to discipline, so that was a challenge.

Judging from conversations with his university supervisor and cooperating teacher, however, it is more likely that Hunter requires structure and order but seems to have difficulty developing it for himself. In my first classroom visit, I observed that Hunter closely emulated the structure and choice of materials and activities used by his cooperating teacher. He reported frustration and anxiety over the amount of work and seemed to be looking for a structure to guide him. Hunter claims to be organized, and he appears to need organization, but he had difficulty demonstrating that he knew how to achieve that in a classroom of students expecting him to be the organizer. This issue of structure and organization and how it is accomplished in a classroom was a major theme throughout Hunter's student teaching. His vision of expecting an organized classroom conflicted with his inability to create an organized classroom, and that affected his decisions and preparation for reading instruction.

### ***Early Influences***

Hunter did not attribute his thinking about teaching to particular individuals from his own educational experiences, but other comments suggested that his

attitudes about what constitutes good teaching may in fact have originated with his childhood experiences. From his own experience, Hunter reported enjoying the time he spent reading with his mother. He also fondly recalled his second grade teacher and her way of teaching. “I really liked my second grade teacher. She was great....I remember her as an excellent teacher. We did a lot of writing, and she read books to us.” His vision of teaching reading includes ideas of a comfortable location where students can share books with the teacher, whereas, some of his own elementary classrooms were much different.

In the classroom, I don’t remember being able to take a book out of the classroom. We did have basal readers, but those things are something else! I don’t even know what I want to say about those, but it wouldn’t be positive. We used to do that round-robin reading, and it was awful! If you had kids who couldn’t read that well, they would stumble over the words, and kids would be giggling. That’s so bad! I would say that the reason I was such a good reader is that my mom read to me all the time, and she bought me lots of books.

### ***Learning about Diversity***

Having grown up in an ethnically-homogeneous community, Hunter’s views of diversity seem to be based on criteria other than race or culture. His family had no reported contact with individuals of diverse backgrounds. He did, however, talk at length about his uncle Jason who has Downs Syndrome:

Besides my brother, he [Uncle Jason] was my best friend. We would go out in the mountains where we lived and play all day long. My uncle Jason is pretty severe. Some people can’t understand him when he talks, but I grew up with

him, and I understand him perfectly. Growing up, I could see what the differences are and how you really need to help someone who has those differences and work with that person. I really built a relationship, and if I had to say one person who was the most influential in my life, it would have to be Jason. He had so much exposure to being out with other people, and my grandma didn't shelter him. He's been the most influential in my life as far as education. My first idea when I came to college was to be a special education teacher, but there's no major here for that. Now, I plan to get my masters in special education.

Hunter was influenced to teach by his interaction with his uncle with special needs. He thought about becoming a special education teacher but was constrained by the lack of an undergraduate program in special education at his chosen university. He had little or no experience with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds, but his uncle Jason taught him people can be different and have different needs.

Once grown, Hunter's world broadened. "In the military I've had a variety of experiences with people of different races and nationalities. In basic training, I took it upon myself to go visit all the different churches to see what the different religions were like." On further questioning, I learned that the "different religions" Hunter visited were actually different Christian denominations. Still, he made an effort to seek out new experiences. He also interacted with individuals of diverse abilities other than his uncle Jason.

Another experience I have had is coaching Special Olympics swimming. The students may be White, but they have different needs. Diversity is also

different needs as well. I love working with those guys and girls. It's amazing and so rewarding. I've been doing it for about 4 years now. I go to their dances and chaperone, and they're all my friends.

I asked Hunter if he had grown up hearing racial or ethnic slurs. He was candid in his response:

Absolutely! You know, you grow up in a small town where you haven't been exposed to things, the parent as well as the kids talk that way, and I may have even joined in sometimes [chuckles and then grows serious]. Of course, that was before I joined the military and was exposed to other people.

When asked how his upbringing has influenced his thinking about people of diverse backgrounds, especially now that he was working with African American and Latino students, Hunter was reflective: "It's something I thought might be difficult, but as I get more into what I'm doing, I see right through the color thing. I'm very open-minded, and I like the challenge." Although he did not request the urban placement<sup>16</sup>, Hunter expressed willingness to student teach in the urban district and took credit for the decision:

I'm glad I chose to work in an inner-city school rather than working out in the middle of nowhere, because I grew up in a small town. I never really had that kind of experience where they're culturally diverse. It's not really where I'm from. It's a really good experience, and I love it.

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<sup>16</sup> According to university procedures, teacher education students are required to log hours of experience in rural, urban and suburban classrooms. A student may request a particular student teaching placement, but if he has not logged enough field hours in urban classrooms, he might be placed in an urban district.

### ***Visions of Teaching Reading***

Like his vision of the reading environment in his classroom, some of Hunter's negative feelings about basal readers may be attributed to an emphasis on other aspects of reading instruction in his reading classes.

Something I learned about but I haven't been able to implement yet are literature circles – I love them. They cover all aspects of a student's ideas, and students can do what they're interested in. The students get to work with each other and learn from each other. I really want to do that.

Later in the same interview, Hunter elaborated on his vision of teaching reading:

I thought about literature circles, and you always read to kids, so I thought about reading to children. I thought about having them have time to read to themselves. My classroom vision before I got into student teaching was having beanbag chairs and having their little corner or library where they could just go and pick up books and read them. I thought about being able to pull groups to come sit on the couch with me and read to me. That's the kind of classroom I pictured. When I got here, I thought, "Wow! That's not it at all!"

Hunter rejected the basal readers he experienced as a child in favor of literature circles he learned of in his teacher education program; however, his vision reflected only superficial aspects of interacting with children in reading based mainly on visible characteristics in classrooms he observed and one aspect of reading (literature circles) he learned about in a reading course. He could articulate no well-organized set of strategies for guiding students' development as readers. The

comfortable, emotionally-safe environment he envisions is positive, but it lacks the structure and organization he claims to value. This superficial view of teaching reading may be due to not having a minor in reading like the other four participants. As an Early Childhood minor, Hunter had taken only three courses in reading and language arts, in contrast to eight courses for students with a reading minor, and he had not yet completed the Early Childhood block.<sup>17</sup>

Hunter's exposure to diversity in the military allowed Hunter to feel that he has embraced diversity, but it did not exclude him from the "culture shock" of an urban classroom. Because he enjoys authority in his military role, he expected his students to automatically grant him authority and the control that implies, but they did not. His vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds assumed self-motivated students who already knew how to read, but his urban second-grade classroom was made up of children of varying reading levels, some with challenging behavior patterns, and many English language learners.

The greatest changes in his vision of teaching reading were the clarity surrounding aspects of reading, the need for more systematic planning and preparation, and interdisciplinary approaches. Hunter's vision statement from the final interview includes a clearer vision of aspects of reading instruction:

I'd like to have a share time for students to retell their book and summarize.

During independent reading I have mini-lessons based on what I feel my

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<sup>17</sup> I learned during the semester that Hunter was allowed to student teach before completion of the "Early Childhood block," a semester of four courses including 1) a practicum in a K-2 classroom; 2) language development, literacy and play; 3) assessment in early childhood; and 4) primary curriculum that usually precede student teaching. The reason for his request was so that he could take the Early Childhood block in the summer following student teaching and still graduate before his military deployment in September.

students need to work on. They might be the whole class or small groups depending on what the skill is. At the end we might think and then share with each other, with a partner. I see guided reading. I like it. That was the toughest thing for me and the last aspect of reading I picked up and still didn't think I could do a good job of it, but now I write my lessons out. I have my students leveled, and I know what strategies they need to work on, and I focus on what they need.

Hunter also incorporated interdisciplinary teaching in a two-week unit. Although he had learned about teaching units in his classes, this was his first actual experience using the approach in an actual classroom setting:

I'd have magazines, especially for science. We don't have any science curriculum, so I would definitely add science and cross-curricular activities. In this district, I could use their same schedule and routine but what they would be learning would be related to science. Even in phonics, I found some activities using animal words to go with the unit. I love interdisciplinary learning. The kids can make more connections. It's a lot of work but I think it's the most effective.

In the end, asked if his attitudes and beliefs about teaching students of diverse backgrounds had changed, he indicated they were more positive, and he accepted an interview for a teaching position in the urban school district.

They [attitudes and beliefs] have changed for the better. I came in not sure of what to do. I was nervous about the environment because of being, you know,



from the mountains. City life was definitely a culture shock for me! I thought, 'How am I going to teach them effectively, what are they interested in, what is the correct way to teach them?' What I found was I taught them in a way I would teach any other student. This experience was a learning experience for me, and I wouldn't change my experience for the world. I wouldn't say I had negative views, but you hear stories, and you get worried and nervous. Yeah, it's a bad area, a poor area, but the kids can't help it. It's not their fault. People say they're going to grow up to be thugs, or drug addicts, and they do bring in inappropriate things to class, but I pushed for them to focus on their dreams and stay involved in education.

While Hunter's attitude became more positive and hopeful, he has not embraced the integration of the students' cultures into his teaching. His lack of attention to the backgrounds of his students has implications for teacher education programs striving to develop teachers who are more culturally responsive.

### **Joseph – Taking Multiculturalism Home**

Joseph Colden, a 21 year old White male, described growing up with his mother and brother. His biological father left when he was four years old. After that, they lived on and off with his mother's boyfriend, to whom he refers as his "sociological father."

We lived with my sociological father up until I was 12, between 5 and 12....

He has a son of his own and his son used to beat me up, so we moved out until he graduated, which was a two-year period. And then we moved back in with him. Then they split up again, and we ended up living out in a really trashy

area of the town. The places are run-down, and it gives the idea that this is an industrial town and not everybody has money in this place. That's the kind of area we lived in. Lots of double houses, trailer parks that are run-down - a lot of low-income housing. We lived there until I was 18. Then my mom met up with her current boyfriend, and we've been living with him ever since.

Home for Joseph is a small rural community about one hour north of the urban district where he did his student teaching. It became clear that Joseph saw college as an escape from his hometown, and his expectation was that anyone in that type of situation should want to do the same.

I graduated with 52 people including myself. And it's a very small town. Ethnically, it's the same kind of people. We have 13 churches. The town is very religious. It's all White people, pretty much. We have a few African American families, we have a few Hispanic families, and the only Asians in our town were the ones who owned the Chinese restaurant. A lot of people are racists or bigots and as far as multicultural things that went on there, there really wasn't anything. Most people are German descent. They have a saying in my hometown: If you're raised there and you don't get out after high school, you're going to stay there. That's definitely the kind of area that is. We have a metal factory in my town, and if you find yourself working in the metal factory after you graduate, you're going to stay there. You're going to be stuck.

Joseph indicated that about half the high school graduates in his town stay in the area. He seems to value being one of only a few of his classmates to get a college degree within four years.

A lot of them have dropped out of college now, and they've gone back to the area. I think right now about five kids will graduate from college. A lot of them take five or six years to graduate. Some are in jail, some are working in the metal factory, and some of my best friends from high school are working at Best Buy. Sure they have good jobs and some are in management positions, but they didn't get an education.

Joseph arrived at college without clear direction for his future and with long hair and body piercings. He had been an athlete in high school and pursued extreme snowboarding and skateboarding outside of school. Through the Career Development Center, he became aware of his aptitude for teaching and thought about being an English teacher because of his love of reading and writing. Ultimately, he decided that an elementary education degree would make him more marketable than being a secondary English teacher. During interviews with the associate dean, he received the message that his physical appearance would have to change before he entered elementary classrooms, so the long hair was cut, and he removed his chains, studs, and rings.

When it came time to apply for student teaching, his lack of urban field experience, like Hunter's, conflicted with requirements. He was hesitant about the placement and concerned about discipline and scripted curriculum.

Joseph - Actually I really had no intention of being in an urban school. I requested a suburban school.... I suppose after some of the advisors looked at my records and saw I didn't have exactly enough urban education hours, they decided to place me in the urban setting.

Becky - How did you feel about that when you found out that you were placed in an urban classroom?

Joseph - I was a little distraught to be placed in an urban setting because I knew it was going to be harder, as far as discipline goes. Then a lot of time what I've seen in urban settings is that they have your entire curriculum mapped out before you get there, and it's just really not as creative as a suburban or rural setting.

Joseph's ideas about urban curriculum and classrooms seemed to be based on common assumptions and generalizations about urban schools from the media. He, like Hunter, did not seek out a student teaching placement with students of diverse backgrounds, but he expressed interest in multicultural education as he understands it.

### ***Early Influences***

Joseph learned to assert himself and take initiative early in his life. Because of his experiences at home, he took on responsibilities at a young age.

I have a biological brother. He's a great guy, and he's in the army now, but we didn't exactly make nice when we were growing up. Then after my parents split up, he got into a lot of drugs, and we got him the help he needed, and then after I became the man of the house, he decided, 'Now that I see my little

brother doing what he's supposed to do for the family and helping pay the bills, maybe it's time that I should grow up too.' ...now he's in the Air Force, and he's married and doing well for himself.

Joseph attributed his independent thoughts and decisions to these early experiences at home. He learned self-reliance and felt he was not blindly accepting the ideas espoused in his household. Some underlying assumptions from his childhood remained, however, and would surface in his student teaching experience.

Unlike the other four participants, Joseph spent half the semester with Ms. B, an African American teacher of third grade, and half the semester with Ms. T, a European American teacher of sixth grade. The contrast between the contexts of the two classrooms contributed to Joseph's changing vision about teaching students of diverse backgrounds. Ms. B's classroom consisted of mostly lower-middle-class students with parents who were somewhat involved in their education, but Ms. T's class was in a school populated with a high percentage of families on welfare living in subsidized housing and in which the parents played a minimal role. Both schools are predominately African American. Whereas Ms. B was strict in managing both behavior and reading instruction, Ms. T gave Joseph free reign in teaching reading. The looser structure of the second classroom encouraged a more relaxed atmosphere but also created more classroom management issues for Joseph. In Interview One, Joseph described his first placement:

I was really intimidated to go into the school and work in the classroom that I'm in. My [first cooperating] teacher is a traditionalist, and she has absolutely

no problem getting up in front of her kids and yelling at one of them that they need to correct their behavior in front of the whole class. And to be honest, I walked in the classroom, and it scared me that she yelled at this kid in the way she did. I was wondering how she would feel about me coming in her classroom. Not just in this classroom, but I've taught in other classrooms with females before and you're just intimidated by a man's presence in that classroom.

Judging from other comments as well, he appreciated the classroom control the teacher's strictness created; however, he disagreed with the atmosphere it created<sup>18</sup>. He was unable to maintain that control when his cooperating teacher left the classroom, however, because it relied on her personal power over the students.

Also interesting were Joseph's gender expectations. Perhaps because of his mother's situation and having to become the "man of the house" at an early age, he seemed to doubt the competency of women as leaders:

Joseph - I've only really seen men as administrators in my own experience and in [this urban district], a lot of administrators with the exception of one or two are men<sup>19</sup>. In my school, both of the administrators are women, and it kind of surprised me.

Becky - Did you think it was better/worse? Did you have different expectations then because you found out they were women?

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<sup>18</sup> In week seven of student teaching, Joseph reported to his supervisor that Ms. B had yelled at him and called him down in front of the class. Based on that incident and the supervisor's opinion that Joseph was not being allowed any discretion in planning his own reading instruction, he was moved in week nine, to a different placement in another school within the district.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph's assumption is not accurate. Out of 14 K-8 schools in this urban district, only two have male principals. The other 12 have female principals.

Joseph - Not really. As far as I've seen, it's just a normal school even though it's two women in charge. Now I see that women are more than capable of taking over an urban setting and this school. This is something new for me, but they're definitely doing a pretty good job in their school.

Becky - Was any of your surprise because of the fact that the principal is a White woman?

Joseph – [Chuckles] That *was* one of my surprises: that she is a White woman. I expected to see a woman full of attitude and not necessarily as calm as she is, especially with some of the teachers that are so full of attitude in the classroom. [I didn't expect] for her to be real calm and real specific about what she wants students to do, for her to have high expectations of students when I had not seen that before.

When probed further, Joseph explained that the “women full of attitude” he was talking about were female African American teachers.

### ***Learning about Diversity***

Joseph's family had no social or personal contact with people who were culturally different from themselves. Early exposure to ideas about individuals of diverse backgrounds came from Joseph's step-father, who was later contradicted by Joseph's teachers:

My stepfather - he would say, 'Mexicans this, and Mexicans that - taking our jobs'...now he's got this thing about - Tyco is starting to move a lot of their company over to China, and 'Chinese people are taking our jobs, and are no good,' and even Black people - he's just talking about, 'they're lazy' - and I

know better than to believe that because some teachers that I had just engrained it that we have other cultures in this world, and just because you're White, and just because your parents say something about Black people, Hispanic people, Asian people - whatever - doesn't mean it's right. These are teachers I had in middle school and high school. We didn't really get into a whole lot of culturally diverse things when I was in elementary school, for example, they didn't start celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day until the year that I got out of high school. It was kind of ignored.

From these comments and the implication that Joseph did not want to be “stuck” in his hometown, I was surprised when he said he wanted to return there to live and teach. His motivation, however, is to be an agent of change:

I think it'd be great to go back to work in the area. I hate to say it, but I'd like to bring a little bit of class and a little bit of dignity to that area - teach some multicultural education and get these kids to realize that White people are not the only people in this world. You're going to meet a lot of different people, and regardless of what your dad or uncle or grandpa is teaching you, people of color are people too, not just White people and that they don't need to grow up to be a bunch of bigots.

Joseph made it clear that his attitudes and opinions were his own and not based on those of his parents. “Whatever my dad would say growing up, I would discard. It would go in one ear and out the other. I'm kind of an individual person, and



I do whatever I want with people...” He attributed his strong rejection of intolerance of others to his personal experience of being ridiculed for his physical appearance as a boy.

When I was growing up, I had a lot of discrimination against myself.... I squinted if I didn't have my glasses on, and I have almond-shaped eyes, and I don't really have eyelids, so sure, maybe I'd be mistaken for a Chinese person growing up, I don't know! They'd make a lot of derogatory comments to me - even some of my friends would do it. It got to where I would start beating people up over it. They'd come up and say something to me, and when I went back to my hometown, somebody made a comment to me, and it took everything I had not to beat the snot out of them! Seeing that kind of intolerance and hatred for one kind of person is a powerful image - you can't go back and do the same thing to somebody else.

Joseph also attributed some of his thinking about multicultural teaching to a particular professor of education:

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_[education professor] is the one who inspired my ideas about teaching multicultural and diverse issues to the students – let them know there are different cultures in the world and teach so they don't become racists and bigots and they don't think they are the only people here.

Although Joseph did not volunteer for the urban placement, he used his experience of personal discrimination and the conflicting attitudes of his step-father

and his teachers to form opinions of how to treat others. That early influence, however, did not overcome his underlying assumptions about gender or about urban families that came to the surface in his second placement. He looked to his own low-income background and personal drive to improve his economic conditions as a model anyone should want to follow. He did not consider other constraints his students' families might face due to race or culture:

It really surprised me to see the neighborhood because most of the parents are, I hate to say it this way, but lazy. They really don't care, being on welfare is good enough for them, and they don't strive to make anything better for themselves. I realized before student teaching that everybody is different, but I didn't think I'd find anybody that would not strive for something better, like some of the families of my students now. I hadn't believed my professors when they said reinforcement between home and school is a big issue, but now I can see it because the kids who come from those families really don't appreciate the education they're getting, and they couldn't care less about what they're being taught. They're not striving for excellence. They're not striving to learn.

As the semester progressed, Joseph seemed more frustrated with the situation in his classroom and lost hope for some of his students. He did not seem to recognize that he was expressing the same kinds of opinions he had rejected from his step-father. Although Joseph's vision does not necessarily steer him toward urban teaching in the future, he is interested in opening the world of diversity to students from his

hometown. Because of his limited view of multicultural education, however, it remains unclear how effective he will be in changing attitudes of his hometown students.

### ***Visions of Teaching Reading***

Joseph attributed his initial vision of teaching reading specifically to his reading classes. As a reading minor, his junior year was spent immersed in reading courses. “Most of my ideas came from those classes. I didn’t really have any set ideas before that.” Unlike the other participants, Joseph did not mention his own classroom teachers influencing his vision of teaching reading but rather, a combination of reading coursework and field experience:

A lot of my courses had field experiences, like tutoring with Dr. \_\_\_\_\_. A lot of my ideas of what I’m doing now came from trial and error. If it doesn’t work, let’s try something different. Even now, if something doesn’t work, I try something different. The concepts came from courses, but what I choose to use came from my field experiences.

Joseph’s vision of reading instruction seems to be based on his teacher education courses; however, his attitudes about multicultural teaching and learning appear to be a rejection of what he heard and experienced in childhood coupled with what he learned in a multicultural education course. Joseph, like Hunter, highly values his own experiences in shaping his vision, but unlike Hunter, Joseph described an instructional program for reading including major aspects of instruction. His experiences with diversity are quite limited, and his concept of multicultural education seems to be located within the “contributions approach” (Banks, 2004), in

which the teacher focuses on holidays, heroes, and visible elements of culture. Some deep-seated assumptions have not been erased, consistent with research that has found attitudes to be resistant to change (Pajares, 1992).

Major changes in Joseph's vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds consisted of a move from less-structured to more-structured reading instruction, more emphasis on multicultural education for all students, and better organization on his part.

I think a lot of kids need more explicit instruction. Teachers need to get back to that, but they can't just say it. Kids need to hear it, then they need to see it, and then they need to do it so they get all styles of learning. With all that's going on right now, you don't always have time to do that, but I don't care.

Once the classroom door is closed, I may do it anyway!

Joseph felt his attitudes had been strengthened about all children benefiting from multicultural education:

Children from every background need diverse education as far as the strategies and content they are learning, such as history and culture using different trade books. It really helps when you have a heterogeneous classroom and everyone is unique. The kids learn from that.

Like Hunter, he appreciated the need for more personal organization as a teacher, and he credited his reading courses for providing the strategies for teaching reading:

I strive for organization. That's one of the things I've been working on. I have sort of a chaotic organization going on. I know where things are, but it's not enough. I need to have everything set up, have an exact order of where they're

going and giving clear expectations. Another thing is knowing the strategies to draw from to help kids learn how to read. That's one thing the university did prepare us for – learning how to help students with reading problems. The university should put the reading minor courses right into the elementary education program. I can't imagine doing what I've done without those courses.

Joseph's experiences in two urban classrooms did not seem to change his vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. His case is indicative of the complexity of influences and how they interact to develop teacher vision. Joseph does not even seem aware that attitudes from his upbringing are continuing to influence his thinking about diversity. Joseph's plan for teaching reading in his hometown district did not change. He did not interview in the urban district and moved back to his mother's home after graduation. He plans to work at another job if he cannot secure a teaching position in his hometown or a similar near-by district.

### **Sylvia – A Colorblind View**

Growing up in what she describes as “the country,” Sylvia Clyde, 21, lived in a town of 3,000, about 150 miles from the nearest city. Sylvia's White, middle-class household consisted of both parents, one sister and two brothers. She considers her up-bringing somewhat sheltered and was surprised that her fifth-grade urban students discussed topics, such as alcoholism, that she was not aware of until she was much older.

### ***Early Influences***

Like Hunter, Sylvia was influenced to become a teacher by one of her family members:

My older brother has a reading disability, and I see him struggling all the time. He can't comprehend past a fourth-grade level, and he's 24. He can read, but he can't comprehend. So if I can make a difference in one child's life and not have them have that struggle, that would be great.

Sylvia did not specifically request the urban placement for student teaching, but she was not surprised or unhappy about it. "When I wrote my philosophy of education, I wrote that diversity is a tool and not a weakness, and I think that's why I was placed in [this urban district], but I'm not sure." Still, it took several weeks into her methods course placement to get over her anxiety:

[I got over being scared] probably within the first two weeks of my placement last semester. I was in [this urban district] with a different co-op in a different school. From that experience, I saw they [the students] wanted to be in school. They were excited to learn, and I had a stereotype that these kids were bad and really mean, but they're not. They're just like any little kids – they're excited to be there.

Even before beginning to work in the urban district, she researched online to gather information. What she found were some differences she expected and some similarities she did not expect:

When I got my placement, my mom and I got on the internet and compared the school district with my hometown district. The website shows information about – details like, we found it really funny because my school district had like only four African American students, and it's completely the opposite in this school district. [In] my home district, about 15% receive free or reduced lunch, and in this district, it's almost every student, so that surprised me. And the single-parent homes – that surprised me on both ends. I didn't realize that many students didn't have two parents in my hometown. It was almost 60% at home, and I think it was about the same in [this urban district].

### ***Learning about Diversity***

Although Sylvia was surrounded by prejudicial comments growing up, her immediate family worked to counteract that influence. She encountered resistance about working in an urban setting but expressed a commitment to changing the pattern of discrimination for her younger family members:

Sylvia – My uncles and my grandfather are very prejudiced, so growing up I know I heard comments, but my parents would say, 'That's wrong. They're just the same as you, there's nothing different in them,' and I can see it upsets me more now because of my students. I actually want to work in [urban district] after I graduate, and when I share my thoughts with my grandparents, my grandfather says, like 'Why do you want to work with them?' and things like that. It frustrates me because I have a lot of young cousins, and I know they're hearing that. I guess I did grow up with that, I just wasn't as aware of it. My parents just handled it by telling us it was wrong.

Becky – Has hearing those things influenced how you think about working with students of diverse backgrounds?

Sylvia – It's influenced me to the positive – made me want to educate my younger family members – that they're not that different from us, and sometimes it makes me want to step up to my grandfather and say, 'Well, what makes you think this way? You never interacted with them,' but he would take it as disrespectful, so I won't do it!

Sylvia went to school with only two non-White students. One bi-racial girl was her good friend, and she talked about their relationship:

Becky – Did they hang out with the White kids?

Sylvia – Yes, they did, in fact I was friends with one of them, but I didn't think of her as African American. Her mom was Caucasian.

Becky – So she was actually bi-racial?

Sylvia – Yes, but I didn't see her as African American.

Becky – Did she see herself as African American?

Sylvia – When we were filling out college applications, she didn't know what to mark. If anyone else saw her, they would say she was African American, but she didn't know what she was. In her mind, she wasn't, but to look at her, you'd say she was.

Sylvia and her friend were apparently close enough to talk about the issue of what race to mark on her college application; however, neither Sylvia nor the friend



herself saw her as African American. She was phenotypically African American, but Sylvia considered her in the same cultural group as herself. These two examples point to a “color-blind” view of multiculturalism. Sylvia’s parents used the argument that “they (people of diverse backgrounds) are the same as you” to contradict the prejudicial comments by other family members, and neither Sylvia nor her friend “considered her African American.” Cochran-Smith (1995) advised against mistaking color blindness for equality, and Valli (1995) argued that not seeing color can hinder White teachers in recognizing their own dominating culture. In Sylvia’s understanding, she was rejecting the discrimination of her grandparents, and that represented a positive step towards her acceptance of a role in teaching students of diverse backgrounds.

Sylvia does not remember literature about different cultures in her elementary classrooms: “Maybe if I had been exposed to that, maybe I wouldn’t have had the stereotypes I had, and I want to make that different for my students.” She considers this lack of cultural literature the root of her assumptions about people different from herself; however, her stereotypes may also have come from comments from family members. She collected some information about different cultures in her class of Multicultural Issues and Strategies; however, she did not feel well prepared for the urban setting she entered for student teaching. Like Joseph, she learned a “contributions approach” to multicultural education, but she tried to move beyond that with her students. From her experiences in student teaching, she recognized the importance of building relationships and integrating the students’ interests based on

their backgrounds. She elaborated in the context of teaching an interdisciplinary unit on the Civil War:

As far as their reactions, they're really into slavery and what it was like and why we had slavery. They can't get past slavery, so the unit has turned out to be more on slavery than on the Civil War. For three weeks we did study the Underground Railroad, what the abolitionists did, and what it was like to be a slave. I didn't plan on spending so much time on slavery....From their reactions to what we had done so far, I saw how much they were into studying about slavery, so I decided to go that way. It surprised me because I thought they wouldn't want to talk about it, but it was the complete opposite. I was really afraid of teaching the slavery part of the Civil War because I thought they were going to have negative reactions, but they just questioned why.

Although she felt insecure about addressing the subject of slavery, she decided to focus more on it because of her students' interest. She integrated her reading instruction into the social studies content of importance to her students.

### ***Visions of Teaching Reading***

Sylvia considers reading more than simply recognizing the words on a page or a set of skills. "It goes beyond reading the words - comprehending what's going on, and then to relate to things that you've experienced through books, the world, and interaction with others and applying what you've read to your life." Of all five student teachers, Sylvia had the most clearly articulated sociocultural view of reading. She was also clear about what teaching reading meant to her:

Sylvia - Probably half-way through my sophomore year [in college], I was taking my reading courses. I was learning techniques for working with kids, and I would go home and read with my little cousins, and I'd use those techniques, and I'd think, 'Does this really work? I'm going to apply it!' Sometimes it worked, and sometimes it didn't, and when it did, I thought, 'Wow! I'm going to be teaching a lot of kids to do that!'

Becky – Since that time, do you think your vision of being a reading teacher has changed at all?

Sylvia – Yes, when I started, I thought, you apply these techniques, and they learn to read. The more I'm in the classroom I realize, you apply these techniques, and they don't learn to read, sometimes. You have to go beyond those techniques; you have to find your own techniques. You have to find different materials for those students. It's not just 'learn this and go apply it' like some other jobs, it's learn this - it might work, and it might not. You have to find a way to make it work.

Sylvia reflected Duffy's (2002) assertion that outstanding teachers "adjust, modify, adapt, and invent; they do not emulate" (p. 333). When asked about her vision of classroom environment, she described it in relation to her role as a teacher:

An open, accepting environment, that it's OK not to be the same, where they'll feel safe being who they are. A lot of that depends on the teacher. The teacher has to be open and accepting to their environment because if I'm not, how can I expect my students to do that?

Unlike Hunter and Joseph, Sylvia had a greater sense of efficacy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds. She understood that the instruction and environment in her classroom was contingent upon her own attitudes and actions. Rather than clear changes in Sylvia's vision of teaching reading, she experienced more of a confirmation of what she envisioned in the beginning. At the end of student teaching, her vision came closer to reality because she felt confident and empowered to put her vision into practice. Sylvia accepted an interview in the urban school district and is hoping to receive a job offer.

### **Suzy – The Hard Work of Teaching Reading**

Suzy Sanders, 22, grew up in a middle-class rural area about an hour away from the urban district in which she student taught. She described her hometown as "pretty much all White, Catholic and Protestant, middle to upper-middle class." She graduated with 160 students never having had a teacher whose background culture differed from hers. She is an only child. Although Suzy was not as open about her childhood stories as the other participants, she did share her initial thoughts about becoming a reading teacher:

It's not all games and making arts and crafts. Teaching them reading – when I was tutoring showed me they need a lot. There's a lot that goes into reading... it's a challenging job. I think that's what made me go into teaching – it's a lot harder than it seems, but it's very rewarding.

### *Learning about Diversity*

Suzy's family had little contact with individuals of diverse backgrounds except for helping provide gifts and dinner to the underprivileged at Christmas.

I was just taught that people were different but they should be treated the way you would want to be treated. There were never any feelings that others were bad. My parents had a really low tolerance for not respecting people....I grew up in a very liberal environment, pretty accepting of everyone, and I always felt that differences were not a big deal.

With the idea that "differences were not a big deal," the "color-blind" theme again emerged as a way of dealing with diversity. Without any real exposure to individuals of different cultural backgrounds, it may have been difficult to imagine how differences could affect one's understanding of other people. Suzy confirmed this idea of difference not being important later during student teaching. In the final interview, when asked about how her vision of teaching in a culturally diverse classroom had changed, she made the following statement:

They really focused in our classes in college that native backgrounds and tapping into where they came from were really important. I think it's important but not relevant. The students don't talk about it in first grade. They're all learning the same things, and bringing another culture in – I don't think it would be helpful. Maybe bringing in a culture for a topic would be good, but they don't notice they are different. I was thinking before that if the

students felt uncomfortable about being of a different background, I could address it, but at least in first grade, it doesn't seem to be relevant.

Suzy seems to have a limited understanding of her role as a teacher in making the issues of culture valuable in the classroom. Although she learned in classes that home culture was important, she allowed her concept of "difference as not important" to reestablish itself. Her first graders did not talk about their cultures because their regular teacher did not encourage it. This issue has great implications for teacher education and the choices of cooperating teachers as role models for preservice teachers.

### ***Visions of Teaching Reading***

I've always loved reading stories to kids, and I thought that's what teaching reading was. When I got into my first reading class and learned about teaching reading, I had no idea! I thought it would be so easy, but it's not! I think my vision of teaching reading changes everyday because of my experiences in a real classroom.

Suzy, like Hunter, thought teaching reading would be an easy task. Unlike Hunter, however, by the time she reached student teaching, Suzy had equipped herself with a clear vision of the aspects of reading needed in a diverse classroom. Suzy envisioned nurturing a caring environment in her classroom and saw her role as recognizing and supporting the individual differences in her students.

Within the context of student teaching, with a cooperating teacher whose presence in the room could be described as intimidating, Suzy lacked confidence in

her ability to implement effective reading instruction. Not until her experience of more than a week teaching solo did Suzy begin to give herself credit for her ability to make instructional decisions and manage a classroom. That week seemed to be a turning point. Suzy learned that she needed to be more assertive but in her own classroom, she would no longer need to mimic her cooperating teacher's style:

I never thought I'd be the kind of teacher I am now – loud and really in it. I never expected to have the confidence to be so driven to just get it done.

When I first got in there and saw my teacher, I thought, oh, no, I'm not like that! I like the change, but in my own classroom I think it will mellow out a bit. My co-op will not be there, so in my own classroom I'll start out fresh.

The changes for Suzy consisted of becoming more confident and confirming the vision of reading instruction she brought into student teaching. She, like Sylvia, developed a vision closer to reality as she finished student teaching. Suzy also interviewed in the urban district and is hoping to be hired.

### **Sarah – High Expectations for Success**

Of the five participants, Sarah Evans, 21, had the most privileged background. She grew up in a community of upper-middle class White families in the suburbs of a small city of about 56,000. She lived with her mother and father, both professionals, and one younger sister.

Sarah was always on the dean's list in college and holds very high standards for herself in everything she does. Although she, like Joseph, had a vision of making changes to the system of education, she was much less an individual thinker than he. She was motivated to exceed expectations, and in her reading instruction, she took

more initiative than any other participant, planning interdisciplinary units and field trips. Sarah was concerned about “appearance” and always wanted to present herself as compliant and politically correct. For example, in interview one, I asked how she would define culture. She answered, “Oh, I wish I had this question like after my sophomore year. I forget - there's like a huge definition.” When I assured her I wanted to know her own thoughts on the topic, she was still concerned that I was looking for a particular answer.

### ***Early Influences***

Sarah experienced positive support in school and loved reading. She attributed her desire to teach to a love of reading as well as to her fourth-grade teacher:

In terms of reading, she was by far my favorite teacher because she nurtured everyone's love of reading and was very enthusiastic and supportive of the individual needs in the classroom. She stands out in my elementary school experience, but I've always loved working with children. My love of books and reading and things like that probably helped me decide.

Reading was valued in her life growing up, and Sarah articulated how important she views reading for everyone:

I think I've had such a positive experience growing up in a family where reading was emphasized. Reading tons of books at home, reading at the grocery store, reading on a walk, reading this, reading that, it was always emphasized. When I think of reading I think of it being everywhere, being a part of the fabric of the life that you lead. We had it as such a huge building



block of our existence, it's like basic math - if you don't know how to read or write or communicate, you really struggle in life.

### ***Learning about Diversity***

The diversity within Sarah's home community consisted of a few Asian and Indian families whose parents were also professionals. When asked about any personal friends her family had who came from different cultural backgrounds, she seemed to apologize for the lack of any diverse friends:

Not my mom. Not really my dad either. And my sister, one of her best friends is Chinese. But her mother and father were born here as well. She has some friends that were from different cultural backgrounds but, no, for the most part, you know, I hate to say that...

Still, she grew up in what she described as a very tolerant environment.

I was always brought up to be very open and very accepting of people that are different. My mother is Jewish and my dad is not. He is from a Christian family but, he doesn't really practice as much anymore, so I grew up with kind of both in my background and Jewish traditions and things, so that kind of gave me the background to be accepting of others that are different, because I was a little different. But that said, I felt like growing up, even though I didn't have close friends who were from different cultural backgrounds, I was always very accepting, and I think I learned that from my mom and dad. They are very tolerant of the people who are different than we are.

Like Suzy, Sarah learned tolerance in theory but was not exposed to personal experiences with individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Sarah mentioned that sometimes friends or acquaintances would make derogatory comments about Jews, but she was hesitant to criticize them and seemed somewhat ambivalent in her stance:

It didn't ever really bother me. I know that sounds like I'm not telling the truth, but it never really got me. I always thought they were kidding and they knew that I was from that background and they weren't trying - it was all in fun, sort of. People have slurs or whatever of any difference - not that it makes it right. There are politically incorrect jokes of any denomination, so I was never really hurt by that. I'm not extremely religious, but I do come from a family that it is important, so of course, you know, I would take it offensively if someone was disrespectful.

Sarah did not feel prepared for working in an urban setting. Although she did take the Multicultural Issues and Strategies course, she commented on the lack of diversity issues in her methods classes:

A lot of my professors didn't really talk about it enough, knowing that a lot of us were in urban placements and it's a lot different. I didn't really want a trophy for being in the city, but at the same time, I wanted to address the issues I was observing and to troubleshoot what we think about 'How can I not kill myself trying to create all these activities and supplemental things, but what can I do to make it better?' I don't really think there was enough support with that in courses that weren't specifically multicultural.

Even in her methods course experience in the urban district<sup>20</sup>, Sarah felt a lack of support from her cooperating teacher:

I loved it but I was horrified. That was my first experience where I was walking in with a lesson, and I observed first, of course. I was horrified with how high my expectations of the students were for my lesson and to see the kind of feedback I got from the teacher and from the students. It's not that my expectations should have been lower, but that was just my first time where they didn't really mean as much as I thought they would...[the children] had no concept, and there were a lot of English Language learners in the classroom I was in. It was a huge impression at that time, so my initial impression was they were really behind. They don't have the resources necessary to help and to get better, and the teacher really was pretty rough. She wasn't really very caring in terms of the dynamics in a classroom. The fact that she had students that didn't speak English - she did *not* feel it was her job to communicate with them or speak another language - that kind of thing.

The perceived lack of support for working with students of diverse backgrounds brings to light implications for teacher education not because no support existed but because preservice teachers may either resist issues of diversity or expect universal solutions to questions about teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004).

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<sup>20</sup> The semester before student teaching, all elementary education majors complete what is called the Professional Semester. They take methods courses in reading, language arts, science, math and social studies. During the semester, the students spend 2 days a week in their field placement for the second and third months of the semester. Then in the fourth month, they spend an entire two-week period in the classroom all day, everyday, assisting and teaching. Many students then return to that class for student teaching the following semester. Of my five participants, Hunter and Suzy were in the same classroom for both Professional Semester and Student Teaching. Joseph was in Ms. G's class for Professional Semester and the first half of Student Teaching. Sylvia and Sarah had different placements with two teachers in two different schools in the urban district.

### ***Visions of Teaching Reading***

Sarah was a high-energy kind of person with a clear, broad, distant vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. I categorize her vision of teaching reading as *broad* because she was the only participant who saw herself as responsible for the whole classroom and each student as a whole. By the fifth week of student teaching, she had fully accepted the role of teacher in the classroom, unlike other participants who were still struggling at week eleven to accept the total teacher role. She felt a calling to work with students she felt lacked home environments that promoted literacy as she viewed it:

It's so significant for children to be exposed to either their teacher if they don't have people at home who are reading to them or helping them with their reading or initiating a love for reading. Maybe that's why I do find a sort of calling being in an urban setting because I know that a lot of these children don't have books at home or don't have people to read to them, and I love to read aloud. I think that's so important.

In contrast to Hunter and Sylvia, who specifically rejected the use of basal readers, Sarah would be happy with a more structured program:

I kind of like... a basal, a book that you can, I mean, yeah, it's scripted, and I don't like that, like a cookie-cutter approach, but that it was all there for you, so it was consistent. I think that a lot of students really learn from that. I don't think that all the time, that it was the most effective way to teach, but, ...I don't think that it's reasonable to ask a teacher to come up with original ideas

24-7, you know what I mean, I think that's impossible, so I think that in my ideal classroom, if I had the accessibility of some kind of a program that was kind of planned out and then I can pick and choose from it and supplement other additional resources and other books and texts, and support. For me, especially as a first-year teacher with students that would need additional support, it would be overwhelming for me to create from scratch.

Sarah actually came the closest to the assistant superintendent's vision of how teachers in the district should approach the mandated balanced literacy program, and she worked with a cooperating teacher who held a similar view. The assistant superintendent had commented that her dream was for teachers to be data-driven decision-makers: "Ideally we want teachers to make decisions based on students' needs....My dream...is to trust teachers to use assessments to make their own decisions."

Sarah began as the most driven of the group with the most experience working with students of diverse backgrounds. She had a very successful experience and was considered a leader among the student teachers; however, she lost some of her idealism and came to realize that her vision, though clear, may have been what Hammerness (1999) termed too distant, "...for those who find the distance seems too far, the experience of comparing vision against practice can prompt feelings of discouragement and despair....These teachers discount their visions, doubt themselves and question their students' capacities" (p. 11). Sarah was influenced toward the end of student teaching by her parents who wanted her to take a job where her high standards and talents would be "more appreciated" or perhaps to take off a

year and travel in Europe. Although she was unsure whether she would accept any position in the fall, she did accept an interview in the urban district. She was encouraged by her principal and cooperating teacher and thought she might accept a third-grade position, if offered.

### **Visions of Teaching Reading to Students of Diverse Backgrounds**

Hammerness (1999) described teacher vision in terms of the “constellation” it produces by its combination of characteristics along three dimensions – focus, range, and distance, plus the nature of its context. In her study, four constellations emerged to describe many of her participants’ visions: close-clear, close-cloudy, distant clear, and far-clear.

The “close-clear” constellation described visions that were clear, narrowly focused, close to their actual practice, and in a supportive or neutral context. The “close-cloudy” visions were found among teachers also in supportive contexts but who were vague about how to get their practice closer to their visions. For these teachers, vision played little role in their teaching lives. The two final constellations, both with clear visions, differed in their contexts and the range of focus. In the “distant-clear” group, vision was clear with a narrow focus and became a negative influence. The gap between vision and practice was overwhelming to the point of undermining the teachers’ motivation. Finally, the “far-clear” visions were much broader in range, so even with visions far from practice, these teachers, in supportive contexts, saw their visions as motivational and a positive influence in their teaching. Hammerness (1999) summarized how visions may be beneficial or more damaging:

Vision consists of images of what teachers hope could be or might be in their classrooms, their schools, their community, and in some cases even society as a whole. For these teachers, vision can provide a sense of ‘reach’ that inspires and motivates them, and invites them to reflect upon their work. Yet visions don't always function in these beneficial ways. For other teachers, the reach seems too distant. The comparison of vision to current practice leads them to learn that their visions are impossible and that they and their students are powerless to reach them (p. 4).

Table 5 illustrates the constellation, as defined by Hammerness (1999), in which each of the five student teachers’ vision is described.

**Table 5**  
***Constellations of Student Teachers’ Visions***

<i>Student Teacher</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Constellation</i>
Hunter	Fuzzy	Narrow	Close	Supportive	Close-Cloudy
Sylvia; Suzy	Clear	Narrow	Close	Supportive	Close-Clear
Joseph	Clear	Narrow	Distant	Non- supportive / neutral	Distant-Clear
Sarah	Clear	Broad	Distant	Supportive	Far-Clear

### ***Sylvia’s Vision***

Of the five participants, Sylvia articulated the most detailed vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds at the beginning of student teaching. I

narrate it here as an example before beginning the cross-case analysis of the five visions:

Sylvia sees the physical environment in her reading classroom (4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade) as very comfortable and inviting to students, with a carpet, couch, and beanbag chairs for independent reading. She also sees students sitting at tables for group work but does not rely on “a lot of paper and pencil activities.” Her classroom rules are visibly posted, and she nurtures an environment that is open, safe and accepting. Striving to build relationships with her students, Sylvia uses team-building activities early in the year to help students become comfortable with each other and with her:

Starting from day one, I would get my students to know each other, and in a diverse classroom, I would show them that even though we’re different, we’re all the same, through different activities. Then I would teach them what a team is and does, like we encourage each other, we use helping words, we don’t put each other down, so they see themselves as a unit and not as an individual. I’d keep that building throughout the year, and if I saw my team falling apart, I’d take them back to the beginning and start again with what a team is and does – and constantly reminding them we are a team.

The library in Sylvia’s classroom contains reading material that is on, below, and above her students’ reading levels and includes various genres, popular series books, and books about different cultures. She has computers with internet access available for students’ use.



Sylvia is specific about her role in the reading classroom. She begins by finding each student's reading level through individual assessments and discovering each student's strengths and weaknesses as a reader. Her job includes modeling a love of reading, allowing book choices and helping students make connections with the texts they read. She uses group interaction, mini-lessons, read-alouds, literature circles, learning centers and a word wall to support her students' reading progress. She is adamant about no basal readers in her classroom and prefers that her students enjoy reading, choose books on their own, and discuss them with peers.

Parents of Sylvia's students read with their children at home. They also share a commitment with Sylvia to cooperate for the benefit of their children. Sylvia and parents discover what each expects of the other to build their working relationship.

### ***A Close-Clear Vision***

According to Hammerness's (1999) dimensions, Sylvia articulated a clear, narrow, close vision within a supportive context. Like the other participants, she is at the beginning of her teaching career and has not yet entered a full-time teaching position. Her ideas represent positive memories from her own experiences and ideals learned in teacher education courses coupled with limited experience in an urban classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. Also similar to the other participants, she has just begun to compare her vision to actual classroom practice and determine where the intersections of vision and practice promote or hinder each other within the given context. In her student teaching experience, her vision was fairly close to her practice because the supportive context encouraged her to confirm the vision with which she began.

### **Commonalities across the Vision Statements**

I found it significant that Sylvia did not mention classroom management in her vision statement except to say her rules would be posted. Issues of management were absent from all five vision statements. In talking about envisioning his “ideal classroom,” Joseph commented that there would be no need for a behavior management plan because all the students would be motivated and focused on learning. In reality, the interdependence of instruction and classroom management was an important issue throughout the semester for all five student teachers and is addressed more fully in Chapters Five and Six.

As the student teachers began to take more responsibilities in their classrooms they discovered intersections, both positive and negative, among their vision, practice, and teaching context. These intersections are identified and analyzed in Chapter Five. Conspicuous by its absence or scarcity in all five vision statements was a concern for cultural responsiveness. Several of the student teachers envisioned diverse literature in their classrooms; however, only Joseph mentioned incorporating culturally diverse ideas in his teaching. This issue of culturally responsive teaching is addressed in Chapter Six.

### **Components of the Vision Statements**

Table 6 summarizes the participants’ initial visions of the role of teachers, students and parents for reading instruction. Table 7 highlights their initial visions of important aspects of reading instruction and books and materials. Table 8 identifies the physical and emotional environments they hope to create in their classrooms.

The student teachers saw themselves as facilitators and supportive of individual and cooperative student learning but did not describe their role in terms of transmitting particular knowledge. They described their students as active and responsible in their acquisition of reading. Suzy (1st grade) was specific about gradually allowing students to take on responsibility for their own learning:

In the beginning of the reading process, it's a lot of hand-holding, going through the terms and vocabulary, and modeling each thing that you do everyday and having the students apply it – each day gradually having them demonstrate that they know what they're supposed to be doing... It takes a lot of modeling and repetition, especially in diverse classrooms – it takes a lot longer – to have the release of responsibility.

**Table 6**  
***Visions of Teacher, Student, and Parent Roles***

	Hunter	Sylvia	Suzy	Sarah	Joseph
<b>Teacher Roles</b>					
Use variety of instructional strategies	X				X
Facilitate student learning	X	X	X		X
Connect/communicate with parents	X	X			
Establish classroom routines	X				
Assess students' instructional needs		X	X	X	X
Incorporate culturally diverse ideas					X
Model a love of reading		X	X		
Allow book choices		X			
Provide fun, creative activities					X
<b>Student Roles</b>					
Work & learn cooperatively	X	X	X	X	X
Enjoy reading and lessons		X			X
Active participant in learning		X	X	X	X
Motivated by own improvement				X	
<b>Parent Roles</b>					
Active in child's learning	X	X			
Read with child	X	X	X	X	
Cooperate with teacher	X	X			X
Classroom assistant/speaker					X

All but Joseph expressed the view that parents should read with their children. Joseph approached the parents' role from a view of how they would interact with him

as a teacher, mentioning cooperation and help in the classroom. Based on responses in the first interview, most of the visions of a parent's role originated in the participants' memories of their own parents' role and education professors stressing the relationship between parental involvement and student success.

**Table 7**  
***Visions of Reading Instruction***

<b>Important Aspects of Reading Instruction</b>	Hunter	Sylvia	Suzy	Sarah	Joseph
Shared reading	X		X	X	
Guided reading	X		X	X	X
Literature circles	X	X			
Independent reading	X			X	X
Phonics	X				X
Word study/Word wall		X		X	X
Learning centers		X			
Mini-lessons (explicit instruction)		X	X		X
Read alouds			X	X	X
NO round-robin reading/basal readers	X	X			X
<b>Books &amp; Materials</b>					
Diverse literature	X	X			X
Leveled trade books	X	X		X	
All genres		X		X	X
Popular series books		X			
Computers		X			
Visuals/tactile objects			X		
Book on tape/listening center				X	
Dictionaries/Thesauruses				X	
Smart Board (technology)					X
Materials(physically)accessible to students					X

All five vision statements contained language consistent with a constructivist view of teaching and aspects of reading instruction recommended by reading researchers Fountas and Pinnell (2001), whose books are in the schools' bookrooms and are used in university reading classes. These images of teaching reading seem to be influential due to their emphasis in university reading courses and their prevalence in the reading instruction implemented in the urban district's balanced literacy program. They overshadowed memories of reading instruction from the student

teachers' childhoods. What did appear (from childhood) in their own visions were supportive environments and physically comfortable locations for reading.

**Table 8**  
***Visions of Classroom Environments***

	Hunter	Sylvia	Suzy	Sarah	Joseph
<b>Physical Environment</b>					
Comfortable reading area	X	X		X	X
Carpeted area	X	X			
Students in groups		X			X
Rules posted		X			
Extensive classroom library				X	X
Multicultural bulletin board					X
Smart Board (technology)					X
Materials(physically)accessible to students					X
<b>Emotional Environment</b>					
Positive reinforcement	X	X			
Friendly/ fun atmosphere for learning	X			X	
Classroom routines	X				
Positive teacher/student relationships		X			
Positive relationships among students		X			
Collaborative		X		X	
Open, safe, accepting	X	X	X	X	X
Supportive teacher				X	
Appreciation of diversity encouraged					X

### Changing Visions

In the course of their student teaching semester, all five student teachers experienced changes in their visions of teaching reading in a culturally diverse classroom. In Hammerness' (1999) terms, their visions in general became *clearer*, especially for Hunter, whose vision was the fuzziest to begin with due to his limited background in reading. They remained relatively narrow in focus, except for Sarah; however, this may be a result of the vision prompt I provided. As the semester progressed, most of the participants commented on including more science or teaching with interdisciplinary units, so their vision statements might have been limited by my specific questions about vision.

Some changes were distinct to each individual, as described in the profile of each student teacher. Some general changes, however, were common to all. From my experience, these are issues that many student teachers come to understand as they teach the entire semester in one classroom. First, they all recognized that time constraints mediate many aspects of reading instruction and the ability to enact their practice in concert with their vision. Second, they all realized or confirmed the need to manage and structure the classroom in order for teaching and learning to take place, although their perceptions of how to accomplish that varied. Third, they all reevaluated some views of reading instruction, learned from university reading professors or their own elementary school teachers, based on their experiences with students, families, the urban district, and especially, their cooperating teachers.

The influence of their cooperating teachers in the context of the diverse classrooms was mentioned most as contributing to their change in thinking about instruction and management. For example, Sarah struggled at times with some highly disruptive students whose actions could send the whole classroom into chaos. She altered her view of using independent paper and pencil activities for times when a change in classroom dynamics was needed:

Sarah – It was actually my co-op who said there are days when students cannot engage in lessons as planned, and it's better to give them independent work, like reviewing what they need to practice. I never thought I would do it, but one day there was an eruption in the classroom, a physical fight actually took place, and there was no way to recover, so with independent work I was able to get them back on track.

Becky - How did you feel about that change?

Sarah – Initially, I was almost embarrassed to write it down [in the weekly reflection]. I was worried that if someone walked in, what are you having them do? I'm not really teaching them anything. But then, I realized, this is the way it has to be today, and I saw it change from the downward spiral. I reminded the students that there are packets if the whole room gets out of hand. I finally felt success and was able to move on, and the next day, lessons went much better.

Likewise, through reflections with his cooperating teacher, Hunter reevaluated his vision of simply reading with students as an instructional program. Sylvia and Joseph learned from their cooperating teachers that their students “couldn’t handle” too much independence. Suzy abandoned her sing-song, very sweet demeanor and learned a straight-forward, more matter-of-fact approach to interacting with her students that she never thought would constitute her style of teaching. Although not always positive, these contextual factors contributed to the changing visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds.

### **Taking Orders and Taking Initiative**

The two male participants provided an interesting contrast in taking orders and taking initiative in teaching reading. Hunter came from a military background and expected discipline and order in the classroom. He also assumed that he would receive explicit instructions about how to teach and expected to closely follow the district guidelines for teaching reading without deviation. His vision was “close-

cloudy” (Hammerness, 1999) and based on superficial aspects of classroom observation. Joseph, who displayed a more independent and rebellious nature, resisted following rules and complained about having to fit his teaching into requirements of the district and his first cooperating teacher. Joseph’s more elaborate vision was clearer but also narrow and more distant. He found it difficult to integrate his vision into classroom practice due to difficulties in maintaining control of his classroom and because he dismissed the need to relate personally with his students. Neither Hunter nor Joseph had requested the urban student teaching placement, and both men came to realize that their success in teaching reading would depend on more organization and structure in the classroom.

### **Growing Confidence**

Both Sylvia and Suzy began student teaching with a lack of self-confidence. Due to the particular contexts of their classrooms, each one experienced growth and development of confidence as a teacher in a different way. Sylvia’s and Suzy’s visions were “close-clear.” Sylvia’s cooperating teacher allowed her the freedom to develop as a reading teacher by encouraging her to make instructional decisions based on the needs of her students. Suzy’s cooperating teacher had a powerful presence in the classroom and expected to be a specific role model for Suzy. However, she was called out of town on family business for more than a week, and due to the scarcity of substitute teachers, Suzy was left to teach on her own much more and sooner than she expected. The changes in vision for these two student teachers came primarily from their experiences of growth as teachers interacting with students in the classroom.



## **Conclusions**

The five student teachers were influenced to become elementary teachers at least in part because of their love of reading. The question prompting these responses was “What made you decide to become an elementary school teacher?” The question was general and did not probe why they wanted to be a reading teacher in particular but rather focused on their initial desire to teach children. It is significant that they equated teaching children with teaching reading. For all of them, their love of reading played a major role in their career decision.

Two initial vision statements (Suzy and Sylvia) were clear, narrow, and close to practice. Hunter’s vision of teaching reading was fuzzier due to his more limited coursework in reading but also narrow and close. Sarah had a clear, broader vision that was perhaps too distant to be attainable at present. The overall roles they envisioned for students, parents, and themselves as teachers were based on a constructivist view attributable to their teacher education coursework. The four reading minors (all but Hunter) had internalized many aspects of reading instruction from their reading courses, including guided, independent, and shared reading, read alouds, and word study with mini-lessons. Those instructional ingredients coupled with the context of a district mandated balanced literacy program created expectations of teaching reading in generally the same manner. However, each student teacher had more- and less-favorite aspects of reading instruction and envisioned making their own choices about the final structure of their classroom reading programs. For all five student teachers, the issue of meeting individual students’ needs was more important

than addressing cultural issues, perhaps because of that emphasis in their reading courses.

The change and development in visions of teaching reading to students of diverse background appear to have been more positive in Sylvia and Suzy, who began with clear visions of teaching reading and invested themselves in the process of learning from their student teaching experiences and applying them in the classroom. Hunter and Joseph both struggled: Hunter because he expected an outside entity to create the order for his classroom, and Joseph, because he resisted following the requirements of the district but was not able to replace them with his own structure. Sarah's vision proved to be very distant, and coupled with pressure from her family to teach in a different environment, she lost some of her optimism about teaching students of diverse backgrounds. The Hammerness (1999) framework was helpful for analyzing the range, focus, and distance of the visions of each student teacher; however, the positive/negative dimension and change-across-time emerged as areas not directly accounted for in the framework. The details of how each participant's vision interacted with his or her practice and the context of student teaching is discussed in Chapter Five.

## **Chapter 5: Intersections among Vision, Practice, and Context**

In the last chapter, I profiled the five student teachers and their background experiences, attitudes, and influences that contributed to a changing vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. Throughout the semester, the participants learned from the intersections of their visions, their actual practice of teaching reading in diverse classrooms, and the contextual framework of student teaching. The focus of this chapter is the description and analysis of those intersections for each student teacher.

For every intersection described here from the perspective of the student teacher, there may be another area of intersection from the perspective of the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, the district administrators, or others. These other areas of intersection may or may not coincide with those of the student teachers, but the perspectives I describe here are those reported by or gleaned from analysis of each of the participants. Whenever possible, I also provide the views of others as confirmation of or contrast to the student teacher's understandings, along with my analysis.

The three elements of vision, practice, and context are used in specifically-defined ways as discussed earlier. To recap, I defined teacher vision as the images and expectations of their own actions, of their students, and of the school setting in which they are placed. These visions, I argued, develop out of the interaction of attitudes and beliefs, previous educational experiences, and intercultural experiences. For student teachers, practice includes the immediate local context that consists of the constraints of being a newcomer in another teacher's classroom and expectations that

lead to action. I defined practice as the student teachers' actions and intentions to create an environment and activities that promote and advance student learning within the immediate context of teaching. The broader contextual framework of student teaching is what I termed context. Drawing from categories that emerged from the data, three areas of context were prominent: the district-mandated balanced literacy program, the influence of the cooperating teacher, and the students and their cultural backgrounds, and these are the contextual issues I highlight.

I begin by reviewing my conception of the relationships among vision, practice, and context. Then I analyze the intersections specific to each individual and address how each student teacher's experiences might reflect the dominance of one of the three elements of vision, practice, or context, and the implications of those models. Later in Chapter Six, cross-case analysis focuses on the major intersections common to all five participants; however, some evidence of those intersections is also found in this chapter as it relates specifically to each student teacher. The three common areas of intersections are classroom management, balanced literacy instruction and the students and their cultures. This chapter illuminates the intersections unique to each participant.

### **Negotiating Among Vision, Practice, and Context**

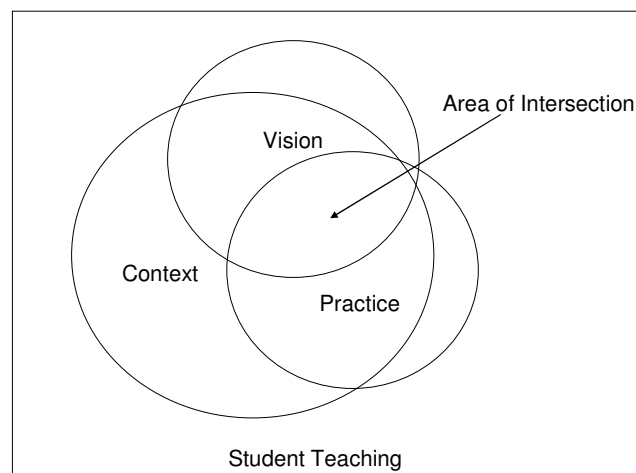
The three elements of vision, practice, and context intersect as a student teacher develops as a reading teacher. Using the model in Chapter One, I described a dynamic view in which vision, practice, and context intersect in various ways to influence the development of the student teachers. At times, one of the elements may

dominate and influence the student teacher's development to a greater degree than the other two elements, and for some, one element was consistently dominant.

***Does Vision, Practice, or Context Drive Teaching?***

Areas of intersection emerged among the three elements throughout the student teaching semester; however, the data suggested that each participant was more or less influenced by each element. Of the five participants, I describe two as vision dominant, two as practice dominant, and one who seemed to draw more evenly from her vision, practice, and context, leaning more than the other participants toward addressing the context of teaching reading and toward culturally responsive teaching. None of the participants was highly context dominant, which is where I believe culturally responsive teaching is found.

***Figure 3. Context dominant: culturally responsive model.***



As shown in Figure 3, the circles representing the three elements overlap, with context encompassing a large area of vision and practice. Context is dominant, indicated by the larger circle. For culturally responsive teachers, the intersection of vision, practice, and context represents a larger area within all three circles identifying the extent to which their visions and teaching practices address the needs of students in their cultures.

Any incident or experience in the classroom may result in an intersection of vision, practice, and context. The size of the circles, the size of the area of intersection, and the relative positions of the circles depend on the relative influences of the three elements at that point in time. For each participant, I have represented a holistic view of their intersections. Not every incident resulted in an intersection in the location displayed, but the graphic representation provides a view of the general location of intersections for each participant.

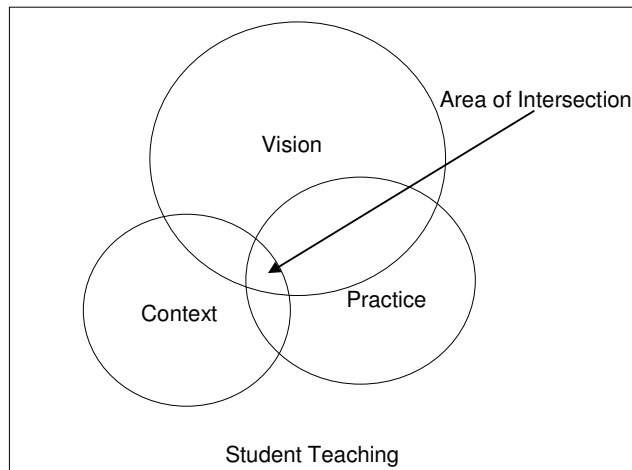
### **Vision Dominant**

Consider vision as a lens with which to view the context and develop practice. A dominant vision provides a view from which inspired teaching can originate and goals can be established, or it might hinder development of practice through the inability to adjust practice to the context of teaching. Joseph, for example, clung to his vision without taking steps to address the context appropriately. Sarah, however, challenged the negative influences she perceived in her teaching context and worked to overcome them, though not always successfully. I describe both Joseph and Sarah as vision dominant.

## Sarah

Sarah's vision was a guiding force in the development of her practice of teaching reading. I characterize Sarah as vision dominant because of her strong vision that led to adaptive practice. Sarah's major intersections of vision, practice, and context centered around the demands of the classroom and her high expectations of connecting with her students.

**Figure 4. Sarah: vision dominant.**



### *Demands of the Classroom*

Sarah's initial vision statement talked about students of diverse backgrounds needing meaningful reading experiences to build on their strengths; however, it also included some evidence of deficit thinking about the students. In our initial interview, she shared this comment about urban teaching. "I do find a sort of calling being in an urban setting because I know that a lot of these children don't have books at home or

don't have people to read to them, and I love to read aloud. I think that's so important" (Interview 1, 2/1/07). She indicated more than once that she was "fighting obstacles" from students' home lives. Her vision of reading instruction, based mainly on teacher education courses, stressed addressing the needs of individual students along with the practicality of grouping:

[My classes emphasized] finding out where students are, in terms of grouping children. For guided reading you can group similar abilities together to meet the needs as much as you can. Knowing that you're only one person and that you can't read with each student, that you have to try to break down the book for each reading group or small group or individual student and have the level of the book that they need. I think it's important to know where each of your students is in terms of their level with reading and to monitor them consistently. (Interview 1, 2/1/07)

Demands of the classroom require adaptive responses. Sarah's vision in many ways intersected positively with the context to the benefit of her developing practice. She connected well with many students and designed engaging interdisciplinary units of study. In some cases, however, the intersection was negative. For example, about ten weeks into student teaching, a new student entered Sarah's classroom. The boy immediately exhibited violent tendencies, left the room without permission, and ignited uproar among other students. For the remainder of the semester, Sarah struggled and seemed to lose some of her optimism:



It was tough to put my vision into action because of the distractions and classroom management. There were a few students who couldn't participate because they really didn't belong in the classroom.... My vision of teaching, which is connecting with each child, suddenly that just wasn't possible. The majority of lessons couldn't go from start to finish because of having to stop because of behavior issues. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

In general, Sarah demonstrated acceptable classroom management, but the demands of a few students disrupting the entire class caused her to adjust her practice. In a conversation about her written reflections, we discussed this issue:

Becky - In your reflection of week 13, you said, 'As the weather gets warmer and students need to be reminded of 'beginning school year' expectations, I changed my negative feelings towards 'busywork' when the class becomes unmanageable to the point that lessons are constantly interrupted.' Tell me more about this.

Sarah – There are days when students can't engage in lessons as planned, and it's better to give them independent work, like reviewing what they need to practice. I never thought I would do it, but one day there was an eruption in the classroom, a physical fight actually took place, and there was no way to recover, so with independent work I was able to get them back on track.

Becky - How did you feel about that change?

Sarah – Initially, I was almost embarrassed to write it down. I was worried that if someone walked in, what are you having them do? I'm not really teaching them anything. But then, I realized, this is the way it has to be today

and I saw it change from the downward spiral. I reminded the students that there are packets if the whole room gets out of hand. I finally felt success and was able to move on, and the next day, lessons went much better. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Sarah's vision interacted negatively with the practice of handing students packets of worksheets, and she reluctantly realized that reaching her ideal might not be possible every day of student teaching. She heeded the advice of her cooperating teacher to the point of changing not only her practice but also her vision of how to respond to the changing demands of the classroom.

### ***High Expectations of Connecting with Students***

Sarah envisioned a strong personal connection between herself and her students and felt she was able to make that happen: "I was able to communicate with my students and have discussions with them in that environment, and that's what I had in my head" (Final Interview, 5/2/07). Her connection with her students was supported by the high-energy atmosphere of her classroom:

The students connected with my idea of teaching. They were interested. There wasn't a day I felt like I was pulling teeth. There really was no apathy in my classroom. The students were vocal and interactive, and the dynamics were good, and it was cool to work with students in that way. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Sarah recognized the need for some aspects of her relationship with her students to change in order for her expectations to be met:

I really learned that students in general, but specifically in urban areas, really want a lot of structure and high expectations, to be challenged, supported and held accountable for their actions. Even though it's easier to pal around with students, they don't want that. They want a teacher who is tough on them, who calls them out when they're out of line, to catch them and be hard because it shows you care about them. I went from an outsider, paling around with them, then I became the teacher, and now I'm playground again. At the beginning I used to get all the love notes, then I was tough on them when I was teaching full time, and now that I'm not teaching anymore, I'm getting love notes like at the beginning. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Sarah's high expectations encountered the demands of the classroom, causing her to reconsider whether she could really teach in an urban classroom. Unsure of her ability to face the challenges, Sarah seemed to be yielding to the pressure from home to find an alternative context:

My attitude about working with the students hasn't changed, but the environment is giving me a more realistic outlook of where I want to teach in the future. I'm now not sure about putting myself in this kind of school environment. I'm not sure where it will lead, but I did interview in this district. I would have to think about it hard if I am offered a job because my parents don't want me to teach in this district. If it's third grade, I probably would. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Sarah's vision proved to be flexible and adaptive through intersections with her practice and teaching context. She learned from the intersections but lost some of her optimism. She accepted that she would need to adjust in order to maintain her vision:

I wish I'd know there would be some days you feel like you can't come back the next day. You feel really unsuccessful, you can't do it, you're frustrated. But that's ok, it's normal, and you need to look at what's working and not working and ask for help. People tell you that, but you can't know it really until you're there. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Sarah's positive intersections among vision, practice, and context outweighed the negative, and in the end, once the stress of student teaching ended, she reevaluated her vision and decided to interview for a position in this urban district.

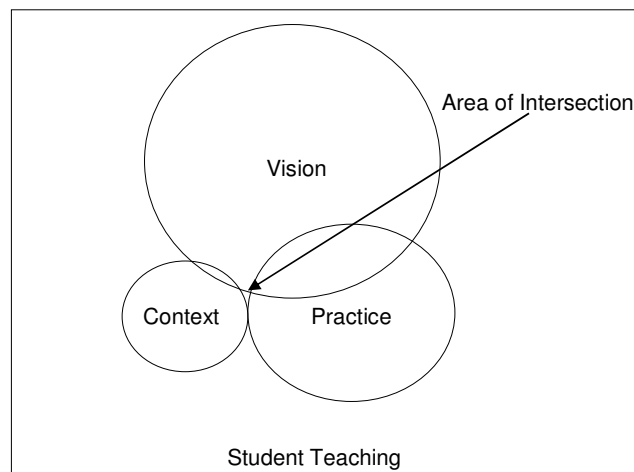
### **Joseph**

Unlike Sarah, Joseph's vision was not flexible or adaptive. His vision was strong and stable across both placements in student teaching. The one major intersection for Joseph centered on his resistance to his role as a learner in the student teaching experience. He exhibited insensitivity to the context and held rigid expectations of students and families.

Much of Joseph's vision of teaching reading originated from his own enjoyment of reading, and he could not perceive that his students might need something more than his anticipation that they should like it, too. He resisted district guidelines, his first cooperating teacher, and the influence of his students'

backgrounds. He saw himself as an “alpha male<sup>21</sup>” with initiative and assumed that was enough to manage a classroom. In student teaching, he resorted to blaming his students rather than taking action to change his vision or his practice to accommodate them. I describe Joseph as vision dominant although the intersections among vision, practice, and context for Joseph were primarily negative. His vision remained strong, and he was able to maintain his ideals by blaming his lack of success on the context of student teaching.

**Figure 5. Joseph: vision dominant.**



### ***Disregarding Families and Students***

Early in the semester, I asked Joseph how the home cultures of students of diverse backgrounds would affect his teaching: “I’d teach them like any other child and teach them the best I know how, but I don’t see that what families are doing at

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<sup>21</sup> In Interview Three (4/3/07), Joseph talked about the challenge of classroom management and his expectation that he could “come in as an alpha male and have the students follow along.”

home will interfere with how I'm going to teach my kids" (Interview 1, 2/4/07).

Clearly, Joseph's vision of teaching reading was not influenced by the context nor did he recognize a possibility for cultural responsiveness. His attitude went beyond colorblindness to rejecting adaptation of his teaching practice based on his students' needs. Although he had espoused ideas of multiculturalism in his initial vision statement, it took the form of "heroes and holidays" coverage. In practice, he exhibited a disregard for home influences and held low expectations of his students. At the end of the semester, Joseph still accepted little responsibility for adapting to the needs of his students: "I learned that students of all ages need structure, and when you deviate from the structure, that's when they get disoriented. Unless everything goes exactly their way, they complain. I think that's just their nature" (Final Interview, 4/27/07).

He put faith in his own experiences to guide his teaching, not recognizing when or if they were appropriate for his students. For example, in Observation One, he began a guided reading lesson on the book *Everest* with five students. Later, I asked Joseph why he had chosen that book, and he responded:

That group needs personal experience and for you to be able to link it to real life. They need the life-to-text connections. I've had a lot of experiences of hiking and climbing and could use myself as a good example and get some really good discussions going. (Interview 2, 4/2/07)

Joseph considered his own prior knowledge rather than the prior knowledge of his students in making life-to-text connections. The next day as I again observed that reading group, the students were having difficulty engaging in the text, and the

discussion turned to a picture of a young man. A girl in the group commented that the man was wearing tight pants, and said, “That so gay! Nobody wear tight pants like that” (Student, Observation 2, 4/3/07). Joseph told her that some men wear tight pants, and that it does not mean they are gay. As she continued to protest, Joseph reprimanded her, saying she was “ethnocentric” for judging someone because what they are wearing is different. As she left the table to look the word up in the dictionary, she muttered, “In *my* household, we think guys who wear tight pants are gay.” Joseph was unable to use the opportunity to discuss differences in attire and why it might be appropriate for a climber to wear more fitted pants. Instead, he challenged the student and rejected not only her opinion but the opinion of her family and missed an opportunity both to teach and to learn something with his students.

Joseph’s second cooperating teacher, Ms. T, gave him great latitude in teaching reading within the district guidelines, but instead of that creating more positive intersections, Joseph blamed his inability to reach his vision on his students:

As much as I wish I could say that my classroom environment is patient and relaxed, the truth is that if I’m not intense, they don’t engage, so I’m a little distraught about that. I want them to think that reading is a good time. Even if it’s something we have to do for requirements, it’s not an un-enjoyable thing.

The kids don’t really seem to get that. It’s the same thing with writing. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Unlike Sarah, Joseph did not reflect on events in his classroom and realize that to change the outcome for his students, he would have to change his strategies. His own personal viewpoint took center stage in any account of motivating students to read:

I didn't know I would have to be really intense with my students to get them to read. Instead, I wanted reading to be a relaxing time. It should be an unwinding time. There's a difference between what the kids accept as fun and what I want them to do. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Joseph's vision of teaching reading not only assumed but also expected that students would react as he did as a student. He was not able to determine what actually motivated the students with whom he was working. Even when he recognized his need to change his classroom management approach, he appeared to view the change as a one-time-fix-all event that would allow his vision to remain unchanged:

Becky – What would need to happen for you to realize your ideal vision of teaching reading?

Joseph – First I have to get my classroom management in line. Once the students are in line, they accomplish a lot. Kids have fun learning. If you're energetic and excited about teaching, for the most part, the kids are going to be excited about learning. In sixth-grade, the kids aren't really excited about anything, but I think that's just an age thing. I could get to my vision if I could just close my door and teach what I want all day everyday. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

He refers to "kids" generically, ignoring their backgrounds and the context in which they learn. Near the end of the semester, Joseph's university supervisor commented,



“He’s working with kids whose background and issues he doesn’t understand, and he floundered” (Interview, 5/1/07).

### *Classroom Structure*

Joseph rejected the highly structured environment of his first cooperating teacher, Ms. B, although he did not reflect on it or inquire why she was adamant about structure in the classroom:

She’s very organized and she doesn’t want to post anything on her walls.

Everything was straight on task every second of the day. I had to stop teaching students to give her the materials when she started doing guided reading with me. If you ask me, if she’s going to do guided reading, she should make her own lessons and not have me try to explain what to do. (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

Joseph lacked the understanding that as the lead teacher, he was responsible for all the planning, just as Ms. B had been during his first few weeks. His narrow vision put his practice into conflict with his cooperating teacher early in the semester. The daily schedule of the literacy block was another negative intersection with Joseph’s vision:

I look at it this way: if it gets boring for me, it’s going to get boring for the students. Having a set schedule everyday works really well in a structured environment; however, I’m not as structured of a teacher that I need to set a schedule everyday. I feel as long as I go through and explain to the students this is what we’re going to do today, this is our schedule, and we’re going to try not to deviate from it too much, we’ll get just as much accomplished that day as we will by having a set schedule everyday. That way we can do creative learning and we can do some fun activities.... I can’t really see that a

reading block necessarily needs to be organized as long as you are doing the typical things. (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

Joseph's vision of teaching the balanced literacy block was in one way, in line with the district administrators' vision.<sup>22</sup> He realized that it might not be necessary to follow a scripted lesson plan; however, Joseph's vision differed in that he made no mention of assessment driving his instruction. Instead, he wanted to make decisions based on his own structure, his personal interpretation of what was appropriate, and what was founded in his own experience.

Although Joseph did not appreciate Ms. B's instructional decisions, classroom organization, or classroom management style, she is a well-respected member of the school community, and Joseph conceded that several parents each year request her for their children.<sup>23</sup> It was clear, however, that Joseph's and Ms. B's visions of practice did not intersect positively, and Joseph's opportunities to learn in her classroom were limited:

Ms. B wouldn't let me fail. She controlled everything so strictly, I couldn't learn from a mistake. I couldn't fail, but if I did, it was my fault because I wasn't doing what I was told. One day she actually yelled and reprimanded me in front of the students, just like she yelled at her students, and that's when my supervisor allowed me to change placements. (Final Interview, 4/27/07).

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Three for highlights of an interview with the urban district's Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction.

<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, after Joseph was reassigned out of Ms. B's classroom, she did not return my calls or e-mail requests for an interview, so I am unable to present her viewpoint.

One week after this incident, Joseph was reassigned to a sixth-grade class in Earl School.

In placement two as in placement one, Joseph failed to communicate with his cooperating teacher to better understand their teaching decisions. For student teaching to function as teacher education, Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) argued that among other things, the student teacher must move toward understanding the central tasks of teaching, strengthen their dispositions and skills to extend and probe student learning, and learn to question what they see, believe and do. For Joseph, the experiences of student teaching lacked substantial education by that definition. The intersection of his vision with the context hindered his practice, and he was unable to benefit from assistance provided by his cooperating teachers or other district professionals. Instead, he viewed intervention as an affront:

I've had the district reading coach come observe me and tell me exactly how I should be teaching. To be a student teacher and have someone other than my supervisor come in and tell me this is what you need to change about your teaching is a lot of pressure. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Joseph retained the attitude that his role in student teaching was to stand his ground against whatever he experienced. He described what he considered his strength as a teacher:

I have a lot of will power. I always thought of myself as a strong person, but I didn't understand how much crap I could take from parents, students, and

other professionals, or I should say un-professionals. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Equating will power with strength as a teacher highlights Joseph's negative intersections among vision, practice, and context, but it also emphasizes the power of his vision to overcome opportunities for reflection and learning. It was not surprising that toward the end of the semester when he became ill and required hospitalization, he lost his desire to continue:

I really feel unmotivated right now, especially after my surgery and having the whole week off. It's going to be hard to get back on the horse, so to speak. If you are not motivated as a teacher, you aren't going to motivate your students. If you don't have any of your own energy, you can't transfer it to your kids. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

For student teachers, vision dominance may be regarded as positive if their visions intersect in ways that allow them to adapt their visions of teaching in a diverse context regardless of its challenges. If, however, the vision is based on an ideal from their apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), or another unrealistic view, the context could block or distort the view and cause the student teacher to perceive the context as overwhelming and unmanageable. In the case of Joseph, his change-resistant vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds made him unresponsive to the context. He chose not to apply for a teaching position in the urban district due to his desire to return to his hometown school district to teach. Unable to

secure a teaching position there, he is now substituting in the urban district where he student taught and unhappy about the situation he is in.

### **Practice Dominant**

Teaching practice is time-sensitive. By that I mean it exists at the point of decision-making as teaching occurs in local context. Practice may become dominant if a teacher reifies specific actions and decisions that discount vision or the context within which they teach. As a drastic example, consider teachers who are described as having not twenty years of experience but one year of experience repeated twenty times. For a student teacher, practice dominance consists of assimilating the structure and instructional practices already in place when they enter the classroom with little influence from their vision and without significantly adapting to the context.

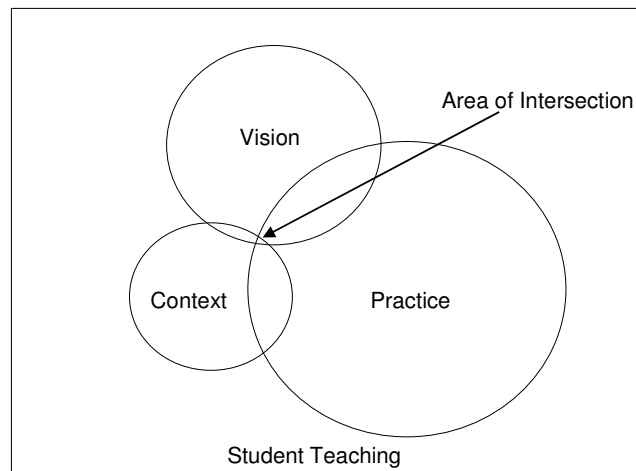
I describe both Hunter and Suzy as practice dominant. Hunter accepted the status quo in his classroom and did not understand until very late in his student teaching semester that he not only had permission but the responsibility to adapt instructional practice to the context. Although Suzy had a clear vision of teaching reading, her lack of confidence hindered the development of her own practice. When she did begin to display her own practice, she considered her students' cultures irrelevant to learning to read. For student teachers as for in-service teachers, practice dominance may not be a desirable model because it can result in de-contextualized teaching.

### **Hunter**

Major intersections of vision, practice, and context for Hunter surrounded

issues of his role as a student teacher, including being unwilling to do the “hard work” of teaching, lack of organization, and limited knowledge and skills for teaching reading.

**Figure 6. Hunter: practice dominant.**



Hunter began his student teaching experience with a cloudy vision of teaching reading. Based on his own enjoyment of reading as a child and his limited reading courses at the university, Hunter viewed teaching reading as a simple process of reading with students. What he first experienced in his student teaching classroom reinforced this notion:

My vision of teaching reading included teaching at the carpet, and I actually did a lot of reading at the carpet. I had a vision of sitting at a chair on the carpet – being able to share with each other, have students talk with the teacher. I think that’s when good learning happens. My co-op teacher was doing this, and I did it in the classroom. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

When his classroom responsibilities increased and his vision was not enough to drive instructional requirements, he had little to draw from except to mimic the practices of his cooperating teacher. Hunter's developing practice overlapped very little with his cloudy vision and the context of student teaching creating a small area of intersection. I characterize Hunter as practice dominant because his vision did not drive his instruction, and he did not engage in issues related to context.

### ***Unprepared to Teach Reading***

Given his lack of background in reading, practice became what Hunter saw in the classroom. However, it was not based on an understanding of the theory underlying his cooperating teacher's practice. Hunter talked about practice in terms of his comfort level with or how much he "liked" an aspect of reading rather than from a comprehensive understanding of student needs. His cooperating teacher's assessment of his understanding of balanced literacy was in line with his vision:

Ms. S – [Hunter is strong in] shared reading. In the beginning he had very little idea about other components of reading instruction. He was not well prepared when he arrived for student teaching. He was really weak in word study and phonics. He needed a lot of modeling and questions answered after the lessons. (Cooperating Teacher Interview, 3/20/07)

Even when Hunter became aware of the value of particular strategies in the balanced literacy program, he was unprepared to embrace the hard work of a teacher: "There's not a big variety of books to choose from. We talked about that the other day. I need to go through the books on her shelves and level them. That's going to take a long time and a lot of hard work" (Interview 1, 2/5/07). He never accomplished that goal

of leveling the books. Hunter admitted his weakness in phonics and liked “the idea of it” but was not pro-active in gaining knowledge:

I don’t remember much of phonics when I was in elementary school. I like the idea of it. I’m still learning how to implement it in the classroom.... There’s a phonics book she reads out of, but I haven’t really looked at it (Interview 1, 2/5/07).

### ***Doing the “Hard Work”***

Hunter’s university supervisor also reported that he complained about having to develop learning centers and changing them throughout the semester, stating that he was not getting paid. He thought it was too much work and expected the cooperating teacher to provide the resources he would need. Hunter was not willing to dig deep and work hard, and as a result, his practice remained quite superficial through most of student teaching.

The school district required on-going reading assessment to gather data about students’ instructional needs, but Hunter was lax about maintaining records. He could articulate the need for running records and other assessments expected by the district, but his lack of organization hindered follow-through. He thought “keeping it in his head” would be enough:

[A good teacher needs] to be observant, able to assess students individually, know their level and what they need. Any teacher can put together a plan, but the most effective way is to focus on each individual’s needs. That’s what we did in my classroom. A lot of the assessment I did was observational. It’s not



necessarily formal assessments, more like anecdotal records. I keep some records, but most of it I have in my head. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

Ms. S, Hunter's cooperating teacher, continued to take running records to assess the students – what “we did in the classroom.” But Hunter followed along, accepting Ms. S's decisions rather than making his own.

### ***Lack of Organization***

Each time I observed Hunter, I requested a lesson plan. What he gave me were scribbled notes on the lesson plan form or plans that had been created the week before but did not correspond to where the students were that day. Ms. S seemed frustrated with his lack of organizational skills and weak reading instruction, as reported in weekly written comments. For example, in the first few weeks her comments focused mainly on his classroom management; however, in weeks six and seven, Ms. S began to focus on Hunter's reading instruction. She described difficulties due to what appeared to her as a lack of thoughtful planning and unclear delivery of instruction and concepts. She also seemed to be trying to “wean” Hunter from relying on her to monitor the class while he worked with one small group. In my observations, I also noticed that Hunter was unable to scan the room and focus on what other students were doing when he was working with a few. Again, his limited range of vision included only the students within his immediate concern.

Hunter's limited vision hindered the development of his own practice. He not only lacked deep knowledge and skills in reading instruction but was unable to engage in teacher decision-making. Hunter perceived limited resources as one cause of his difficulties:

The variety of texts is important but there weren't many culturally diverse texts in our lessons. The curriculum included a few shared reading texts with different cultures, but there was not a big selection. The limited materials and curriculum kept me from doing more. There were some, and we used them when we could, but there weren't many choices that the students could select.

(Final Interview, 5/5/07)

He felt unable to address issues of cultural diversity because of a lack of culturally diverse books in the classroom. He did not envision himself responsible for seeking out additional resources for his students. In the final interview, Hunter again responded to the context with inaction:

Hunter - It was very difficult to contact parents. They're very busy. In the low social levels, some of them have two jobs; rarely does the parent have time. They might be single parents, someone might be in jail. They can't take time to share with the class.

Becky – Did you attempt to contact the parents or approach a parent and were rejected?

Hunter – No, I never really attempted it. There weren't many parents around in the school. You know, in some schools there are those parents that are really energetic and enthusiastic and always want to come in and do things. I know my mother was always doing stuff in my school. Then you have parents that don't show that emotion. I didn't ever have the opportunity to ask a parent to come in and talk about something. The basic limitation was that I was not in touch enough with parents as I should have been or needed to be to

facilitate that kind of activity, but I think it would be a good idea. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

In this case, his vision of parents came with the expectation of the parent rather than the teacher initiating the engagement. His stereotypical assumptions and his reluctance to embrace new activities blocked his approach to parents.

After midterm, Hunter's university supervisor and cooperating teacher became more concerned that he was not following through with their suggestions and were unsure if he would successfully complete student teaching. They scheduled a formal conference with him. According to the teacher and supervisor, they had been suggesting changes from the beginning. The written reflections by Ms. S substantiated their claim; however, Hunter saw it differently:

In a way, I felt I was being roasted, as far as my methods, and I hated it because I had been doing things so long and thought I was doing it the right way. Then, towards the end when I should be taking over to really shine as an educator, they came in and said you need to revamp your whole idea of education and classroom management. For a long time, I was stuck in the whole idea of needing to follow the same methods as my cooperating teacher and follow the curriculum. I was trying to fill someone else's shoes, really. I got to thinking about my philosophy and get away from that strict military idea of education because that was an influence on some of the decisions I made. I had to find my own methods and teaching and put my own personal touch on everything in the classroom. For 11 weeks it was her classroom, and

when I made it mine, that's when I had time to shine. That's the biggest thing from this experience. (Final Interview, 5/5/07).

This realization that he needed to make the classroom his own was a turning point in the development of Hunter's practice. For the last five weeks of the semester, Hunter felt empowered and made progress toward managing the classroom and integrating reading instruction with other subjects. Toward the end of the semester, Hunter's vision was clearer with respect to both classroom management and reading instruction. The powerful intervention by his supervisor and teacher woke Hunter to greater possibilities for his teaching.

Who to blame for Hunter's misconception of his role in student teaching has no simple answer. His background in the military created his expectations of his role as a follower in someone else's classroom. His cooperating teacher may have expected more initiative on Hunter's part. She did provide feedback throughout the semester, which he ignored or was unable to accept and implement. Whatever the cause, Hunter reevaluated his situation and then emerged with renewed motivation:

To make it mine, I had to change some of my ideas, like the military thing and why I wanted to be a teacher, and think about what made me say, 'Hey!

That's the job I want to do. I know I'm not going to be making a lot of money, and I'm going to be working my butt off!' But I had to know why I want to do it. That was a stressful week. I thought, maybe I just want to give up. I'm tired! I'm done! I don't want to do it anymore. I'm not that guy! Maybe I need to be the guy in the field working with soldiers. I thought about that. Why don't I just drop this and go back to what I was used to. But now, I'm so

happy with the end of my experience! It was the best experience ever. It changed my ways and changed my attitudes. I had to go back and think about why I am in the military. I'm in the military just so I could pay for college to be a teacher. This is where I want to be. I was so mad at my supervisor when she had those meetings and told me what I was doing wrong. I didn't want to hear that, but look at me now. I'm really appreciative for that now. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

For Hunter, it took a clarification of his overall vision of himself as a teacher to begin to learn from student teaching, but it was almost too late. Perhaps with more time he might have begun to address the context, but the semester ended with that question unanswered. The university allowed Hunter to student teach without having taken many courses that would have better prepared him. He made his case for student teaching early based on the premise that he would be deployed in the military in the fall; however, that has not occurred. Hunter graduated in August and at the end of a three-week military obligation applied for a teaching position in his rural hometown school district.

### **Suzy**

For Suzy, three main areas created intersections among vision, practice, and context: 1) the classroom roles of student teacher and cooperating teacher, 2) district requirements and school procedures, and 3) meeting needs of English Language Learners. I characterize Suzy as practice dominant; however, she was not as strongly practice dominant as Hunter. Her vision was located closer to practice than to the context. Because her reading background was strong and committed to meeting

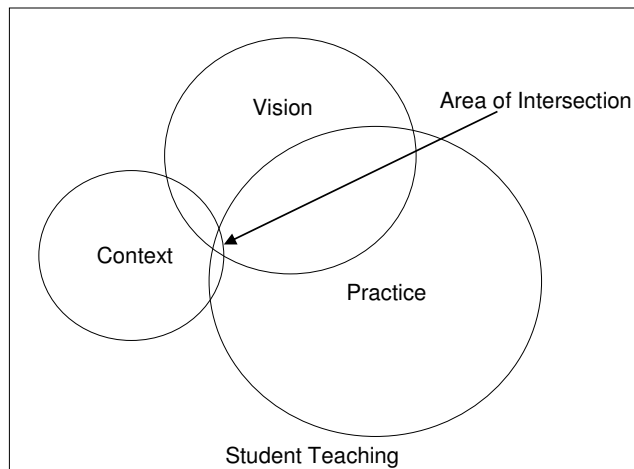
individual needs, she struggled with the issue of students' language and cultural backgrounds.

### ***Gaining Confidence in her Role***

Ms. Y, Suzy's cooperating teacher, had a commanding presence in the classroom, making it difficult for Suzy to find her own practice. Suzy anticipated her role:

When I first met her [Ms. Y], the principal told me she was one of the best teachers in the district for balanced literacy, and teaching reading with her and watching her model for me, I feel like I'm getting better. (Interview 1, 2/8/07)

**Figure 7. Suzy: practice dominant.**



Immediately, her expectation was to follow the lead of her cooperating teacher. Her vision regarding her delivery style and role in the classroom receded, and she adopted Ms. Y's style and delivery of instruction:

Becky – Where did you learn your very direct style of giving directions to students?

Suzy – From my co-op. I don't really notice that I do it or that there's any other way now that I'm giving directions. I think I tried different ways, like, 'please do this,' and nothing happened, so I had to change my approach. I think they are used to loud voices and directions, so that's what I do, but now it seems sometimes like I'm yelling at them all day long! That's just not like me! (Interview 3, 3/27/07)

I did not observe Suzy yell at her students in what I would consider an angry voice, but she did use a firm, loud voice to give explicit instructions and direct commands. Delpit (1995) suggested that African American students may prefer or be used to a firm, direct authority style. Perhaps Ms. Y understood that and Suzy did not, or perhaps Ms. Y simply learned what worked in her classroom without being able to articulate the reason. Suzy learned that a firm, direct style was effective, but she did not perceive it as her own style.

Suzy recognized the needs of her students but did not feel empowered to expand beyond her teacher's practice. When asked if she wanted to implement any strategy that Ms. Y did not allow, Suzy responded,

From my co-op, I don't see any limits, but she has a very strong personality, and sometimes I feel uncomfortable trying new things. I guess that's just me,

but everything seems well established, and I don't want to upset the balance.

(Interview 3, 3/27/07)

Her vision was overshadowed by the established structure in the classroom over which Suzy felt she had no control. A few weeks later when Ms. Y was away for a week, Suzy was able to enact her own practice:

I saw a huge shift when my co-op was gone for a week. It was like the puzzle finally came together. There were always one or two students who riled them all up, but that week, they had to depend on me. There was no one else there, and our community without my co-op really came together. It took until week 10, but then it all came together. As soon as they let their guard down to let me teach them, then it all started to work.... I never thought I'd be the kind of teacher I am now – loud and really in it. I never expected to have the confidence to be so driven to just get it done. When I first got in there and saw my teacher, I thought, oh, no, I'm not like that! I like the change, but in my own classroom, I think it will mellow out a bit. My co-op will not be there, so in my own classroom I'll start out fresh. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Suzy's own practice emerged, but she attributed it more to emulating her cooperating teacher than to her own vision. Once she became comfortable with classroom management, she was able to draw more on her vision:

Something my teacher doesn't do that I want to do is to always be reading a chapter book – I want a higher level text going all the time. I think it's important to hold high standards so they keep moving up - not just working on their comfort level – just keep driving level. I don't want them to be



uncomfortable, but just to keep them working and giving them a challenge.

(Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Ms. Y confirmed Suzy's growing practice through comments about her attention to higher-level engagement with text:

I like that she picks higher level books. Most of my previous student teachers always picked low level books for first graders. She chooses higher level books and because they are longer, she breaks them into days. She is very good at keeping all the students at a high level of engagement with text. She uses turn and talk, graphic organizers, and ties shared reading and read-aloud with writing. She is not afraid to spend several day on a book, and at the end of the week, those kids understand that book, even if it's above their instructional reading level. (Cooperating Teacher Interview, 3/2/07)

### ***District and School Rules***

Another area of intersection for Suzy was the constraint she felt by the balanced literacy program requirements. She expressed feeling "a little nervous to do everything I wanted to do because of district guidelines." She perceived the guidelines as rigid and deferred to Ms. Y's example of sticking closely to district-provided texts. She discussed the week she was left alone in the classroom when Ms. Y went out of town and she assumed full responsibility in the classroom:

It [the balanced literacy program] was a lot more structured than I expected. There wasn't a lot of choice. I followed the *Text Talk* and *Making Meaning* books for read-alouds in that week, and shared reading was from *Break Though to Literacy*, and I did those books that week. I felt a lot of freedom

taken from teachers, like if they gave us a lesson plan, you had to give it to the kids. It wasn't ideas you came up with yourself. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Ms. Y was a member of a district-wide committee for the balanced literacy program and shared district plans with Suzy. Suzy's understanding of the district requirements, like most student teachers, was filtered through the perceptions of her cooperating teacher. Ms. Y reported district plans that conflicted with the vision of balanced literacy the assistant superintendent expressed to me. Suzy relayed her view of the information:

According to my teacher who is on a district curriculum committee, next year there's going to be even more structure because they're required to do it for the grant money that funds the reading program. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Based on my interview with the assistant superintendent, the committee was indeed developing a guidebook for the balanced literacy program; however, it was designed to provide structure for those teachers desiring more guidance and to demonstrate that the district was following the required guidelines for funding. In practice, however, the assistant superintendent expressed her hope that teachers would pick and choose from among the materials provided based on student assessments. It is unclear whether the assistant superintendent conveyed that vision to teachers or whether Ms. Y did not receive that message in the meetings.

Another issue for Suzy was being interrupted during instruction. In my previous work at Walters School, where Suzy was student teaching, I sometimes called to leave a message for a teacher and was surprised to be connected directly to

the classroom. Suzy experienced this school practice of phone interruptions, which I observed. One day during my observation, her teaching was interrupted by several phone calls from the office. I asked how often that occurred.

Suzy – A lot! It’s really frustrating because they call when they know there’s no substitute and I’m the only one there, and they call about a little thing like a jacket, and that could wait! It’s really frustrating because we get a lot of calls! (Interview 2, 3/26/07)

The contradiction between requiring a 90-minute literacy block during specified times and the lack of protection of that time from office interruptions was apparently lost on school office staff.

### ***English Language Learners***

Of the five participants Suzy taught the most English Language Learners with the greatest variety of home languages: Vietnamese, Laotian, Korean, and Spanish. She expressed concern in the first interview.

I knew it would be hard, but I had no idea where to go with it. I’m not Spanish-speaking, and I don’t have any bilingual ability, so I was really nervous. It’s been through this experience that I’ve learned to basically survive. I don’t know if it’s necessarily successful, but I try and help as much as possible. It’s a challenge! (Interview 1, 2/8/07)

Her expectation of English Language Learners was different from reality in the classroom:

The students were higher than my expectations. I thought they were going to be coming in from horrible families with parents that didn’t care at all, and I’d

have to start from scratch. I think some families were a lot more supportive than I had anticipated, and some play a key role in education. Others I didn't see at all, and I expected that - no parent involvement. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Rather than changing her vision, Suzy's expectation of no parent involvement was reinforced because some parents did not participate. Instead of changing her view, she looked on them as exceptions to the rule. Suzy also assumed that parents and students were not proud of their heritage language because the parents encouraged their children to speak English at school.

They don't talk about it. I think their parents drive it into them, especially the language. They're not allowed to speak their language at school, especially the Lao and Vietnamese kids. They're not proud of it, and I think it's because of their parents.

Min (2004) reported that some Asian American parents place great emphasis on their children's education because they recognize the social barriers they will face without a command of the English language. Other studies also reported by Min (2004) indicated that some second-generation Asian Americans felt shame and tried to downplay their ethnic cultures. Suzy's assumptions led to her conclusion that culture was not important in her first-grade classroom:

Suzy – They really focused in our classes in college that native backgrounds and tapping into where they came from were really important. I think it is important but not relevant. The students don't talk about it in first grade. They're all learning the same things, and bringing another culture in – I don't

think it would be helpful. Maybe bringing in a culture for a topic would be good, but they don't notice they are different. I was thinking before that if the students felt uncomfortable about being of a different background, I could address it, but at least in first grade, it doesn't seem to be relevant. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

I find it ironic that the teacher education program was credited with making cultural responsiveness important, but the context of a culturally diverse first-grade classroom negated that concern for Suzy. This seems to suggest that preconceptions were at work in Suzy's vision and influenced her practice. Through the semester, Suzy developed her practice and succeeded in implementing many of the aspects of reading instruction she knew to be valuable; however, she remained distanced from the cultures of her students. Suzy is planning to teach in the urban district and has interviewed for the school in which she student taught.

### **Context Dominant**

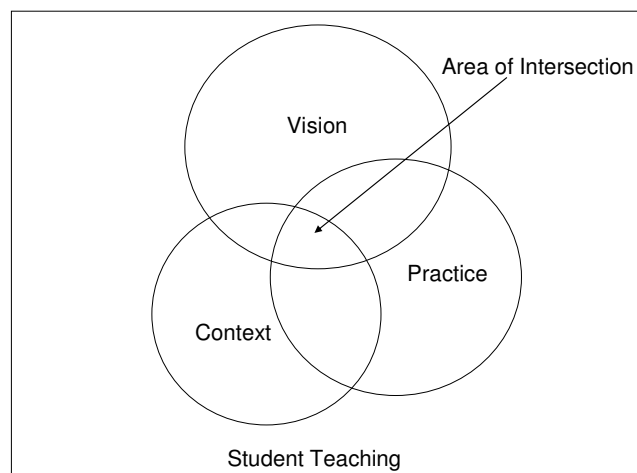
Context includes many aspects of the school and students surrounding classroom teaching. In this study, the major areas of context that emerged as intersections with vision and practice are classroom management, balanced literacy instruction, and students' cultures. For a student teacher to be context dominant, her vision and practice must be closely connected to the context. One positive result of context dominance is culturally responsive teaching; however, culturally responsive teaching requires more than attention to the context. It requires the alignment of vision and practice with the consideration of students' cultures and how they influence the ways learning takes place. Only one of the five participants drew more

evenly from vision, practice, and context in her teaching, and although I cannot characterize Sylvia as context dominant, she did address the context more than the others even though issues of race and culture were uncomfortable for her.

### **Sylvia**

Sylvia showed a great deal of learning in the course of student teaching. She acknowledged her vision but willingly changed her vision and adapted her practice to the context even though she sometimes did not have sufficient information to make it culturally responsive. Areas of intersection for Sylvia included 1) her changing expectations of students, parents and herself, and 2) her connections with students that intensified her commitment to accommodating her students' needs. Intersections for Sylvia tended to be positive in nature due to her willingness to adapt.

***Figure 8. Sylvia: balanced vision, practice, and context.***



### *Expectations of Students, Parents and Self*

In her fifth-grade student teaching classroom, Sylvia encountered students different from what she expected:

When I started, I had a pretty stereo-typical idea of urban students: They didn't listen, they didn't care, and they didn't want to be there. But my kids are not like that. They get very upset when they don't do well, and they do care about learning. That really surprised me. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

She admitted her low expectations of both her students and their parents' involvement in their education, but unlike Suzy who saw the difference as an exception to the rule, Sylvia accepted her erroneous assumption:

Sylvia – When I first came in, I didn't have very high expectations at all. My expectations have gotten much higher for my students. I also didn't think they cared about school and didn't want to be there. But they do want to be there and make something of themselves. As far as parent involvement, I always thought their parents didn't get involved, but a lot of my students' parents want to be involved. They want to know about their children's progress and behavior. I recently sent home my first set of progress reports, and a lot of parents wrote me back with comments like, 'you can contact me anytime if these problems continue,' or asking for daily contact sheets or letters back for updates. I have set up daily contact sheet with two parents.

Becky – How did you learn the students care about school?

Sylvia - The kids tell me they are concerned about grades. When they don't do well, they ask for extra credit. They have big dreams. (Interview 2, 3/19/07)

Like Joseph, Sylvia was placed in a school with a high percentage of students from families on welfare and in subsidized housing. Sylvia's attitude towards parents, however, was very different, and was reflected in her openness to parents. Part of her expectation for herself was "to find out what parents expect of me and for me to give my expectations of how they can help at home" (Interview 1, 2/4/07).

In addition to recognizing that her students were genuinely concerned about education, Sylvia also raised her expectations of reading instruction:

I thought all students in urban settings were lower, but they're not. My highest group is two grade levels above fifth grade. That definitely changed my ideas.

I'm impressed how well they do relate to the books and have adult conversations about their books. (Interview 2, 3/19/07)

By remaining open to possibilities other than her preconceived notions, Sylvia adapted to the teaching environment and learned from her experience.

I thought good teaching was if your class is quiet and your class does good work. My class is not always quiet but they still learn well in that environment. Kids don't always have to be sitting down doing work. They can be up and moving and they're still learning. It was a big eye-opener!

(Interview 2, 3/19/07)

Sylvia talked about her vision of creating a classroom environment:

[I envision] an open, accepting environment, that it's OK not to be the same, where they'll feel safe being who they are. A lot of that depends on the teacher. The teacher has to be open and accepting to their environment



because if I'm not, how can I expect my students to do that? (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

In the classroom, she began to take responsibility for the morning activities with the class. She was quick to identify a need and adapt her practice:

[The] students greet each other the same way everyday, and they told me they're bored of greeting each other the same way....I'm going to start that next week and have them greet each other in a different language each week. Then we'll play an activity game just to get their minds going. (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

### ***Connecting with Students***

Sylvia felt a growing connection to her students, which was confirmed by her cooperating teacher, Ms. R, and which she credited with improved classroom management. Sylvia quickly developed a rapport with her students, evident early in the semester:

My first literature circle didn't go very well, and my kids could tell I was upset. They felt bad for me, and they said, 'Ms. [C], we'll do better! This is going to work!' They knew I was just starting out, and they were my cheerleaders. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

The relationship Sylvia was building with her students was somewhat of a surprise to her, and she was not always sure of why things were working for her, but the result was positive.

I didn't see myself connecting with my students as much as I have. Because I am from the country and they're from the city, I thought it would be very hard

to connect to them. There are still some things that are hard for me to imagine. Some of the things they know, I know I didn't know in the fifth grade. I don't know if it's cultural or just time and age differences. The confidence I have in the classroom has been greater than I expected. I really surprised myself with how much classroom management I really do have. (Interview 3, 3/22/07)

Late in the semester, she took initiative based on what she had learned about parents, stating, "In the past few weeks since behavior has deteriorated, I've made a bunch of calls home, and they started bringing in their assignments, so I know the parents will support me if I contact them" (Final Interview, 4/30/07). Sylvia was also open to interdisciplinary teaching using books tailored to her students' interests and needs:

Sylvia - We will have reading groups for social studies. I choose for the lowest group, a book about Harriett Tubman and the Underground Railroad; the middle group will read *Who Came with Cannons?* It's about a family who takes in a slave girl. They're part of the Underground Railroad. The family's little girl and the slave girl become good friends. I haven't chosen the last one for the upper level.

Becky – How did you come up with those particular choices for social studies?

Sylvia - I based them on the groups' interest and reading ability. The lowest group is really into fighting and feelings, so their book is about the Underground Railroad and what it felt like to go through that. My middle

group is mostly girls. They're interested in friendship, working together as a team and relationships, and so I picked the story about that. (Interview 2, 3/19/07)

Sylvia's vision intersected positively with her practice and the context as she connected with and adapted to her students' needs. Although she could not articulate that the bond she had forged with her students was moving her toward culturally responsive teaching, her instincts were good. She was gaining credibility in the classroom, but she lacked knowledge about how to incorporate students' culture appropriately into her reading instruction. Issues of race made her uncomfortable, but she was willing to allow her "cross-border connections" to be her catalyst for growth (Howard, 2006):

At first I was really uncomfortable because I'm the minority and I've never been the minority in my life, so it was very hard for me at first. But now I use it as a teaching opportunity. If it is a culture thing, I point out the differences and use the multicultural aspect of it and try to teach them about culture from it. It's not always easy, and they're very protective of their race – defensive, maybe. My co-op was teaching while I was still observing, and she read a book about the Negro minor league in baseball. They started asking why they had to have a minor league, why couldn't they have a major league or all be together. It wasn't right! For them, they were living today's life, so they didn't understand. (Interview 3, 3/22/07)

Sylvia's cooperating teacher was open with the students about issues of race, and Sylvia followed her lead; however, because of Sylvia's lack of previous intercultural

experiences or clear understanding of how students of diverse backgrounds might understand particular issues, her choices were not always culturally responsive:

Sylvia - For three weeks we did study the Underground Railroad, what the abolitionists did, and what it was like to be a slave. I didn't plan on spending so much time on slavery. When I redid the unit without the packets, from their reactions to what we had done so far, I saw how much they were into studying about slavery, I decided to go that way. It surprised me because I thought they wouldn't want to talk about it, but it was the complete opposite. I was really afraid of teaching the slavery part of the Civil War because I thought they were going to have negative reactions, but they just questioned why.

Becky – Did they get upset during the slavery lessons?

Sylvia – They questioned why African Americans were chosen as slaves. We talked about minorities, and they had a hard time with that concept because where they live, they're not a minority. And when I grew up I wasn't a minority, but now I am, so I had that connection with them. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

Sylvia's lack of knowledge of culturally responsive teaching left her vulnerable to projecting her own cultural understandings on her students. She was successful in making connections with her students and was open to engaging on a cultural level, but had not yet reached that "something more" necessary for culturally responsive teaching:

In week 11, I started my Civil War unit. My students weren't into it like I thought they were going to be. I was surprised because it's a big part of their

history. They have to be excited about their learning and have to be interacting with each other and with me to understand the concepts. I think I accomplished being able to engage most students. I know I'm not going to have all 16 engaged all day long, but I do feel that I've grown a lot in that. My co-op supported me by reflecting with me. I expressed to her a lot that I was concerned that my students weren't engaged. She said she didn't see it. She thought I was doing fine. Even when my supervisor read my reflections she told me she didn't see a problem either, but the kids are honest and open, and they tell me when they're bored, and they're the true ones I need to listen to.

(Final Interview, 4/30/07)

These comments suggest that Sylvia held herself to a high standard and recognized her limitations:

Growing up in school, posters were all White kids. It was very rare to see different cultures. I wish I'd had more intercultural experience. The world *is* diverse. All kids need to know that.... I'm at the point now that I know what I want to teach and how I want to teach it, but I need to get to the point where I know what I'm teaching but that the kids are maybe going to change that. I haven't gotten there yet. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

Her cooperating teacher and university supervisor agreed that she was on target as a student teacher, but whether she could articulate it or not, Sylvia seemed to sense the need for "something more."

As her student teaching experiences unfolded, Sylvia's confidence grew, and her vision and practice changed. She saw the possibilities for her students'

achievement in ways she did not recognize at the beginning of the semester. Because her students' reading levels, concern for education and parent involvement surpassed her expectations, it was easier for her to reevaluate her prior attitudes and beliefs about teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. Whether she would have made similar advances in another classroom is an unanswered question, but I suggest that her balanced influence of vision, practice, and context contributed to her ability to adapt, and she would have succeeded.

### **Conclusions**

To answer the research question, "What are the intersections of vision, practice, and context in student teacher development as reading teachers for students of diverse backgrounds?" I have divided my analytical chapters between individual intersections in Chapter Five and cross-case intersections in Chapter Six. The individual intersections reported in this chapter consist of categories that seem connected to the personal characteristics of each participant.

Sarah experienced intersections related to the demands of the classroom and her own high expectations of building connections with her students. She displayed high energy, was action-oriented and maintained a commitment to high standards in everything she attempted. These high standards created a tension in the intersections of her vision, practice, and context. Sarah was able to overcome the negative influences and regain her vision. Joseph, in contrast, resisted authority and blamed others when he did not succeed. His intersections created tensions between his views of students and families, classroom structure, and the realities of his student teaching

placements. Joseph's inability to change his vision or his practice to address the context created tensions resulting in negative outcomes.

Hunter also experienced negative outcomes until the intervention by his university supervisor realigned his vision with what was expected of a student teacher. His intersections stemmed from being unprepared to teach reading and unwilling to put in the effort necessary to accomplish his task. Suzy, whose intersections surrounded her role expectations, school policy, and English language learners, grew in confidence, resulting in strong reading instruction, but she consistently ignored the context. Instead, she maintained her colorblind pedagogy while seeking to meet individual needs without regard to culture.

Of the five, Sylvia's intersections created the greatest growth toward responding to the culture of the students while maintaining her vision and developing her practice. She was willing to reflect and change based on the needs of her students. Although issues of attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions have been addressed in the research literature on preservice teachers, the findings in this chapter suggest that more understanding of preservice teachers' personal characteristics might contribute to better preparation of teachers.

Experiences by themselves do not create meaning (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Each student teacher created meaning from his/her classroom experiences. They learned in different ways, some of which resulted in positive outcomes and some of which were more negative. How they responded to the intersections of vision, practice, and context seems related to their personal characteristics. Hammerness (2006) spoke of the "dark side" of vision, which can blind one to reality, create

disillusionment, or be culturally biased or exclusionary. Joseph's vision in particular created tension because of his cultural bias and expectations of students that were based on his own experience from a low-income family. The conceptual framework developed for this dissertation goes beyond the dimensions of focus, range, and distance articulated by Hammerness (1999). Looking at intersections allows for consideration of the positive/negative dimension of vision for an individual. Blanton and colleagues, (Blanton, Shook, Hocutt, Medina, & Schumm, 2006) argued that a teacher's professional identity ( in which I believe teacher vision plays a role) begins with "engagement with the struggles of contentious practices in local settings" (p. 104), suggesting that the intersections of vision, practice, and context constitute a location of learning. That learning can result in positive or negative outcomes, such as exemplified by Sylvia and Joseph.

Except for Hunter whose reading background was weak, the participants began student teaching with similar visions of teaching reading. There were some differences in their previous intercultural experiences, but generally they came from similar backgrounds of upbringing and education. Each participant, however, completed student teaching with a unique understanding of what it means to be a reading teacher for students of diverse backgrounds. Common intersections occurred in the areas of classroom management, teaching balanced literacy, and the students' cultures. A cross-case analysis of these intersections is discussed in Chapter Six.



## **Chapter 6: Negotiating Intersections: Did Culturally Responsive Teaching Emerge?**

Chapter Six presents a cross-case analysis of classroom practices and their intersections with vision and context, emphasizing the issue of culturally responsive teaching as it did and did not develop through the intersections for the five student teachers. This chapter begins with a discussion of the three areas of intersection and concludes with findings related to culturally responsive teaching strategies.

Throughout the student teaching semester, several broad intersections of vision, practice, and context emerged from the data for all five participants. The areas of classroom management, teaching balanced literacy, and the students' cultures appeared as major intersections across the five case studies. In this section I present examples of how the student teachers negotiated issues of managing and structuring their classrooms and how their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds intersected with the district-mandated balanced literacy program. I conclude this section with the complex picture of how the student teachers thought about their students' cultures.

### **Classroom Management**

Classroom management tends to be a concern for many student teachers. According to LePage, P., Darling-Hammond, L., Akar, H., Gutierrez, C., Jenkins-Gunn, E., & Rosebrock (2005), teacher candidates historically have considered classroom management a crucial topic in their teacher preparation. The five participants all experienced intersections involving classroom management; however, classroom management was absent from their initial vision statements. They may not

have considered classroom management an integral part of teaching practice in reading as they articulated their visions. Other than Sylvia, who mentioned that she would have rules posted, none of the participants described how he or she would handle classroom management. In the midst of student teaching, however, they experienced frustrations, tensions, and learning about structuring and managing reading instruction. The student teachers wrestled with 1) aligning their practice to address student behaviors they did not envision, and 2) understanding the level of structure and organization required to maintain a classroom environment conducive to learning.

### ***Aligning Practice to Address Student Behavior***

Visions of classroom management seemed to develop with teaching practice. Although the student teachers reported strategies they had learned for managing a classroom, the adaptive response needed in various situations posed a challenge. For example, Sylvia realized her feelings of frustration were unproductive in managing student behavior:

I did have some struggles with classroom management the first couple of weeks. I realize my weakness is I get frustrated very easily with student behavior. I see myself getting frustrated and then they play off it. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

Sylvia's comment represents ideas she and Sarah held in common. First, they both felt frustration with student behavior but took responsibility for managing their challenges. They expected to adapt their practice to address the problem and after a few weeks, they had both made adjustments resulting in better management. For

example, Sarah talked about making a distinction between productive student conversations and student conversations that distracted from learning. She wanted to be sure she was allowing productive student talk while limiting unproductive student talk:

I do like them to get excited, so you have to find a happy medium so they have that – so they do get excited and share their ideas because I do think that’s the way they learn the best....The biggest thing is for them to get excited and speak and share, but then they have to get back on task.

(Interview 2, 2/2/07)

Sylvia recognized that her desire for a completely quiet classroom was not necessarily required for learning to take place: “My class is not always quiet but they still learn well in that environment. Kids don’t always have to be sitting down doing work. They can be up and moving and they’re still learning” (Interview 2, 3/19/07). Both Sarah and Sylvia recognized that their visions of a silent classroom were not necessarily in line with the best instructional environment for their students.

Suzy and Hunter also learned to adapt to better manage their classrooms, but it took more of the semester to accomplish their goal. Suzy learned that engaging her students more in learning could limit disruptive behavior:

Some of them [students] that were fighting me so much seemed to give up and got engaged. I tried to make them more interested so that maybe they’d give me a break. I think that’s how I got the confidence - by winning over the big distracters in the classroom. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

This example highlights the interdependence of classroom management with instruction. Suzy expanded her attention to engaging students in learning and made better connections with her students. She gained teaching confidence from better management.

Hunter's management strategies were less related to instruction. He tended to address issues of classroom management and instruction individually rather than seeing how they intersected. For example, his response for gaining control when students were disruptive was to send them out of the classroom:

I decided it was time to have a buddy teacher that teaches kindergarten. The students didn't want to go, but when they got to level 4, they had to go to her room....I have to be strict with management and make sure every child understands the goals. You can't leave the door open or that's when you lose it. If students are able to get away with pushing your buttons, that's when you have the most problems. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

Hunter continued to view classroom management from the perspective of controlling behavior. He had a somewhat compartmentalized view of teaching making it more difficult for him to see the connection between classroom management and instruction.

Joseph had the most difficulty in managing student behavior because he was the most resistant to building personal relationships with his students and because his cooperating teachers maintained a controlling presence in their classrooms. He placed the responsibility of engagement on his students: "I didn't know I would have to be really intense with my students to get them to read. Instead, I wanted reading to be a

relaxing time” (Final Interview, 4/27/07). He had trouble engaging his students and had no clear strategy for improvement: “First I have to get my classroom management in line. Once the students are in line, they accomplish a lot” (Final Interview, 4/27/07). Joseph’s comments suggest that he expected classroom management to occur with little effort on his part. He displayed the same kinds of frustration reported by Sarah and Sylvia, but he was less successful at adapting his responses by changing his own vision and practice.

### ***Structure, Routines, and Organization***

The necessity of classroom structure and the effort necessary to create and manage classroom routines created tension for all five student teachers as well, but was most clearly articulated by Sarah, Joseph and Hunter:

Sarah – I never thought routines were effective until I was in an urban placement...when the routines are not in place, the kids are out of whack.  
(Interview 1, 2/1/07)

Joseph – I strive for organization. That’s one of the things I’ve been working on. I have sort of a chaotic organization going on. I know where things are, but that’s not enough. I need to have everything set up, have an exact order of where they’re going and giving clear expectations. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Hunter - The biggest problem at the beginning was how hard it is to move from the carpet to their seats or moving from one lesson to the next...Most of my management problems came during transitions. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

The student teachers came to understand what LePage and colleagues (2005) have argued: that good intellectual work requires skillful classroom management. Hunter provides a clear example of how important classroom structure and organization are to good instruction. Hunter's initial vision of teaching reading focused on the interest and enjoyment of his students; however, that vision was constrained in student teaching due to his difficulty with structuring learning for his students. On the three days I observed Hunter, he provided independent workshop activities (centers) for his students; however, he did not teach the students how to use them. He relied on the cooperating teacher's literacy block structure, but he did not explicitly teach his center activities, and the students floundered. For example, during Observation One, three boys sat in a group. Their task was to read a Reader's Theater rendition of Margaret Wise Brown's "Little Black Bug," while Hunter worked with a guided reading group. The boys asked each other what they were supposed to do, and then they chatted for a few minutes without reading. Hunter did not acknowledge the boys, but the cooperating teacher, Ms. S got up from her desk to give them directions. She sat with them to guide them through the reading. Later in my interview with Ms. S, I asked her what Hunter's greatest weakness was as a reading teacher. Her comment was, "Management of the students ....They need more modeling and direct instruction" (Interview, 3/30/07).

As they learned to teach reading, the student teachers also learned the importance of routines, planning, and organization within and between instructional activities. Their successful reading instruction hinged on their ability to plan and manage a well-structured environment so that teaching and learning could take place.

Suzy recognized that her ability to teach reading was closely connected to classroom management. Halfway through the semester, she commented on her growth in this area:

Suzy – For a while, my lessons were good, but I had a lot of interference from weak classroom management. Finally, I feel like my classroom management is good enough, confident enough so my instruction can come through now. It's amazing how once you get that, it all works so much better! It was tough for a while. (Interview 2, 3/26/07)

Sylvia was able to go beyond simple management to a more nuanced understanding of classroom management that included choosing activities appropriate for her students:

You have to be organized. It's important because our kids get off task so easy, you have to know what you're going to do when and have papers there in order. That's definitely the biggest thing. You also have to have back up plans for your back up plans. It's also important not only knowing your students' levels but also their strengths and weaknesses. Some students thrive on being challenged and others shut down, and you have to know that about each student. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

### ***Developing Visions of Classroom Management into Practice***

Each cooperating teacher maintained her distinct management style, which the student teachers absorbed upon entering the classroom practice; however, they found they could not rely on their cooperating teacher's classroom management once they

began teaching full time. The student teachers negotiated their own practice by finding their personal visions of classroom management, which was not always easy to put into practice:

Sarah - You need to know specific techniques and how to organize things from day one and not give up on classroom management. That's something in student teaching that's tricky. You tend to adopt whatever your co-op already has in place. I think I would have been more successful if I had used my own system, but it's hard to do so as a student teacher. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Joseph recognized his limitation but had trouble articulating concrete ideas of how to improve. He commented instead on his lack of preparation:

Joseph - I'm still coming out as reactionary. I wish I had learned to be more pro-active before I got into student teaching instead of getting out there and having to learn it. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Suzy continued to confirm that instruction is directly tied to classroom management:

Suzy - teaching and learning can't just happen. Until you have the class managed, it's frustrating, and even if they learned some things, you can't get done everything you want to without it. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Sylvia commented several times that her cooperating teacher, Ms. R yelled at students, but had personal relationships with her students, which seemed contradictory:

Sylvia – My cooperating teacher yells a lot. It gets their attention, and it works, but she really doesn't have any classroom management routines.... I would like to get the respect she has, and I think that starts with me getting to



know the kids before they become my students, like she does. (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

Delpit (2005) reported that in many African American communities, a teacher is expected to show their care of students by controlling the class with personal power and building meaningful relationships with individuals. From my observations, Ms. R did use a loud, sometimes sarcastic tone with students; however, she did not appear mean-spirited, and the students seemed to respect her. According to Sylvia, Ms. R interacted in the hallways and cafeteria with younger students in an effort to get to know them personally before they entered her fifth-grade class. Sylvia seemed to internalize the desire to learn about students early as a way of beginning to build relationships. This example may be one way Ms. R modeled cultural responsiveness for Sylvia.

Late in the semester, Hunter set about to improve his classroom structure through behavior management:

Hunter - About the end of March, I couldn't do my teacher's management plan because if a student got a three [level at which child receives detention], I couldn't follow through because my co-op said, 'I don't give detentions.' It wasn't what I expected my class to be like. If there's no management, your stress level goes through the roof. Even great lessons don't matter. I finally put together my own management plan using a responsive classroom approach. The students created their own rules and their own consequences through five levels. (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

In recent years, ideas about classroom management have changed from a focus on intervention for controlling behavior to a focus on prevention by establishing learning communities (Le Page, et al., 2005). This focus is important in the context of this study with students of diverse backgrounds. Especially in a culturally diverse classroom, views and learning preferences may vary. Many teachers from communities of color believe teaching begins with establishing a relationship between themselves and their students (Delpit, 2005), as exemplified by Sylvia's cooperating teacher. The student teachers learned about behavior management plans in their coursework and had differing views on their value. Although classroom management was not part of their vision statements, they knew various strategies. Sarah, Suzy, Sylvia, and Hunter expected to create some type of organized structure for motivating good behavior. Joseph expected students simply to follow his lead. Behavior management may constitute a part of classroom management, but personal connections with students must also be established. For the student teachers to facilitate student learning, as their visions suggested, their understanding of classroom management requires more facets. Sylvia moved the closest to understanding the need to develop personal connections with her students and negotiate what was best for her and the students to enhance her classroom management as well as her reading instruction:

Sylvia - When I first started taking over teaching reading, they were a lot louder than I expected them to be, so that was a big adjustment for me. I'm the kind of person who likes it quiet, but I think it's a combination of changing my opinion and they have quieted down somewhat. I realized they are doing

their work even though they're talking. I've given them more freedom as long as they work, and I'm OK with that. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

### **Balanced Literacy Instruction**

The student teachers negotiated the intersections among their own visions of balanced literacy, what they learned in Reading courses, the mandated district program, and the cultural context in which they were teaching. The school district consists of a majority of low-income students of diverse backgrounds, and in 2000, the state department of education designated it an “empowerment” district because more than fifty percent of students scored in the lowest quartile on state assessments in reading and math. The urban district requires a 90-minute literacy block each day in every elementary classroom in an effort to improve the literacy achievement of students. Table 9 illustrates the aspects of balanced literacy and district requirements for each, in summary.

Teachers are expected to show evidence of implementation based on the goals and expectations for the current school year. Although the goals include choosing materials based on “students’ social, emotional, and academic needs” and addressing “students’ interests,” no explicit reference is made to culturally responsive instruction, materials, or curriculum. Rather, the district program requirements seem to confirm Ladson-Billings’ (2000) argument that generic instructional models are often considered “culture neutral,” when they are actually more consistent with the learning of mainstream students. Even with the high number of struggling students of color, teachers have no district imperative to address students’ cultures to support their literacy instruction.

**Table 9**  
***District Balanced Literacy Requirements<sup>24</sup>***

Aspect of Balanced Literacy	District Requirements, Grades K-2	District Requirements, Grades 3-6
Modeled Reading /Read-aloud	Daily oral reading by teacher with clear purpose	
Shared Reading	Daily teacher-controlled text shared with clear purpose	
Guided Reading	Daily for lowest readers; 2-3 X wk. for all Assessments determine frequency and purpose Flexible small groups by instructional level	
Independent Reading	Minimum 30 minutes daily Weekly individual student/teacher conferences	
Phonics/Word Study	Appropriate instruction differentiated based on student need Use Developmental Spelling approach Word Wall	
Centers/Workshops	Teacher Choice as needed	
Writing	Daily unprompted writing; 30-45 minute Kid Writing block daily	Daily unprompted writing; 45-60 minute writing block daily

***The Balancing Act in Balanced Literacy***

Reading educators have found that excellent teachers, regardless of their school-adopted program, balance phonics instruction with authentic reading and writing in their classrooms (Pressley, 2006). This reality confirms that successful teachers balance their literacy instruction when they are guided by district curriculum and materials and when they are not. The best instruction seems to happen when a combination of methods is used (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). These views underscore

<sup>24</sup> Summarized from the school district “2006-2007 Goals & Expectations for Balanced Literacy, Grades Pre-K – 8.”

the need for both curricular balance and instructional balance (Baumann & Ivey, 1997).

Fitzgerald and Cunningham (2002) argued that a balanced approach to literacy teaching and learning emerges from an epistemological outlook that considers three types of children's knowledge about reading equally important: word and letter knowledge, discourse and meaning knowledge, and affective aspects, such as engagement, attitudes and feelings, motivation, and the desire to read. In addition, a balance of multiple knowledge sources, such as teachers, other adults, and other children combine with multiple ways of learning to complete the balanced literacy epistemology (Fitzgerald & Cunningham, 2002).

In this urban district, curricular balance is found in the requirements of literature-based comprehension lessons as well as explicit, data-driven instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. Requirements of teacher-led instruction (including read-alouds, shared and guided reading and writing, and word study) and independent student application (such as centers, workshops, and independent reading and writing) constitute the instructional balance. The district "Goals and Expectations for Balanced Literacy" also identify multiple knowledge sources (such as teachers and other students).

This program may or may not satisfy the definition of balanced as "equal weighting" of methods or content (Fitzgerald & Cunningham, 2002); however, the district seeks to provide literacy instruction focused on developing students' capacity to construct meaning from text and provides various resources for the curricular, instructional, and assessment components of the program. Conspicuous by its absence

is any mention of students' culture. The district literacy program provides curriculum and instruction on both sides of the scale (literature and phonics; teacher-led and student-led); however, in practice, whether it is balanced seems to depend on the individual teacher, who may ascribe to a balanced epistemology or may simply follow the required guidelines of the district program. Similarly, without explicit direction regarding culture, individual teachers draw on students' home cultures or not according to their own knowledge or conviction.

### ***Developing Visions of Balanced Literacy***

The student teachers seemed to understand balanced literacy as interpreted by their cooperating teachers and gleaned from their reading coursework in teacher education. Early in the semester, I asked the student teachers to explain their understanding of the aspects of balanced literacy and what has to be "balanced." Table 10 displays their responses.

By week four of student teaching, when these questions had been asked, all five participants seemed to understand that a variety of aspects of reading and writing come together to develop a competent reader. They attributed their understandings to reading coursework, conversations with their cooperating teachers, and their implementation of the district literacy program in student teaching. Sylvia mentioned balanced literacy being "student-centered" and Sarah mentioned integrating "different learning styles," but nothing more specific to culturally responsive teaching was identified. Hunter and Suzy mentioned mostly curricular balance. Sylvia and Sarah talked more about instructional balance, but Sarah also mentioned having to balance

time. Joseph mentioned both curricular and instructional balance, but he dismissed the term “balanced” as having no real meaning.

**Table 10**  
***Student Teachers’ Understanding of Balanced Literacy***

Student Teacher	What does a balanced literacy program look like?	What needs to be balanced?
Hunter	Balanced Literacy is focused on reading and writing together and key concepts that are a part of literacy – fluency, comprehension, phonics. If a student reads words but they don’t understand, nothing is going on. In Balanced Literacy, you cover all those aspects of literacy to facilitate a good reader.	The teacher makes the balance by continually assessing the students and working on their needs. The teacher helps the student become a successful reader.
Sylvia	It is student-centered and involves independent, shared, and group reading based on the students’ levels. We also incorporate social studies and writing. Balanced Literacy is based on students’ abilities.	In my mind, there’s a balance between instructional reading and independent reading.
Suzy	It incorporates vocabulary, meaning, discussion, and writing, to make the whole thing balanced.	The balance is between understanding with discussion, applying with writing and demonstrating that you can read it with vocabulary.
Sarah	Overall, trying to have reading and writing integrated for different learning styles – be sure teachers include read-aloud, writing prompt, independent reading, shared, guided reading, word study, conferencing, writing. It forces the teacher to include all the components and integrate them with writing.	Balancing time to get all components in – sometimes time is an issue – maybe we can’t get all components in one morning.
Joseph	We have guided reading and then independent reading. We do shared reading and a discussion and then group work.	I really think the word “balanced” is just something the administration throws in. It’s just a literacy block, and you have to figure out what you need to fit into it. You have to figure out how to balance what you’re going to teach for all your students to learn effectively. I think we can just call it literacy block and be done with it.

The cooperating teachers equated balanced literacy with implementation of the district program. For example, Ms. S, Hunter's cooperating teacher answered my question about her understanding of balanced literacy in terms of curriculum: "I know the different components and that they should be balanced to show growth in all areas: phonics, reading writing, word study, comprehension and fluency (Interview, 3/19/07). Ms. S (Hunter) and Ms. M (Sarah) were the only cooperating teachers who had learned about balanced literacy in their own college coursework. The other four were introduced to balanced literacy through the district professional development.

### ***The Practice of Balanced Literacy Instruction***

Of the student teachers, Sarah and Joseph felt more empowered to change and adapt the literacy time block than others, which may have been a function of their cooperating teacher's view. Table 11 identifies the aspects of balanced literacy I observed each student teacher teaching.

**Table 11**  
***Aspects of Reading Instruction Observed***

Reading Instruction Observed	Hunter 2 <sup>nd</sup> gr.	Sylvia 5 <sup>th</sup> gr.	Suzy 1 <sup>st</sup> gr.	Sarah 3 <sup>rd</sup> gr.	Joseph 6 <sup>th</sup> gr.
Modeled Reading/Read-Aloud	Ob. 1,2	Ob. 1,2,3	Ob. 1,2	Ob. 1,2	-
Shared Reading	Ob. 2,3	-	Ob. 1,2,3	Ob. 3	-
Guided Reading	Ob. 1,2	Ob. 1,2,3	Ob. 2,3	Ob. 4	Ob. 1,2,3
Independent Reading	Ob. 1,2	Ob. 1,2,3	Ob. 1,2	Ob. 4	Ob. 1,2,3
Phonics/Word Study	Ob. 2,3	Ob. 3	Ob. 1,2,3	Ob. 2	-



Guided reading is one of the daily requirements in the district literacy program, if not everyday for every child, at least everyday for some children. Surprisingly, guided reading was not a daily part of reading instruction except in Sylvia's fifth-grade and Joseph's sixth-grade classes, where shared reading and word study as separate instructional components were not included in the daily plans. Suzy, Sarah, and Hunter (and Joseph in his third-grade placement) all commented that, of the aspects of balanced literacy, guided reading was most often left out by them and by their cooperating teachers. The reason most often was attributed to time constraints both during the instructional day and because of the planning required. The classroom structure also requires that students not engaged with the teacher in guided reading must be engaged in independent activities. Planning for independent activities and then managing the entire classroom contributed to the challenge.

Except for Hunter, whose reading background was more limited, the student teachers began student teaching with visions of read-alouds, guided reading groups (which some referred to as literature groups), phonics, and learning centers. Some of their visions translated into practice:

Sarah - I think the best way to teach Phonics and such in your word-study is to pull it from books that you're reading and not worksheets, and not - and that's probably one of the biggest things I learned in my classes but also in my placement now, that students really learn from when you're doing a read-aloud. Find a book that has a lot of those words – whatever your word study is, like *-ly*, for example, and you pull those out and then you work with them on a white board.... (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Sarah reported learning from her reading courses the value of teaching phonics and word-analysis skills in the context of authentic literature. Rather than teaching phonics in isolation, Ms. M, her cooperating teacher, incorporated word study into her interdisciplinary units, and that also influenced Sarah.

Joseph felt more freedom in orchestrating reading instruction in his second placement than in the first. Although he incorporated the same aspects of reading instruction as both his cooperating teachers (read-alouds, guided reading, and independent reading) he was allowed to develop center activities in his second placement and felt more in control of his decision-making:

Joseph - In my second placement, my teacher gives me free reign for reading. I still have requirements and timeframes, but if I want to spend more time reading a book, it's fine. It's exactly how I envisioned it....I wanted to do learning centers, and I got to do them. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Sylvia envisioned reading instruction similar to what she found in Ms. R's classroom:

Sylvia - I did envision myself sitting down with them for literature groups, so that's the same. My expectation was that we would read aloud together in the group, and I do read aloud for at least five minutes after lunch. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

Sylvia's interest in literature study circles began in her reading courses; however, her implementation of them looked more like what Ms. R modeled than what she learned in class: "I knew about literature circles. I knew how they were supposed to run, but I never participated in one, and I wasn't prepared for how they turned out" (Final Interview, 4/30/07). "How they turned out" was a direct reflection of the way Ms. R

implemented what she called literature circles but what more closely resembled the district's category of guided reading, with decisions and choices made by the teacher.

The issue of time allotment for reading instruction was also a concern.

Sometimes the student teachers felt the district requirements put undue pressure on their instructional time as expressed by Joseph and Hunter:

Joseph - The balanced literacy block is a problem. The school thinks you need a certain amount of time for guided reading. But they're forcing me to do an hour and a half of guided reading everyday; I don't have time to plan for anything else. They want us to incorporate writing, more independent reading – a half an hour, and we have standards to meet. It's the biggest pain, and you never accomplish what you want to do because you have to do what the administration is throwing at you, for example the time requirements. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Hunter - I also didn't expect the amount of reading that was done in the classroom. I was not expecting 90 minutes of reading instruction, uninterrupted for the first half of the day. It blew my mind, really! (Final Interview, 5/5/07)

Neither Joseph nor Hunter understood the reasoning behind district literacy requirements and felt they were arbitrary. Although the district teachers had received background information in their professional development, the theory and research behind the literacy program developed for the district was unclear to the student teachers, making it difficult for Joseph and Hunter to embrace the requirements.

Sarah expressed a concern about the uninterrupted nature of the literacy block:

I worry that all the literacy back-to back is almost too much. The kids are, like, enough already. We do morning work, word study, read-aloud, shared reading, independent reading with guided reading in there, and as a teacher, I'm like – ugh! It's a lot, and it's a challenge, but I try to break it up as best I can. (Interview 2, 2/27/07)

Sarah and Suzy also expressed their concerns about the district program in other ways. While Sarah wished for more structure, Suzy looked for more choices:

Sarah - I felt the balanced literacy program didn't have other activities in place other than some teacher materials like *Text Talk* and *Making Meaning with Text*. There are not many student pre-post reading activities so teachers have to come up with all that on their own. In theory I think it's good to focus on literacy, but it's hard to fit in 90 minutes in the morning. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Suzy - It was a lot more structured than I expected. There wasn't a lot of choice. I followed the *Text Talk* and *Making Meaning with Text* books for read-alouds in that week, and shared reading was *Break Through to Literacy*, and I did those books that week. I felt a lot of freedom taken from teachers, like if they gave us a lesson plan and you had to give it to the kids. It wasn't ideas you came up with yourself. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

In the quotes above, Sarah and Suzy expressed different opinions about the same materials available to teachers in the district. They were both reading minors and had similar backgrounds in reading content knowledge. Both student teachers found ways of dealing with the materials they were given. Suzy adapted the materials creatively,

especially for learning centers, and Sarah sought additional outside materials to supplement her instruction.

Suzy and Joseph each commented on how Reading courses could contribute more to their preparation:

Joseph - They need to emphasize that just because we are teaching you this, it may not work for your classroom. They need to give us choices and lots of strategies. We need lots of examples of what we might encounter. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Suzy - You have to tie together lots of different strategies. You have to have a bunch of strategies on hand at all times. If what you try bombs, you have to keep going with something else. (Interview 3, 3/27/07)

This theme speaks to the need for adaptive expertise, or the ability to balance the dimensions of efficiency and innovation in teaching (Hammerness et al., 2005). It is important for preservice teachers to have opportunities to develop adaptive expertise. Suzy's and Joseph's comments identify the need for learning many strategies and practicing decision-making about how and when to use them.

### ***Strengths and Weaknesses in Teaching Balanced Literacy***

Each cooperating teacher described what she felt were her student teacher's greatest strength and weakness as a reading teacher. Those responses are displayed in Table 12.

**Table 12**  
***Cooperating Teachers' Evaluations of Strengths and Weaknesses as Reading Teachers***

Student Teacher	Strength	Weakness
Hunter (Ms. S) 3/20/07	"His voice level is good and he models well. The focuses he brings out – connections and inferences are good."	"He needs to make sure students answer, and he needs to summarize for them what he is teaching. They need more modeling and direct instruction."
Sylvia (Ms. R) 3/19/07	"She has adapted content and made reading lessons, she focuses on teaching reading while teaching content....She is effective in facilitating morning meetings. The students share, and she shares appropriately, she writes back in students' journals, and works one on one. She may not be the best teacher, but she is the best student teacher I've had as far as the students' response to her, so I know she's connecting with them. She absorbs everything."	"She needs polish. It's just insecurity. She's from a small town and has rural experience rather than from an urban environment."
Suzy (Ms. Y) 5/2/07	"She is very good at getting through half a lesson, seeing the need for a change, and changing gears. She doesn't feel locked into her plans if they are not working, if she recognizes that the students need to go in a different direction. She is also very good at word work. After she does the lessons, she uses them to create activities they can use in centers. She changes up her lessons so they can reinforce the concept independently."	"Planning for needs of guided reading. She sees what the students need, but she doesn't know where to go next. She can identify a need but is not sure how to meet it."
Sarah (Ms. M) 3/2/07	"She's an excellent model of oral language. She's very verbal, and students pick up from her. It helps with their fluency. She gives them excellent comprehension strategies and helps them make connections with text."	"Picking a focus that carries importance for 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade. That comes with experience."
Joseph (Ms. T) 4/2/07	"He sees the whole picture. He has goal for each lesson, he's aware of various levels of ability in class, and he spends time recording behavior and work completed."	"Managing the whole group while he works with a small group."

The cooperating teachers focused on different aspects of teaching in their assessments of the student teachers' strengths and weaknesses as reading teachers. Ms. S (Hunter) mentioned instruction (but not curriculum), and classroom management was also important. Hunter's strength was in his ability to replicate what he saw his cooperating teacher model in the classroom. He could verbally engage the students in a read-aloud. What he had more difficulty with was the decision-making that a reading teacher needs to merge curriculum, instruction, and classroom management to address the needs of the students.

Ms. R credited Sylvia with the same strengths I saw in her: the ability to adapt instruction and build personal relationships with her students, which contributed to her management of the classroom. It also made her sensitive to students' needs, and she was willing to listen to students' interests and accommodate those interests within the curriculum.

Ms. Y (Suzy) focused on a combination of curriculum and instruction. She saw Suzy as adaptive in one area of curriculum, word work, but not as adaptive in another, guided reading strategies. Suzy was creative in her development of materials for phonics center activities, but she needed more practice and guidance in decision-making for developing students' reading comprehension in small-group instruction.

Ms. M considered Sarah a very good language role model for students. Her comprehension strategies were strengths as well, and we both found her very adept at making connections to text in read-alouds and shared reading. She was creative and resourceful in creating thematic units, but she seemed easily discouraged by classroom behavior.

Ms. T saw Joseph as able to manage a small group but not the remainder of the students doing independent activities. My assessment confirmed that he was able to create lessons for guided reading accounting for students' ability. He may have had more skill in that area than Sylvia; however, he was unable to connect with his students in ways that helped Sylvia gain the trust and respect of her students, and consequently, produce learning. Joseph, in contrast, tried to implement his lessons without acknowledging who the students were on the other side of the table.

None of the cooperating teachers emphasized a need for balance explicitly in curriculum or instruction. They evaluated the student teachers based on their own interpretation of the district reading program, a practice which may be common among classroom teachers. The student teachers reported knowing the components of balanced literacy from their coursework but not necessarily the term "balanced literacy." They implemented the components that were important to their cooperating teachers but did not focus on balance in curriculum or instruction.

### **Understanding Students' Cultures**

Part of a student teacher's understanding of students' cultures and seeing with the cultural eye<sup>25</sup> (Irvine, 2003) is knowing what constitutes culture. In the first interview, I asked the participants how they define culture and what role culture plays in teaching reading. They responded as follows:

Hunter - I think of different beliefs, different ideas. It's not always race. You

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<sup>25</sup> Irvine (2003) described the perspectives of African American teachers who "look introspectively at how their ethnic identity, their classroom practices, and their beliefs are related to the achievement of their African American students" (p. 28). This perspective is what Irvine calls seeing with the cultural eye, which acknowledges the influence of culture – the teacher's as well as the students' – on the teaching and learning process.



could be someone who is White and grew up in a Hispanic culture and you would follow the things they do differently....I think you need to connect with the culture in a way. You don't have to stick to that, but for a culturally diverse classroom, you need to have culturally diverse literature. (Interview 1, 2/5/07)

Sylvia – [Culture is] the way you interact with your family members, family structure, religion, educational background and how important education is, how important your family is.... Sometimes students will read things, and they haven't had the same experience, and because of their culture, they won't be able to relate to it....if education isn't part of the culture, it's going to be hard to teach them, not only to read, but to teach them anything because you need those parents backing you up 100%. (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

Suzy – Culture includes heritage, where they came from, what kinds of traditions they hold in their homes, how they value the roles in their home, like parenting roles, the roles of children, what kinds of things are acceptable in their homes, and who lives with them – their family situation....Cultures play a role in the value of reading. Some cultures seem to hold a higher value on reading and literacy than other cultures, and those kids seem to be performing at higher levels. (Interview 1, 2/8/07)

Sarah - I think that culture's like your ideas and your traditions in your basic framework that whoever is bringing you up into your morals, your beliefs, they kind of all play a part into your culture. Your language, your dress, the music you listen to, the kind of food you eat, all things like that, I think all

play a part. The importance of an education or not, the importance of what kind of trade you're looking at, working towards things like that....I think it plays a huge part because if you key into the cultures present their classroom, it can help you choose the kind of literature that you'd use in your classroom. (Interview 1, 2/1/07)

Joseph - I don't really care about culture, so to speak. I think about it one nation-one culture....My definition of culture is – the religion, ethnicity and race of a group of people....Different families and different cultures have different ideologies at home. Like an Asian family is very oriented toward academics, so I would expect them to be high. (Interview 1, 2/4/07)

Four of the student teachers commented on the value of education as a part of culture; however, Sylvia, Suzy and Joseph linked their expectations of students to how strongly the culture values education. Hunter and Sarah tied the role of culture to choice of literature in the classroom. All five student teachers agreed that culture does play a role in the classroom; however, none mentioned the teacher's culture as a factor. This omission may point to a lack of awareness of their own culture, or as Ladson-Billings (2001) asserted, "Notions of Whiteness are taken for granted" (p. 96).

The intersections of the student teachers' visions with their students' cultures followed three themes. First, the student teachers' practice sometimes contradicted their vision statements and sometimes the context changed vision and practice. Second, some student teachers expressed unrealistic expectations of their students' knowledge about their own cultural backgrounds. Third, the student teachers

displayed low expectations of their students' families accompanied by little understanding of how to approach parents as partners in their child's education.

### ***Culture in Curriculum and Instruction: Contradictions and Confirmations***

When asked about the importance of students' cultures or how culture fits into reading instruction, most student teachers responded with expressions of commitment to taking culture or students' interests into account; however, sometimes contradictions to those commitments appeared in practice. In one case, a realization of the importance of integrating students' cultural interests changed the student teacher's vision and practice.

Hunter talked about using students' cultures and had a personal example from a course assignment, but he did not translate his ideas of incorporating culture into practice in student teaching:

Hunter - I thought about using stuff like their music, but I haven't done it yet. I'm not a big fan of rap or some of the things kids listen to now. You could use a clean rap song. That's a poem. You could work on fluency with that. Rap is fluency! To be a good rapper, you better be fluent! I'd like to do it some day. Have I done it? No. Would I like to? Someday. Do I think I'm ready for it? Not really. I need to do more research on it, maybe put something together and try how it works. I could implement it with students someday and see how they like it. Once last semester, I did a rap lesson on singular and plural nouns [for language arts methods], and the students loved it. My co-op had a song about possessives. I got the idea from that and decided to use rap. (Interview 4, 3/23/07)

Hunter acquired the idea of rap as an entry point into instruction from his cooperating teacher. The semester before student teaching, he was required to create an activity that addressed students' cultures and used his rap in this same classroom, yet his practice contradicted his statement that it was important to incorporate students' music or other cultural knowledge by never introducing it into his practice in student teaching.

Joseph mentioned tapping into students' strengths and expressed a positive view when asked what he had learned about teaching students of diverse backgrounds: "Every student learns differently, and once you get to know and build a rapport, you get to appreciate them. If you are genuine, you can build on their strengths instead of focusing on their weaknesses." But in the same interview, I asked him about a written reflection in which he talked about "giving up on students." His response was

They don't care about what you're teaching, the rules or their classmates. I don't know the answer. Maybe students need to be referred for emotional or academic support and get them a big brother or big sister and show them what they can be in their lives. (Final Interview, 4/27/07)

Joseph's contradiction was common among his responses throughout the semester. When asked specific questions about students of diverse backgrounds or multicultural education, he tended to give "politically correct" answers that then contradicted other responses in which he discussed his views on teaching. He repeated the idea that something should be done about the students, but he did not envision himself as the person to do it.

Sarah seemed somewhat conflicted about how or whether to integrate culture into curriculum, although ultimately, she did work at making connections between her thematic units and her students' cultural knowledge through the influence of her cooperating teacher. Early in the semester she talked about using culturally diverse literature: "If you key into the cultures present in your classroom, it can help you choose the kind of literature you'd use....I think that's really meaningful for students" (Interview 1, 2/1/07). But later, she tempered her opinion:

It's true [that using culturally diverse literature is important], but also you are entitled as a teacher to school kids on those things they are unfamiliar with, too. It would be interesting to teach them about something completely alien to them. I think you should use where they come from but also, it's your duty to teach things they don't know about that are different. My dad always said we know about Rosa Parks because of the emphasis on multicultural issues but didn't know American history, like what D-Day is. You have to look at what's important and what to emphasize in the time you have with a particular class.

(Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Deciding what was important in the limited timeframe of student teaching was a challenge, but Sarah's cooperating teacher was a role model for integrating culture into lessons, and Sarah followed her lead:

Sarah – You have to be adaptive with lessons. If they don't respond to students' need and backgrounds, reading might be better another way to best fit students' needs. Like one thing I did one day in a readers' theater script was change the names and some of the language to be more in line with my

students. The characters were father, John, mother, Sandra, like typical Anglo-Saxon names, so I changed them to Ciera, Jamal, and La'Tanya. I realized it wouldn't be that good for them the way it was. (Final Interview, 5/2/07)

Suzy missed an opportunity to connect with a Korean child's family during the reading of *Dear Juno* by Soyung Pak. Although she recognized the connection, she did not follow through to bring the child's home world into the classroom:

Suzy - I previewed the book *Dear Juno* with him [Korean boy] and he identified with the grandma writing in Korean. Apparently she sends birthday cards and things like that. He asked if he could bring something in from his grandma, so if he does, like a birthday or Christmas card, that will be really good.

The boy did not bring in a card, and Suzy did not call or write the parents so they would know she valued the connection. In response to my question about the role of culture in reading instruction, Suzy dismissed culture as irrelevant:

Suzy - They really focused in our classes in college that native backgrounds and tapping into where they came from were really important. I think it is important but not relevant. The students don't talk about it in first grade. They're all learning the same things, and bringing another culture in – I don't think it would be helpful. Maybe bringing in a culture for a topic would be good, but they don't notice they are different. I was thinking before that if the students felt uncomfortable about being of a different background, I could

address it, but at least in first grade, it doesn't seem to be relevant. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Suzy's non-committal reaction to the text-to-self connection for her Korean student was confirmed by her opinion of culture as irrelevant. She was unaware of the role she could play in developing her students' cultural awareness and making it a positive influence in the classroom.

Sylvia was concerned about teaching the Civil War to her African American students. Her reasoning for wanting to minimize the issue of slavery in her Civil War unit was that she thought the students would not want to talk about it:

I didn't plan on spending so much time on slavery. When I redid the unit without the packets, from their reactions to what we had done so far, I saw how much they were into studying slavery. I decided to go that way. It surprised me because I thought they wouldn't want to talk about it, but it was the complete opposite. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

In Sylvia's case, she began with the idea of not emphasizing slavery and then changed her practice based on the cultural interest of her students.

### ***Unrealistic Expectations of Cultural Knowledge***

Sylvia accommodated her students' cultural interest in slavery, but she was still nervous about addressing issues of race and oppression with her fifth-graders. Part of her anxiety stemmed from believing that her students already knew a substantial amount about the Civil War and slavery. She was surprised to discover otherwise: "One of their [first] assignments was to write five things they already knew about the Civil War. They were writing general things, like they fought over

land, and people got killed” (Interview 3, 3/22/07). Sylvia ended up spending three weeks on the Underground Railroad, what the abolitionists did, and what it was like to be a slave:

Sylvia – For example, we were learning about the Underground Railroad and runaway slaves, and I was telling them about safe-houses. We talked about the signal lamps, and I brought in a lantern and talked about what the symbols meant. Then students role-played as the slaves and three safe-house keepers. They had to tell me what the symbols meant and they moved to the safe houses at the right time. (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

Students can become resistant to and disinterested in learning when they see little connection between themselves and the subject matter (Irvine, 2003). When she abandoned the “culture neutral” (Ladson-Billings, 2000) work packets and interacted with students more actively about slavery, Sylvia’s students became more engaged. The example above illustrates that Sylvia was beginning to understand how to address the cultural interests of her students; however, she still lacked a deep understanding of how to use students’ cultural perspectives as a tool for learning. Her lessons and activities appeared to focus on the abolitionists and their role in the Underground Railroad rather on the lived experiences of the slaves throughout that time in American history. That change of perspective might have contributed to a more culturally responsive unit of study.

Hunter expected second-graders to already know about Martin Luther King, Jr. “It surprised me what students didn’t know about him. You might think they



would know more about him, so it's good we talked about it" (Interview 2, 3/19/07).

Suzy also expressed surprise at what her students' did not already know:

Suzy - I really was surprised they couldn't understand the concept of a village.

Being in a diverse classroom, I would have thought the students would be aware of other cultures, but they are still in their little bubbles. The story was about an African village – an African market. It's surprising to me that the students don't realize they are from different cultures. They're just - there.

Interview 2, 3/26/07)

Suzy's first-graders included a combination of students with diverse home languages and cultures. At age six or seven, many of them had been born in the urban environment surrounding their school or had immigrated to the United States with their parents at a very young age. Assuming that first-grade students should already have knowledge of an African village seems a stretch. To support students' cultural knowledge, curriculum content selections should reflect not only the traditional but also contemporary realities of students' cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Expecting young students to know the traditional cultural details of their heritage in primary grades before explicit instruction is an unreasonable expectation.

### ***Visions of Students and their Families***

The student teachers expressed deficit views or negative assumptions about the students and their families. Some ideas were influenced by their cooperating teachers, and some participants did not alter their colorblind vision of teaching students of diverse backgrounds throughout the semester. There were a few glimmers of realization of positive attributes of families and communities, but I found little

evidence to suggest that cultural responsiveness emerged for these five student teachers in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds.

Although Sarah had moments of cultural responsiveness and felt a calling to teach students of diverse backgrounds, she described obstacles in teaching her students:

Sarah - It's a cultural thing that students act and model behavior that they observe, so we are working against that all the time. You're kind of trying to teach something at school that may be very different than what's going on at home, so you're working against that obstacle. (Interview 1, 2/1/07)

In the final interview, her view had not changed:

Sarah - I felt I was up against more obstacles than I could have anticipated and that I had no control over....But also I felt I was working against their socioeconomic status, such as their background at home, like if they have one or two parents, how involved the adults are in their children's lives, parent's perspective on education...and that was frustrating. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

Sarah seemed to measure her students against expectations of students from her own experience in school. The obstacles she perceived fueled a more pessimistic outlook toward the end of the semester, what Hammerness (2006) called the "dark side" of vision. Hammerness argued that "teachers with such visions are subject to feelings of disillusionment and despair that can lead them to become jaded about the possible success of efforts in the future..." (p. 4). Sarah's constant drive for excellence is what outweighed her pessimism and contributed to her success in student teaching. With a

closer vision, she could direct her drive for excellence toward more cultural responsiveness for her students.

Hunter and Joseph maintained a colorblind view of teaching throughout the semester:

Hunter - I thought, 'How am I going to teach them effectively, what are they interested in, what is correct way to teach them?' What I found was I taught them in a way I would teach any other student.

Joseph – Teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds is the same as any class – no difference – it's all the same. I don't take notice of their backgrounds. I just see one homogeneous background. There might be differences, but most of my students come from Christian families – located in low-income housing. Most have single-parents, regardless of their race. I just think their SES overrides their racial status. The only different one is [Daniel]. He's the only white/Hispanic student, the others being African American. I treated them all just the same because they're all from the same background.

(Interview 4, 4/11/07)

Joseph not only treated the students the same, but he also failed to recognize their cultural differences. During one observation, Daniel and a Black Hispanic boy were standing along one wall waiting. A boy seated nearby commented that they looked like twins. Daniel retorted, "I don't look like him 'cause I don't look Dominican!" (Observation 3, 4/11/07). A teacher-facilitated conversation initiated by the comments of two students could introduce constructive talk about race and cultures, rather than leaving those topics as unspoken and taboo; however, Joseph was unaware

of the Hispanic heritage of Daniel's "twin." Rather, Joseph saw him as African American like the other Black boys in his class. The students certainly were aware of the cultural differences.

Joseph also held negative assumptions about students and families, which were also reinforced by his cooperating teacher:

Joseph – No parents call or come in. I haven't met anyone. I'd be surprised that parents know [I'm student teaching in their child's room.] The co-op said it's useless to send a letter because most students wouldn't take them home, and the parents wouldn't care. (Interview 4, 4/11/07)

In contrast, Sylvia's view changed from negative to more positive:

Sylvia – When I started, I had pretty stereo-typical ideas of urban students. They didn't listen, they didn't care, and they didn't want to be there, but my kids are not like that. They get very upset when they don't do well, and they do care about learning. That really surprised me." (Final Interview, 4/30/07)

The data suggest that Sylvia's cooperating teacher displayed some culturally responsive strategies, especially in building trusting, respectful relationships with her students and holding them to high expectations. Perhaps Sylvia's positive role model contributed to a classroom environment in which the students developed more positive interactions than was evident in Joseph's classroom.

Suzy and Sarah shared knowledge about where their students lived. Suzy commented on positive characteristics in the students' communities. "I learned there are small communities throughout the district that are high functioning, supportive communities" (Final Interview, 5/3/07). Sarah also learned about "other mothers" in

the community who, although not related to a particular child, serves in a maternal role (Ladson-Billings, 2000):

The community is tight, and most of the kids come from a small area around the school. One of my girls' mother and grandmother are in a custody battle. The father is in jail. What they have to go home to is rough, but it's reality. Other girls' mothers in the community come in to check on her to be sure she's OK, so the community comes through in those ways. (Final Interview, 5/3/07)

These comments suggest at least some of the student teachers were learning about the nature of their students' communities and beginning to understand positive aspects that support students. These complex views and assumptions suggest that without challenges to their visions of students' cultural backgrounds, these student teachers were unable to develop deep understandings of students' culture. Student teachers need more explicit support to make the connections that would result in more significant changes in their visions of families and cultures.

### **Looking for Evidence of Culturally Responsive Reading Instruction**

Using the 35 classroom strategies matched to seven indicators of culturally responsive reading instruction (see Appendix A), I explored how characteristics of culturally responsive teaching did and did not emerge in the reading instruction of the five student teachers. In this section, I illustrate the evidence of culturally responsive teaching for each participant and then discuss the cross-case examples of culturally responsive strategies that did and did not emerge in the practice of the five student teachers.

Each student teacher, university supervisor, and cooperating teacher was asked to complete a checklist of the above strategies indicating if they were consistently used, sometimes used, or never used. I requested the completed checklist several times, but Suzy's cooperating teacher did not submit her checklist, and her data are missing. Appendix C contains the complete data display of the strategies reported as "sometimes used" and "consistently used" for each student teacher. It shows a comparison of strategy use reported by the student teacher, cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and researcher. Table 13 illustrates the number of culturally responsive strategies reported as consistently used in the reading instruction of each student teacher.

**Table 13**  
*Reported Number of Culturally Responsive Strategies Used Consistently\**

Student Teacher	Self	Co-op	Reported by Supervisor	Researcher
Hunter	9	11	0	2
Sylvia	17	18	0	8
Suzy	12	No data	0	2
Sarah	12	21	0	2
Joseph	11	19	1	1

*\* Total number of possible strategies was 35.*

The data analyzed from the checklists show a pattern of differences among the responders. First, I observed very few instances of culturally responsive strategies in the reading instructional practice of the five student teachers; however, I observed only a limited number of classes. Table 14 identifies the culturally responsive

strategies I observed. Strategy 3b occurred in the instruction of all five student teachers. That strategy is *encouraging students to draw inferences during and after reading*, which is also a strategy expected of any high-quality reading instructor, so the student teachers are likely to have learned that strategy in their Reading courses. Strategy 3a, *encouraging students to predict before reading* occurred twice. It is also considered part of good reading instruction in general.

**Table 14**  
***Researcher Observed Culturally Responsive Strategy Use***

Student Teacher	CR Strategies Observed Consistently								
Hunter	3a	3b							
Sylvia	3a	3b	4e	5a	5c		7a	7b	7f
Suzy		3b				5e			
Sarah		3b							7f
Joseph		3b							

The university supervisors also reported very few strategies they could attribute to the student teacher (as opposed to strategies supplied by the cooperating teacher). One supervisor observed Joseph, and she indicated one culturally responsive strategy she felt Joseph used consistently, which was 5e: *Provides opportunities for interaction among students*. In our interview, she reported that Joseph “followed what he was asked to do, but he did not contribute anything above and beyond what the cooperating teacher suggested or I required” (Interview, 5/1/07). She may have been pre-disposed to thinking of his teaching as mediocre. The other supervisor observed Hunter, Suzy, Sylvia and Sarah. She indicated some strategies that were sometimes used, but no strategy that was “consistently used” for any of the four student teachers.

In commenting about the strategies in Indicator Seven, for example, this supervisor considered their use simply part of the curriculum, requirements of the district, or “evidence of effective teaching” (Interview, 5/9/07) so she did not attribute cultural responsiveness to the student teachers. She marked all Indicator Seven strategies as “sometimes used” for all four student teachers. As mentioned earlier, the district requirements, which might be considered “culture neutral” could be interpreted in different ways. What constitutes an “authentic” reading activity, for example, might be different for students of diverse backgrounds. The student teachers may have used the strategies in Indicator Seven in a generic way without actually demonstrating cultural responsiveness.

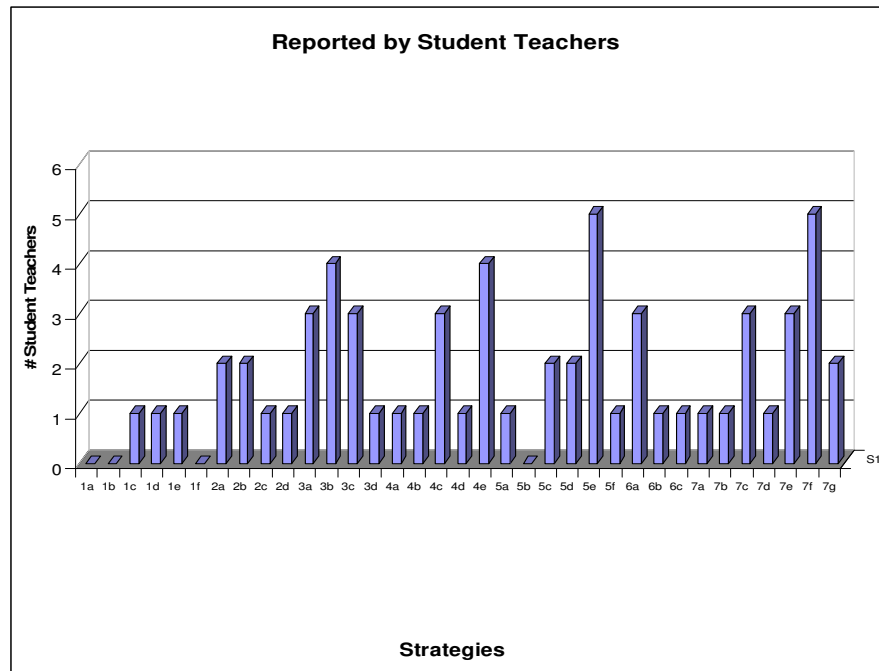
My interview with the university supervisors did not shed much light on the interactions they had personally with their student teachers. In our interview, the university supervisor for Sylvia, Suzy, Sarah and Hunter did not credit them with any consistent use of culturally responsive strategies. The four cooperating teachers who reported indicated more strategies as “consistently used” than even the student teachers. The cooperating teachers, however, may have wanted to project their student teachers in a good light in their interview with me because I work for the university (although I had no supervisory responsibility for the student teachers). They may have felt the evaluation of their student teachers reflected on their own teaching practice or on them as mentors. Another possible reason for the differences in reporting may be the high inference necessary to translate some of the strategies (as they were stated in the checklist) into actual classroom practice. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors acknowledged they had heard the term “culturally



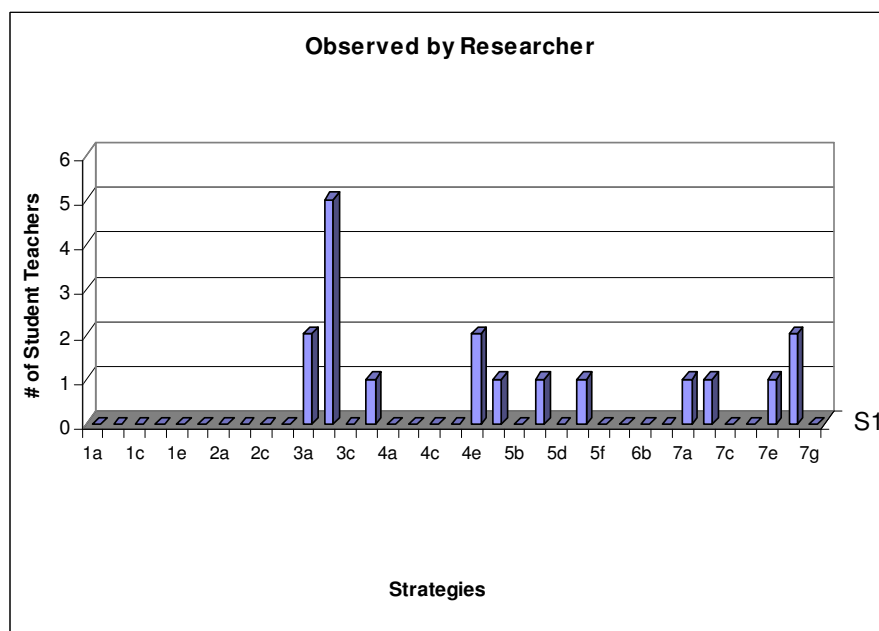
responsive” but did not fully understand what dispositions and actions constituted the term “culturally responsive teaching.” For student teachers, an obvious conclusion is that they wanted to project themselves as competent in all areas of teaching. In our final interviews, the student teachers reported not knowing the term “culturally responsive teaching.”

Another finding in the data gathered through the checklists and illustrated in Table 13 is the limited number of different culturally responsive strategies I observed across all five cases. Only nine of the 35 strategies in the outline were evident in the student teachers’ practice as I observed. The student teachers and the cooperating teachers reported more use of more different culturally responsive strategies, and the cooperating teachers were in the classroom daily with their student teachers. It is possible that I simply missed the days on which the culturally responsive strategies were in use; however, another possible explanation is that cooperating teachers and student teachers exaggerated their positive reporting. Figures 9 and 10 show a comparison between the strategies I observed consistently over several observations and the strategies reported by the student teachers as “used consistently.”

**Figure 9. Culturally responsive strategies consistently used.**



**Figure 10. Culturally responsive strategies consistently observed.**



The strategies that I did observe tended to cluster within only a few indicators. The most used strategies corresponded to Indicator Three, concerned with *engaging students in higher-level thinking with text*. The next most prevalent was Indicator Seven, the indicator of *equality of educational outcomes*. Strategy 4e focused on *activating students' prior knowledge*. Those particular strategies are also associated with high-quality reading instruction in general and are not exclusive to culturally responsive teaching.

In contrast, less evidence emerged for use of most strategies in Indicator One, *high regard for student and family competence*, Indicator Two, *recognizes literacy demands of the community*, Indicator Four, *modifies content for relevance to students' lives*, (except 4e). Not more than one student teacher consistently used a strategy from Indicator Five, *structures participation in various ways*, except strategy 5e and Indicator Six, *values home culture and language*. The strategies missing from use by the five student teachers suggest that particular topics or areas of concern for culturally responsive teaching are not learned simply from exposure to intercultural experiences, such as an urban field placement with students of diverse backgrounds.

I have argued that a culturally responsive reading teacher must begin with the characteristics of any effective or high-quality teacher and then exhibit “something more.” Of the five participants in this study, Sylvia demonstrated the most promise for rejecting a colorblind pedagogy, engaging with parents, and building the kind of relationship with her students that could lead her to culturally responsive teaching. Sylvia’s “something more” included

1. **Making personal connections** with students that not only valued the individual but also valued their cultural background,
2. Being willing to **interact with parents** in ways that valued their contribution to their child's education,
3. **Seizing every opportunity** to engage the students' own thinking about a topic, and
4. **Being open to conversations** with students on issues of race even when it is uncomfortable for the teacher.

The student teachers in this study exhibited isolated examples of culturally responsive indicators, but sometimes they were juxtaposed with deficit thinking. After Sylvia, Sarah showed the most promise for cultural responsiveness. She learned the value of using cultural references in her instruction and used culturally diverse literature; however, she maintained a deficit view of her students and their surroundings, which limited her vision of what was possible for her students.

The difference in outcomes regarding cultural responsiveness among these five student teachers is not surprising given their initial desire for or against student teaching in an urban district in a classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. Sylvia and Sarah, the only two participants who demonstrated any cultural responsiveness (although limited) were also the only two who actually chose the urban placement for student teaching. Suzy was ambivalent about her urban placement and ignored the students' cultures. Joseph and Hunter were both placed in urban classrooms contrary to their desired placements. Hunter ignored culture, and Joseph rejected the notion that the students' cultures should play a role in teaching

reading. This finding underscores the importance of student teachers' dispositions toward urban classrooms and student of diverse backgrounds.

### **Conclusions**

This cross-case analysis of classroom practices and their intersections with vision and context suggests that the use of culturally responsive strategies by the five student teachers was limited. The participants struggled with aligning their practice to address student behaviors, classroom structure, routines and organization, and developing a vision of classroom management appropriate in a classroom with students of diverse backgrounds.

In the implementation of balanced literacy, they developed visions of balanced literacy, sometimes having to negotiate the differences between the district requirements, as interpreted through their cooperating teachers, and what they learned in their Reading coursework. Learning to understand the role of students' cultures resulted in contradictions and confirmations between vision and practice. Some deficit views and colorblindness remained and hindered the student teachers' ability to deeply understand how their students' home cultures could enrich classroom learning. Few culturally responsive strategies emerged in the practice for the five participating student teachers. With the goal of better preparation of preservice teachers to teach students of diverse backgrounds, these findings hold many implications for teacher education.

In the next and final chapter, I summarize the findings of this dissertation study by revisiting the research questions individually to discuss the influences in developing a vision of teaching reading, the intersections of vision, practice, and

context, and culturally responsive reading instruction. Implications for teacher education begin with suggestions for the use of visioning as a tool for supporting preservice teachers in their development as culturally responsive reading teachers. I then elaborate on some specific ways to enhance preservice teacher learning of classroom management, balanced literacy, and culturally responsive teaching, including suggestions for addressing preservice teachers' personal characteristics and dispositions that might play a role in their success as culturally responsive teachers. Implications for future research include the need for more research into how particular student teachers, such as Sylvia, gain more ground than other similar student teachers toward culturally responsive teaching. I also suggest research that extends and enhances the Checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies developed in this dissertation. Theoretical implications include the need for greater conceptualization of the positive/negative and change-over-time dimensions of intersections among vision, practice, and context. Chapter Seven concludes with final comments and reflections.

## **Chapter 7: Moving Toward Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparation**

Preparing preservice teachers for cultural diversity in the classroom is imperative, given the well-documented cultural mismatch between teachers and their students. To support the narrowing of the reading achievement gap, in particular, it is incumbent upon teacher educators to craft learning experiences for preservice teachers that discourage deficit thinking about students of diverse backgrounds and instead encourage visions and practices that draw on students' backgrounds and cultures to support their reading success. In light of the need for improving reading teacher preparation for cultural responsiveness, the goal of this dissertation has been to understand how student teachers' visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds develop and then intersect with practice and the context of urban classrooms. This dissertation extends current research in the area of teacher vision and preparing preservice teachers for culturally responsive reading instruction, with implications for reading teacher education and future research.

From a sociocultural perspective and using qualitative case study methods, I have studied five student teachers as they taught reading in their student teaching placements with students of diverse backgrounds. Through interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of weekly reflections and other documents, I looked at how their visions intersected with classroom practice and the context of urban classrooms. Individual and cross-case analyses suggested that the student teachers' visions changed in some regards; however, the mere fact of student teaching with students of diverse backgrounds does not necessarily translate into culturally responsive teaching.

These findings suggest the need for more explicit instruction of culturally responsive strategies in teacher preparation coursework.

In this final chapter, I begin by recounting the findings presented in Chapters Four, Five, and Six of this dissertation based on the three overarching research questions. A discussion includes implications for teacher education and future research. I conclude with some final thoughts on preparing teachers for cultural responsiveness.

### **Summary of Findings**

Chapter Four concentrated on answering the first research question, “How do the participating student teachers characterize their vision of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds?” I highlighted individual case studies of the five student teachers and their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. The focus of Chapter Four was how the participants characterized their visions of teaching reading for students of diverse backgrounds at the beginning of student teaching. Building on that vision statement, I explored what part attitudes and beliefs, previous education, and inter-cultural experiences played in shaping their visions, and other factors that contributed to their visions.

#### ***Influences in Developing a Vision of Teaching Reading***

The five participants began student teaching with similar backgrounds and similar visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. They began their teacher preparation with limited cross-cultural experiences but were all placed in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds for student teaching. One



finding related to vision development was the way in which different experiences contributed to different aspects of vision. For example, personal experiences of learning to read as a child seem to have influenced their visions of the physical and emotional environments for reading in their own classrooms. Visions of a parent's role in a child's education seemed to be based mainly on their own parents as models. Their visions of actual reading instruction and roles of teachers and students, however, were based mainly on a combination of their reading coursework and field experiences. For all five student teachers, meeting individual students' needs was considered important due to its emphasis in their reading coursework, and they retained that focus in their teaching practices.

The five student teachers in this study equated being elementary school teachers with being reading teachers. For all five, their love of reading played a significant role in their visions of teaching. The one student teacher deemed not as well prepared by his university supervisor and cooperating teacher (Hunter) was also the only non-reading minor. Because of his more limited reading preparation, his vision of teaching reading was less clearly defined than the others, which hindered development of his own practice.

The student teachers envisioned roles for students and themselves as teachers based on a constructivist view attributable to their teacher education coursework; however, evidence that personal experiences and attitudes learned at home continued to play a role in their visions of teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds surfaced in complex ways. For example, Sylvia acknowledged racial prejudice in her extended family but made concerted efforts to fight against that viewpoint. She chose

culturally diverse literature for her Civil War unit but expressed a lack of understanding as to why her African American students would want to study about slavery. She thought her unit on the Civil War should be more about states rights' than about slavery. Although issues of race were difficult for her, she adapted her vision to include the students' interest in their history. Joseph also stated his rejection of racial prejudice in his family. On the surface, he spoke about the value of multicultural education and the need for understanding students' diverse backgrounds, but in practice, he tended to blame his students for their low achievement and resistance to reading, and he found it difficult to adapt his vision. He envisioned himself working with White students to reduce their prejudice rather than working with students of diverse backgrounds.

In addressing the question of how the student teachers understood culturally responsive reading instruction as part of their vision, I found that culturally responsive teaching was not mentioned in any of the vision statements. Although several student teachers talked about the need for diverse literature, only Sylvia and Sarah intentionally chose diverse literature in their classrooms. Later in the final interviews, the student teachers all stated either they had heard the term culturally responsive teaching and did not understand exactly what it was, or they had never hear the term before.

### ***Intersections of Vision, Practice, and Context***

Chapter Five continued the individual analysis in addressing the second research question, "What are the intersections among vision, practice, and context in student teacher development as reading teachers?" Each participant experienced

distinct intersections among vision, practice, and context. For Sarah, major intersections were centered on the demands of the classroom and her high expectations of connecting with her students. She was able to adapt her practice, and yet her vision remained at a distance. For Joseph, the major intersection was his resistance to his role as a learner in student teaching, which limited his ability to grow as a teacher. His change-resistant vision of teaching reading resulted in unresponsiveness to the context.

Hunter experienced intersections related to his unwillingness to do the “hard work” of teaching, his lack of organization, and his limited preparation for teaching reading. Late in the semester, Hunter was confronted by his university supervisor and cooperating teacher, which seems to have been a turning point in his learning. Suzy began with a clear vision of teaching reading; however, she had difficulty establishing her own practice separate and distinct from her cooperating teacher and the cooperating teacher’s conception of the district requirements. Suzy also struggled with her students’ limited English. Although Suzy interacted positively with her students on a personal level, she remained aloof to their cultural backgrounds within her instructional practice.

Sylvia experienced intersections that allowed both her vision and her practice to change and grow. Her areas of intersection included her changing expectations of her students, parents and herself, and connections with her students. She learned to value the possibilities for her students in ways she had not seen early in the semester. Sylvia’s intersections tended to be positive in nature due to her willingness to adapt. The positive outcomes for these student teachers were influenced by their optimism,

their ability to be reflective, and their willingness to change based on their experiences in the context of student teaching.

In four of the cases, one of the intersecting elements (vision, practice, or context) seemed to influence the participant's student teaching more than the other two. For Sarah and Joseph, vision was dominant. For Suzy and Hunter, practice was dominant, and for Sylvia, the three elements influenced her somewhat evenly, and she came the closest to moving toward cultural responsiveness. The positive/negative dimension of the intersections was important to the relative success for the student teacher. For example, Sarah and Joseph were both vision dominant, but Joseph's intersections were more negative, and he experienced a less satisfactory student teaching semester both from his own perspective and from the perspective of his university supervisor. A relatively even influence among vision, practice, and context seems to have supported Sylvia's growth by allowing her to adapt and shape her practice based on the needs of her students.

Chapter Six continued the analysis of intersections of vision, practice, and context across the five cases, emphasizing the three major cross-case intersections: classroom management, the balanced literacy program, and the students' cultures. The urban district, in which the five participants student taught, prescribes a 90-minute balanced literacy block in every elementary classroom. Especially in a balanced literacy classroom, the aspects of reading instruction vary from teacher-directed to student-directed, and at least partly because of that, issues of classroom management constitute an important part of reading instruction. All five student teachers experienced tensions at the points where their visions of teaching reading

intersected with the realities of managing a reading classroom. District requirements for balanced literacy, filtered through the understanding of each cooperating teacher, also created intersections for the student teachers. In their classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds, the student teachers sometimes ignored students' cultures or expressed deficit views of their students, hindering their ability to draw on their funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004) and appreciate the possible contributions of their students' cultural backgrounds to learning in the classroom.

To address the third research question, "How, if at all, do characteristics of culturally responsive reading instruction appear in the student teachers' reading instruction with students of diverse backgrounds in an urban setting?" I used a checklist of culturally responsive indicators with related strategies. Chapter Six concluded with a comparison of the culturally responsive indicators and strategies that were and were not reportedly used by the student teachers.

### ***Culturally Responsive Reading Instruction***

The checklist of culturally responsive strategies provided a source of data on how culturally responsive the student teachers perceived themselves to be during student teaching.<sup>26</sup> Cooperating teachers, university supervisors and the researcher also completed the checklist for each student teacher. Although differences in reporting occurred, two important results emerged across all five cases. First, only

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<sup>26</sup> In interviewing the participants throughout the semester, I asked questions about how they handled various issues of diversity, what role the students' culture played in their teaching, and what they were learning about students and families of diverse backgrounds. I did not, however, introduce the term "culturally responsive teaching" until the end of the final interview. I wanted to explore whether culturally responsive teaching emerged naturally. I did not want to predispose the participants' thinking about the kind of teaching I "was looking for."

four of the 35 strategies were reported consistently used by most (4 or 5) of the student teachers themselves. They are:

- 3b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading,
- 4e. Activates students' prior knowledge to connect with concepts being taught,
- 5e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students, and
- 7f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level.

These strategies reported above are also consistent with high-quality, effective reading instruction in general and not exclusive to culturally responsive teaching.

This finding suggests that cultural responsiveness was not necessarily at work in the student-teachers' decision-making to choose the strategy; however, some beginnings of culturally responsive reading instruction emerged, especially in Sylvia's practice. Her practice moved toward making personal connections with students and their cultures, making interactions with parents as partners in their children's education a priority, taking every opportunity possible to engage students' creative thinking, and engaging in conversations surrounding issues of race, even though it was uncomfortable for her.

A second finding was that three of the seven indicators, each including several strategies, showed very little reported use:

- 1. High regard for student & family competence,
- 2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school), and
- 6. Values home culture and language.

These three indicators are the most sensitive to attitudes and actions that address students' home cultures, and they were absent from the student teachers' practice. The findings suggest that student teachers need more systematic opportunities to learn about culturally responsive strategies in teacher education coursework if they are expected to demonstrate them in the classroom.

### **Implications for Teacher Education**

The results of this study suggest that even with the current efforts of teacher education to better prepare preservice teachers for diversity, more is needed to assure that cultural responsiveness becomes ubiquitous in the teaching practice of student teachers. McDonald (2005) found that even within teacher education programs specifically focused on social justice in teacher education, opportunities for preservice teachers to acquire the practical tools (for example, specific strategies) needed in the classroom were more limited than opportunities to learn the broad concepts related to working with students of diverse backgrounds. Grossman et al. (2000) also found that student teachers acquired the broad concepts that contribute to developing a vision; however, they acquired limited practical strategies that could help them implement instruction in practice. The five participants of this study also did not appear to acquire culturally responsive strategies (practical tools) beyond those also generally regarded as high-quality and effective reading instruction, such as activating prior knowledge and encouraging prediction before and during reading. Teacher education programs need to address these strategies more explicitly for them to become part of student teachers' vision and practice. In this section I discuss the

implications for reading teacher education in the areas of visioning, classroom management, balanced literacy, personal characteristics and dispositions, and culturally responsive teaching.

### ***Visioning in Teacher Education***

Teacher vision can be a powerful tool for supporting preservice teachers in their development as culturally responsive reading teachers. Visioning is useful in tapping into how preservice teachers actually think they will put their teaching into practice. Hammerness (2006) found that for some teachers, their visions consisted of vivid and concrete images of instructional practices that contributed to making a teaching philosophy real. Duffy (2002) described visioning as a teacher's conscious sense of herself and her own work. The results of this study confirmed that these student teachers did have visions of what their teaching would or should be like. By encouraging preservice teachers to articulate their visions as they develop, teacher educators would have a window into how their students understand their roles as reading teachers and as a first step in learning how their visions intersect with practice in particular contexts.

In some ways, the revelation of the student teachers' visions did not emerge until their visions intersected with practice in a classroom context. Smagorinsky and colleagues (2004) found that tensions associated with learning to teach can be productive in teacher development provided the teachers are guided to develop a clear vision for student learning and teaching methods to help them realize their vision. As visions intersect with practice in particular contexts, support from cooperating teachers and university supervisors is important in the student teacher's growth as a



teacher. Duffy (2002) argued that when teachers have a vision, they are more likely to take control of their decision-making in the classroom.

I suggest that one way for teacher educators to support student teachers in taking control of decision-making is to combine strategies used by Turner (2006), that of asking preservice teachers to write their visions in detail, and Brock, et al. (2007), providing debriefing sessions after teaching practicum events, in which preservice teachers identify for themselves the intersections they recognized in their own vision, practice, and context of teaching. For example, reading methods students assigned to a practicum, armed with their previously written vision statements, could share in a semi-structured discussion with question prompts such as, “In what ways did your vision of teaching reading connect smoothly with today’s instruction? In what ways did your vision conflict with today’s instruction? What accounts for the differences? What needs to change to smooth out the conflicts? What is your role in the process?” Teacher educators need to contribute to the discussions by listening and then guiding the preservice teachers to resources such as readings or classroom teachers willing to dialogue by e-mail and then share their responses with the group. A well-articulated vision coupled with appropriate conversations and reflection could constitute a dynamic tool for promoting learning throughout coursework, student teaching and into the first year of teaching.

Course activities designed to connect vision with practice must be contextualized for teacher candidates. Lloyd and Anders (1994) found that teachers were not as likely to embrace professional development practices if they were not connected to their own teaching context. Although during coursework preservice

teachers are unlikely to know exactly where they will be teaching, a decontextualized activity might be construed as “normal” and assumed to apply to classrooms from their own experience. For many preservice teachers, that would not include classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. The changing demographics of public schools underscore the importance of providing many activities that emphasize different contexts of teaching.

Using visioning to support preservice teacher learning requires attention to many possible scenarios and contexts in which the preservice teacher might teach. Some classroom contexts might include many different reading levels, English language learners, students of diverse backgrounds, unmotivated, disruptive students, students with special needs, or classroom constraints due to school or district policy. These different classroom contexts would help preservice teachers recognize the variety in real classrooms for which they must prepare. Teacher educators need to emphasize with preservice teachers that the strategies and techniques being taught are the “well” from which they must draw based on the needs of their students (Duffy, 2002). With more opportunities to adapt to different needs in the classroom, preservice teachers will experience beneficial tensions in the intersections of vision and practice in particular contexts, and those intersections could promote adaptability.

### ***Learning Classroom Management in Context***

A major intersection among vision, practice, and context for the participants was classroom management during reading instruction. The student teachers recognized the need to manage behavior and structure their classrooms in order for teaching and learning to occur. In all five cases, the student teacher reported the

desire for more understanding of classroom management, especially as it relates to a reading classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. In talking about envisioning his “ideal classroom,” Joseph commented that there would be no need for a classroom management plan because all the students would be motivated and focused on learning. The interdependence of instruction and classroom management should be emphasized with preservice teachers to discourage the erroneous conclusion that it is possible to teach reading without considering management of the classroom structure and dynamics. If Joseph’s vision had been explored in his coursework, for example, his vision of no need for classroom management might have been challenged before he began student teaching. It is possible Joseph said he would not need classroom management facetiously; however, the comment would still provide a place to launch a discussion about the importance of clear planning in that area.

Also important is to recognize whether classroom management expectations are based solely on the preservice teachers’ personal cultural influences. Research suggests that unlike “mainstream” students, children of color tend to be more motivated by the need for affiliation and an emphasis on feelings and personal connectedness (Delpit, 1995). Preservice teachers should have opportunities to envision and create a classroom management model for a group of hypothetical students motivated by individual achievement or students motivated by personal relationships rather than creating classroom management for “mainstream students” and “students of color.” This focus on what motivates students could discourage the kind of stereotyping that sometimes results when categories of students are generalized to particular characteristics. Rather, it allows preservice teachers to

understand motivation as one component to be considered without labeling entire groups.

Learning how to transition from one aspect of reading instruction to another, the level of organization necessary when teaching guided reading or conferencing with individual students, and teaching students routines and expectations all require opportunities to apply what is covered in reading pedagogy textbooks. For example, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) present a chapter on designing and organizing the classroom and another chapter on classroom management related to reading instruction. The authors provide detailed descriptions of how to create a reading classroom for balanced literacy instruction. These suggestions are necessary and helpful but not sufficient. What is also needed is the application of that knowledge to actual classroom situations. Teacher educators could support their students' learning by providing opportunities for contextualized learning about managing reading instruction. With more opportunities to explore how their visions intersect with teacher decision-making in diverse contexts, preservice teachers could acquire more adaptability.

Preservice teachers would benefit from more active involvement in management scenarios in the context of a classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. Activities might include role-playing, analyzing and discussing video displays of actual classroom situations, or field observations in classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. When possible, preservice teachers should have opportunities to evaluate how they would handle a real-life scenario and then discuss with the classroom teacher how she successfully handled the classroom management

challenge. Actual field experiences or technology-assisted entry into classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds are important in learning classroom management in context.

The technology exists in some schools and universities for video-conferences between a teacher education classroom and a K-12 classroom. Such technology would allow for interaction among preservice teachers and educators who teach students of diverse backgrounds in situations where distance or time precludes classroom visits. Beyond observation of the classroom, discussion with the teacher is vital. The teacher/preservice teacher interactions, whether on-site or by video-conference, would also allow for insight into the decision-making and thought processes of the teachers. Absent the advanced technological capability, video records of practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999) could be used to support preservice teacher learning about classroom management in reading classrooms, provided they are accompanied by written or taped discussions by the teacher articulating their motives and thought-processes.

### ***Learning to Teach Balanced Literacy***

In the school district Goals and Expectations for Balanced Literacy, no explicit references were made to culturally responsive teaching. Although Au (2006) recognized balanced literacy as appropriate for culturally responsive teachers, the “something more” I have argued is required for culturally responsive reading teachers must be stipulated. The implication for teacher education is that preparing preservice teachers for cultural responsiveness and then placing them in classrooms with non-culturally responsive teachers could result in two possible outcomes. First, the student

teachers could influence the cooperating teachers by their example and collaborate to make the classroom more culturally responsive.

Second, (and unfortunately more likely), the student teachers could adopt the non-culturally responsive practice of the cooperating teacher. This is also likely if the university support of culturally responsive teaching is limited to one or a small number of the Reading faculty. When a new initiative is not built coherently into the program of teacher education, it may not be valued by the students. Research also suggests that student teachers are likely to abandon progressive teaching strategies when faced with more traditional methods in student teaching.

Sylvia remembered from her reading courses that literature study circles are student-led. Samway and Whang (2003) acknowledged that many teachers continue to instruct in a teacher-centered fashion after being introduced to other approaches. They suggested that successful literature study circles are much more student-led than teacher-led. The teacher's participation should contribute to the group discussion but not be privileged over other group members (Hanssen, 1990). The discrepancy between Ms. R's practice and Sylvia's understanding may be a result of Ms. R's interpretation of district guidelines, which stipulated "guided reading groups" as opposed to "literature study circles." Guided reading is a context in which a teacher chooses and introduces a text to a small group of students and supports each reader's development of effective strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). At the middle-elementary school level with students past the beginning reading levels, literature study circles are appropriate. At any grade, substantial, explicit teaching of the procedural aspects of literature study circles is required for students to maintain the

structure on their own. The implication for reading teacher education is the need to provide many opportunities to practice classroom decision-making and discuss their decisions with others and with their instructor.

The strengths and weaknesses of the student teachers in balanced literacy instruction seem to be a function of inexperience, and yet student teachers and cooperating teachers tend to expect student teachers to perform to the level of a more veteran teacher. My recommendation for teacher education is to impress upon preservice teachers that student teaching is only the first segment in their field-based teacher preparation. Universities need to maintain a connection to and relationship with their new graduates at least through their first year of teaching. This extended induction period, supported by the university, should be a collaborative effort between the university and the school district.

The uneven success of these five student teachers in teaching balanced literacy highlights the need for teacher educators to treat student teachers in the same way they expect student teachers to treat their students – as individual learners with strengths and weaknesses, developmental needs, and different locations on the continuum of cultural responsiveness. Brock and colleagues (2007) argued that when teacher educators fail to address preservice teachers' individual differences, especially regarding dispositions, attitudes, and beliefs, they do a disservice not only to the preservice teachers but to their young students as well.

### ***Personal Characteristics – Student Teachers and Cooperating Teachers***

In analyzing data for all five student teachers, it became apparent that personal characteristics contributed to a more positive or more negative student teaching

experience. For example, Joseph's vision was not flexible or adaptive. His vision was strong and stable across both placements in student teaching. Joseph resisted his role as a learner in the student teaching experience. He exhibited insensitivity to the context and held rigid expectations of students and families. In contrast, Sylvia's vision intersected positively with her practice and the context as she connected with and adapted to her students' needs. Although she could not articulate that the bond she had forged with her students was moving her toward culturally responsive teaching, her instincts were good. Issues of race made Sylvia uncomfortable, but she was adaptive and willing to allow those tensions to lead to growth as a teacher. Sylvia's combination of personal characteristics coupled with knowledge and skills led her toward cultural responsiveness. This finding implies that identifying preservice teachers' personal characteristics early in their teacher preparation programs could help teacher educators challenge deficit thinking about students of diverse backgrounds and urban teaching. Equally important were the dispositions of the five participants regarding their willingness to student teach in an urban classroom with students of diverse backgrounds. Those more committed to teaching in urban classrooms before student teaching experienced more positive outcomes.

I am not suggesting that teacher candidates be screened or excluded based on personal characteristics; however, it is important to recognize which preservice teachers, based on their dispositions, might be more likely to envision culturally responsive teaching if provided appropriate preparation. Business leaders have long relied on personality profiles, not to disqualify employees but to better understand the strengths and compatibility of each member of the team. Similar applications might



prove useful in teacher preparation. For example, the Personal Profiles created by the DISC system<sup>27</sup> identify personal styles including working, learning, and social styles. One section assesses knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of diversity.

The personal characteristics and styles of the cooperating teachers played an important role in the student teachers' development as well. Knowing the personal profiles of student teachers and cooperating teachers could identify the possible combinations of individuals who are compatible and productive, compatible but not productive, and those whose styles cause tensions, either productive or unproductive. A tool such as DISC would help to match student teachers with cooperating teachers who would provide the most productive context for a particular student teacher's learning.

### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

The color-blind theme emerged for most of the participants as a way of dealing with diversity. The student teachers either stated that "differences are not a big deal" or that they "teach everyone the same as I would any child." With little previous exposure to individuals of different cultural backgrounds, it may have been difficult for the student teachers to imagine how culture could affect one's understanding of other people. Suzy, like the other participants, demonstrated a limited understanding of her role as a teacher in making the issues of culture valuable in the classroom. Although she learned in her coursework that home culture was important, she allowed her concept of "difference as not important" to reestablish itself. Her first graders did not talk about their cultures, their regular teacher did not

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<sup>27</sup> DISC Classic Version 9.0 (2001) is published by Inscape Publishing, Inc. More information may be found at [www.onlinedisc.com](http://www.onlinedisc.com)

encourage it, and their student teacher did not embrace it. Teacher educators need to create cultural contexts for preservice teachers, such as cross-cultural simulations, cultural immersion trips, and experiencing being in the minority to help them develop empathy for their students of diverse backgrounds (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

Valli (1995) found that some student teachers in cross-cultural settings who began with a color-blind view of students abandoned that view as they gained confidence and skill in the classroom. Through seminar discussions, the student teachers in Valli's study were challenged to reevaluate their responsiveness to their diverse classrooms and changed their practice as a result. The participants of this dissertation study experienced few challenges to their thinking about diversity, given the little emphasis of cultural responsiveness among the cooperating teachers and university supervisors. More opportunities to learn strategies in context might have helped them become more culturally responsive.

The culturally responsive beginnings, such as observed in Sylvia and to a more limited extent in Sarah, need to be identified and encouraged not only in Reading courses in teacher education programs but also by cooperating teachers of children of diverse backgrounds. Workshops and training sessions for cooperating teachers either on the university campus or in the schools could function as professional development for the cooperating teachers as well as encouraging culturally responsive strategies for the student teachers. Teacher educators need to encourage the use of these culturally responsive strategies with preservice teachers as carefully as they encourage addressing students' individual needs. For teachers to learn cultural responsiveness, teacher educators must teach these ideals systematically

and assist preservice teachers in envisioning them as part of their own instructional practice.

This study also suggests the need for more focus on preservice teachers' own cultures, interaction in communities different from their own, and opportunities to discuss and evaluate their understandings of community cultures. To support preservice teachers in thinking of themselves as cultural beings and to assist teacher educators in better understanding and adapting their teaching based on the needs of their teacher candidates, Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth (2004) suggested that teacher education classrooms function as cultural construction zones. In the field of reading teacher education, Hoffman and Pearson (2000) reported that requiring teachers to learn more about the cultures of their students and school communities in active ways resulted in more culturally responsive pedagogy. Community experiences may lead to understandings of a variety of cultural practices and strengths not evident to the preservice teacher in classroom interactions (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Preservice teachers could be challenged to critically examine how they view their own and others' cultures in relation to privilege and oppression, which could encourage their attention to developing their students' critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

A culturally responsive (or relevant) teacher supports her students in gaining power over their own lives. One step to gaining that power is to critically assess the school curriculum, the decisions made on their behalf, and the institutions of society that maintain an inequitable balance of power. Culturally responsive teachers should be agents of change (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) helping their students of diverse backgrounds become social critics able to make decisions that promote social justice

(Gay, 2000). For the participants of this study and other preservice teachers like them, being an agent of change begins with oneself. The first steps in becoming culturally responsive, as Sylvia demonstrated, are to become self-aware and to engage in dialogues about cultural diversity (Gay, 2000). Then with a knowledge base about cultural diversity in education, a teacher is better prepared to become an agent of change.

Finding cooperating teachers who are able to help student teachers develop as culturally responsive reading teachers remains a challenge because of the limited number of culturally responsive teachers in practice and the importance of having appropriate role models in the classroom. In many universities, simply finding enough classrooms for student teacher placements requires casting a wide net, resulting in some less-than-optimum placements. Student teachers need mentor teachers in classrooms that will support acquisition of culturally responsive pedagogy. In this study, Sylvia's cooperating teacher demonstrated some modeling of cultural responsiveness. The challenge is to identify other teachers who would be good mentors in urban classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds. The findings of this study emphasize the need to appropriately pair student teachers with cooperating teachers whose characteristics and dispositions complement the development of the student teacher, as in the case of Sylvia. A more rigorous matching scheme is needed to improve the compatibility between student teachers and cooperating teachers such as described in the previous section.

The challenge is multi-faceted. First, teacher education programs must change curriculum to emphasize cultural responsiveness (Lazar, 2004). This change requires

critical assessment by teacher educators individually and by the teacher education program as a whole to insure a coherent program that not only includes diversity in its mission statement but also infuses curriculum integrating cultural responsiveness into every course and field experience. As suggested by McDonald (2005) the curriculum must include opportunities for preservice teachers to acquire both the conceptual framework and the practical strategies for working effectively with students of diverse backgrounds.

Second, teacher educators should improve their partnerships with classroom teachers by providing more professional development for prospective cooperating teachers (Smaller, 2007) and work collaboratively with the schools and teachers to learn from culturally responsive practitioners (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Over a number of years, a teacher education program concerned with preparing culturally responsive teachers can tap their own previous graduates to provide early field experiences and then accept student teachers. The key is to continue relationships with graduates through their induction years and establish their commitment to assisting in the preparation of new teachers for cultural responsiveness.

Finally, research suggests that one semester is unlikely to change attitudes, and during one semester of student teaching, these five student teachers moved very little toward cultural responsiveness. In addition to a curricular change, the timeframe for classroom experience with students of diverse backgrounds should increase to allow for more development over time. One-year internships in classrooms with students of diverse backgrounds would allow for more opportunities to experience the

intersections of vision, practice, and context and the learning that accompanies those intersections.

### **Implications for Research**

This dissertation study extends research on preservice teacher vision of culturally responsive reading instruction (Turner, 2006) by exploring the intersections of vision, practice, and context in student teaching. The data were collected during one semester of student teaching. In order to better understand how vision develops and changes with practice in the context of teaching students of diverse backgrounds, research, beginning early in teacher preparation programs and continuing through the first years of teaching is needed. By following preservice teachers through their years of teacher preparation, student teaching, and then into their first teaching positions, researchers would gain understanding of the possible trajectories of vision and practice in particular contexts. Talking with new teachers about their conceptions of teaching students of diverse backgrounds at different points in time would allow researchers to learn when, how, and under what conditions understandings about teaching students of diverse backgrounds change.

More exploration is also needed of what allows student teachers like Sylvia to grow toward culturally responsive teaching in contrast to Joseph, who resisted changing his vision and practice. Hammerness (2006) talked about the “dark side” of vision, which might be exclusionary or based on cultural bias. What accounts for the positive/negative dimension of vision? What makes one student teacher’s vision dynamic and productive while another’s remains static and discouraging? What role do the student teachers’ personal characteristics play?

The student teachers' personal characteristics emerged from the data as an important influence. My first research question focused on what sources contributed to the student teachers' visions, and I found that personal characteristics seemed to influence how the student teachers thought about teaching and students. The issue of how personal characteristics influenced the intersections of vision, practice, and context is a topic for further research. Characteristics of adaptability, personal reflection, and optimism seemed to make a difference in the success of the student teaching experience. Different combinations of these characteristics might have contributed to how intersections of vision, practice, and context were perceived and managed; however, more research is needed to explore how these and other characteristics influence vision and practice and how to support preservice teachers in developing those characteristics that seem to lead to more positive student teaching experiences.

Another area for additional research is the assessment of student teachers' cultural responsiveness. My checklist of Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies began as an observation checklist to stimulate my thinking about cultural responsiveness as I observed the student teachers. Learning the perceptions of the student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors using the same checklist was valuable; however, more research is needed to extend the usefulness of the checklist as an evaluative instrument. Using alternate wording might focus each item more and reduce the inference required to interpret the meaning of each strategy statement. Meeting with the cooperating teachers and university supervisors to discuss culturally responsive reading instruction and to train them on the use of the

checklist before they evaluate their student teachers on the strategies would contribute to alignment among the evaluators.

Adding a qualitative component could help the researcher understand motives and intentions. For example, probing in an interview or conversation why particular responses were given or developing related open-ended questions, would help articulate the respondent's reasoning. Such an instrument could assist teacher educators in scaffolding the development of culturally responsive strategies in preservice teachers as well as provide preservice teachers a self-evaluation tool for reflection and discussion.

A sociocultural perspective provided the foundation for this dissertation and allowed for the unit of analysis to include the student teacher within the context of student teaching. The graphic display of the intersections of vision, practice, and context (see Chapters One and Five) provided a visual representation of the intersection of vision, practice, and context in teaching reading to students of diverse backgrounds. The graphic showed the possibility of one of the three elements of vision, practice and context being dominant for a particular student teacher. Further research could strengthen the understanding of the relationship among the three elements. Under what circumstances is one element dominant, and is the dominance of one over the others more conducive to culturally responsive teaching? I have theorized in this dissertation that culturally responsive teaching lies in intersections in which context is dominant with a large overlap of vision and practice with context, but more research is needed to test this assertion. The data also suggested that vision, practice, and context could have a more positive or more negative dimension



resulting in different outcomes for the student teacher and that change across time should be considered. The positive/negative dimension and change across time are added dimensions that are not displayed on the current graphic representation of intersections and need to be conceptualized further.

### **Final Comments**

In August, 2007, three of the study participants, Suzy, Sarah, and Sylvia were hired by the urban district in which they student taught. Suzy is teaching a second grade class. Sarah, in the same school as Suzy, is teaching third grade. Sylvia teaches fourth grade in a different school. They have each put into practice many aspects of the visions they discussed with me during student teaching.

As part of the university teacher preparation program, urban teachers are invited as panelists to discuss urban teaching with preservice teachers before their urban field placements. This semester, Suzy, Sarah, and Sylvia took part in the urban educator panel. I had the opportunity to speak with them before the event and then hear their presentations and how they fielded questions from the audience. I was struck by how only six-weeks into their first full-time teaching position, they were able to articulate their classroom responses to many of the issues that loomed so large in student teaching. They recognize they are still learning to teach and admit to the challenges they face each day, but each one expressed a renewed vision of teaching students of diverse backgrounds.

Sarah reminded the preservice teachers to pay attention both to activating students' prior knowledge and to building relationships between what they know and

what you want to teach them. Suzy talked about not assuming that parents do not care about their children's education just because they are not visible at school. She told the audience about her students' home languages and how to find resource people in the school and in the community to help with communication. Sylvia has worked hard to meet almost every parent of her students. She has invited her own grandparents into her class to read as a first step in bringing students' families into the classroom. It is possible that these ideas emerged from their reflections on their learning in student teaching. It is also possible that our conversations and interviews about their intersections of vision, practice, and context underscored for them the importance of taking students' home cultures and families into account. These beginnings provide the promise and possibility of developing culturally responsive teachers from among preservice teachers who began with little cross-cultural experience or knowledge of what it means to teach reading in culturally responsive ways.

## Appendix A: Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies

Culturally Responsive Indicators and Strategies	
Indicator	Strategies
1. High regard for student and family competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Intentionally teaches societal contributions of diverse individuals</li> <li>b. Invites parents to share expertise with class</li> <li>c. Contacts and communicates with parents as partners in student learning</li> <li>d. Incorporates funds of knowledge from home to build literacy at school</li> <li>e. Seeks out and uses community resources</li> <li>f. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom literacy activities</li> </ul>
2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identifies home literacy practices</li> <li>b. Validates home literacy practice</li> <li>c. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom practices</li> <li>d. Provides authentic literacy experiences based on students' community context</li> </ul>
3. Engages students in higher level thinking with text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Encourages students to predict before reading</li> <li>b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading</li> <li>c. Allows for creative responses to text</li> <li>d. Provides high level engagement with text for all students</li> </ul>
4. Modifies content for relevance to students' lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Uses multicultural literature</li> <li>b. Intentionally chooses texts and other materials to reflect students' cultures</li> <li>c. Allows students to choose from a variety of texts</li> <li>d. Allows students to choose responses to literature that are personally relevant</li> <li>e. Activates students' prior knowledge to connect with concepts being taught</li> </ul>
5. Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Determines students' learning styles and uses them to inform lesson planning</li> </ul>

participation in a variety of ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Uses knowledge of culturally-based learning preferences to plan lessons</li> <li>c. Scaffolds student “ownership” of literacy</li> <li>d. Delegates authority to student groups while holding them accountable</li> <li>e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students</li> <li>f. Provides access to abstract concepts in multiple ways</li> </ul>
6. Values home culture/language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Validates students’ home language, dialect or way of speaking</li> <li>b. Uses students’ home language as bridge to learning standard English</li> <li>c. Promotes bi-literacy</li> </ul>
7. Social justice-fosters equality of educational outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Allows equitable time to all reading groups</li> <li>b. Provides consistent rigor in expectations for all reading groups and individuals</li> <li>c. Provides authentic reading and writing experiences</li> <li>d. Systematically teaches reading, writing and language skills to all children</li> <li>e. Makes all instructional tools available to all students, regardless of reading level</li> <li>f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level</li> <li>g. Assesses students based on both group and individual work.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix B: Coding Categories – Intersections**

### **Intersections**

#### **Classroom Management**

- Structure – positive/negative
- Organization
- Routines
- Parents
- Behavior management
- Expectations of students
- Co-op's style
- Connection between CM and instruction

#### **Balanced Literacy Instruction**

- Time
- Application of teacher education learning
- District requirements
- Students' needs
- Students' prior knowledge
- Thematic units
- Reading not easy to teach
- Cooperating teacher
- Parent role
- Action orientation – or not
- Aspects of instruction
- Script vs. creativity

#### **Culture**

- Deficit view
- Obstacles
- Concern over discussing racial issues
- English language learners
- Expectations of parents
- Expectations of urban students
- In curriculum
- Culture as irrelevant
- Unrealistic expectations of knowledge

## Appendix C: Data Summary – Indicators and Strategies of Culturally Responsive Reading Instruction

Use by Participants Reported by Student Teacher, Cooperating Teacher, University Supervisor, and  
Researcher

S = sometimes observed; C = consistently observed

Participant: HUNTER

Au (2006)	Au (2000); Gay (2000)	Hunter	Co-op	Supervisor	Researcher
Indicator	Classroom Strategies				
1. High regard for student & family competence	a. Intentionally teaches societal contributions of diverse individuals		S		
	b. Invites parents to share expertise with class				
	c. Contacts and communicates with parents as partners in student learning		S		
	d. Incorporates students' funds of knowledge from home to build literacy at school	S	S	S	
	e. Seeks out and uses community resources				
	f. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom literacy activities				
2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school)	a. Identifies home literacy practices	C	S		
	b. Validates home literacy practices	C	S		
	c. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom practices		S		
	d. Provides authentic literacy experiences based on students' community context		S		
3. Engages students in higher level thinking with text	a. Encourages students to predict before reading	S	C	S	C
	b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading	S	S	S	C
	c. Allows for creative responses to text	C	S	S	
	d. Provides high level engagement with text for all students	C	S	S	
4. Modifies content for relevance to students' lives	a. Uses multicultural literature		S		
	b. Intentionally chooses texts and other materials to reflect students' cultures				
	c. Allows students to choose from a variety of texts	S	S	S	
	d. Allows students to choose responses to literature that are personally relevant	S	S		

	e. Activates students' prior knowledge to connect with concepts being taught	C	C	S	C
5. Structures participation in a variety of ways	a. Determines students' learning styles and uses them to inform lesson planning	S	S		
	b. Uses knowledge of culturally-based learning preferences to plan lessons		S		
	c. Scaffolds student "ownership" of literacy	S	C		
	d. Delegates authority to student groups while holding them accountable	S	C	S	
6. Values home culture/language	e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students	C	C	S	S
	f. Provides access to abstract concepts in multiple ways	S	C		
	a. Validates students' home language, dialect or way of speaking	C	S		
	b. Uses students' home language as bridge to learning standard English				
7. Social justice-fosters equality of educational outcomes	c. Promotes bi-literacy				
	a. Allows equitable time to all reading groups	S	S	S	
	b. Provides consistent rigor in expectations for all reading groups and individuals	S	S	S	
	c. Provides authentic reading and writing experiences		C	S	
	d. Systematically teaches reading, writing and language skills to all children	S	C	S	
	e. Makes all instructional tools available to all students, regardless of reading level	S	C	S	C
	f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level	C	C	S	
	g. Assesses students based on both group and individual work	C	C	S	

Participant: SYLVIA

Indicator	Classroom Strategies	Sylvia	Co-op	Supervisor	Researcher
1. High regard for student & family competence	a. Intentionally teaches societal contributions of diverse individuals	S	S		
	b. Invites parents to share expertise with class				
	c. Contacts and communicates with parents as partners in student learning	C			
	d. Incorporates students' funds of knowledge from home to build literacy at school		S		
	e. Seeks out and uses community resources	S			
	f. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom literacy activities				
2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school)	a. Identifies home literacy practices	S			
	b. Validates home literacy practices	S			
	c. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom practices	S			
	d. Provides authentic literacy experiences based on students' community context	C	S		
3. Engages students in higher level thinking with text	a. Encourages students to predict before reading	C	C	S	C
	b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading	C	C	S	C
	c. Allows for creative responses to text	C	C	S	
	d. Provides high level engagement with text for all students	S	C	S	C
4. Modifies content for relevance to students' lives	a. Uses multicultural literature	S	S		
	b. Intentionally chooses texts and other materials to reflect students' cultures	S	S		
	c. Allows students to choose from a variety of texts	C	C	S	
	d. Allows students to choose responses to literature that are personally relevant	C	S	S	
	e. Activates students' prior	S	C	S	C



	knowledge to connect with concepts being taught				
5. Structures participation in a variety of ways	a. Determines students' learning styles and uses them to inform lesson planning	C	C	S	C
	b. Uses knowledge of culturally-based learning preferences to plan lessons	S			
	c. Scaffolds student "ownership" of literacy	C	C	S	C
	d. Delegates authority to student groups while holding them accountable	C	C	S	
	e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students	C	C	S	
	f. Provides access to abstract concepts in multiple ways	S	C	S	
6. Values home culture /language	a. Validates students' home language, dialect or way of speaking	C			S
	b. Uses students' home language as bridge to learning standard English	C			
	c. Promotes bi-literacy	S			
7. Social justice-fosters equality of educational outcomes	a. Allows equitable time to all reading groups	C	C	S	C
	b. Provides consistent rigor in expectations for all reading groups and individuals	C	C	S	C
	c. Provides authentic reading and writing experiences	C	C	S	
	d. Systematically teaches reading, writing and language skills to all children		C	S	
	e. Makes all instructional tools available to all students, regardless of reading level	S	C	S	
	f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level	C	C	S	C
	g. Assesses students based on both group and individual work	S	C	S	

Participant: SUZY					
Indicator	Classroom Strategies	Suzy	Co-op	Supervisor	Researcher
1. High regard for student & family competence	a. Intentionally teaches societal contributions of diverse individuals				
	b. Invites parents to share expertise with class				
	c. Contacts and communicates with parents as partners in student learning		NO DATA		
	d. Incorporates students' funds of knowledge from home to build literacy at school	C			
	e. Seeks out and uses community resources	C			
	f. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom literacy activities	S			
2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school)	a. Identifies home literacy practices	S			
	b. Validates home literacy practices	S			
	c. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom practices	S	NO DATA		
	d. Provides authentic literacy experiences based on students' community context				
3. Engages students in higher level thinking with text	a. Encourages students to predict before reading	C		S	
	b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading	C	NO DATA	S	C
	c. Allows for creative responses to text	S		S	
	d. Provides high level engagement with text for all students	S		S	
4. Modifies content for relevance to students' lives	a. Uses multicultural literature	S			
	b. Intentionally chooses texts and other materials to reflect students' cultures		NO DATA		
	c. Allows students to choose from a variety of texts	C		S	
	d. Allows students to choose responses to literature that are personally relevant	S		S	
	e. Activates students' prior knowledge to connect with concepts being taught	C		S	S
5. Structures	a. Determines students' learning	S		S	

participation in a variety of ways	styles and uses them to inform lesson planning				
	b. Uses knowledge of culturally- based learning preferences to plan lessons		NO DATA		
	c. Scaffolds student “ownership” of literacy			S	
	d. Delegates authority to student groups while holding them accountable	S		S	
	e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students	C		S	C
	f. Provides access to abstract concepts in multiple ways	C		S	
6. Values home culture /language	a. Validates students’ home language, dialect or way of speaking	S			
	b. Uses students’ home language as bridge to learning standard English	S	NO DATA		
7. Social justice-fosters equality of educational outcomes	c. Promotes bi-literacy				
	a. Allows equitable time to all reading groups			S	
	b. Provides consistent rigor in expectations for all reading groups and individuals	S	NO DATA	S	
	c. Provides authentic reading and writing experiences	C		S	S
	d. Systematically teaches reading, writing and language skills to all children	C		S	S
	e. Makes all instructional tools available to all students, regardless of reading level	C		S	
	f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level	C		S	
	g. Assesses students based on both group and individual work	S		S	

Participant: SARAH					
Indicator	Classroom Strategies	Sarah	Co-op C	Supervisor	Researcher
1. High regard for student & family competence	a. Intentionally teaches societal contributions of diverse individuals				
	b. Invites parents to share expertise with class	S			
	c. Contacts and communicates with parents as partners in student learning	S	S		S
	d. Incorporates students' funds of knowledge from home to build literacy at school	S	S		S
	e. Seeks out and uses community resources	S	C	S	S
	f. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom literacy activities	S	S		
2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school)	a. Identifies home literacy practices	S	S		
	b. Validates home literacy practices		S		
	c. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom practices	S	S		
	d. Provides authentic literacy experiences based on students' community context	S	C		
3. Engages students in higher level thinking with text	a. Encourages students to predict before reading	C	C	S	S
	b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading	C	C	S	C
	c. Allows for creative responses to text	C	C	S	
	d. Provides high level engagement with text for all students	S	C	S	
4. Modifies content for relevance to students' lives	a. Uses multicultural literature	S	C	S	S
	b. Intentionally chooses texts and other materials to reflect students' cultures	C	C	S	
	c. Allows students to choose from a variety of texts	S	C	S	
	d. Allows students to choose responses to literature that are personally relevant	S	C	S	
	e. Activates students' prior knowledge to connect with concepts being taught	C	C	S	S

5. Structures participation in a variety of ways	a. Determines students' learning styles and uses them to inform lesson planning	S	C	S	
	b. Uses knowledge of culturally-based learning preferences to plan lessons	S	S		
	c. Scaffolds student "ownership" of literacy	C	S	S	S
	d. Delegates authority to student groups while holding them accountable	S	S	S	S
	e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students	C	C	S	
	f. Provides access to abstract concepts in multiple ways	S	S	S	S
6. Values home culture/language	a. Validates students' home language, dialect or way of speaking	C	C		S
	b. Uses students' home language as bridge to learning standard English	S	S		
	c. Promotes bi-literacy	C			
7. Social justice-fosters equality of educational outcomes	a. Allows equitable time to all reading groups	S	C	S	
	b. Provides consistent rigor in expectations for all reading groups and individuals	S	S	S	S
	c. Provides authentic reading and writing experiences	C	C	S	S
	d. Systematically teaches reading, writing and language skills to all children	S	C	S	S
	e. Makes all instructional tools available to all students, regardless of reading level	C	C	S	S
	f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level	C	C	S	C
	g. Assesses students based on both group and individual work	S	C		

Participant: JOSEPH (SECOND PLACEMENT)					
Indicator	Classroom Strategies	Joseph	Co-op	Supervisor	Researcher
1. High regard for student & family competence	a. Intentionally teaches societal contributions of diverse individuals	S		S	
	b. Invites parents to share expertise with class				
	c. Contacts and communicates with parents as partners in student learning		C	S	
	d. Incorporates students' funds of knowledge from home to build literacy at school	S	S		
	e. Seeks out and uses community resources				
	f. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom literacy activities	S	S	S	
2. Recognizes literacy demands of community (different from school)	a. Identifies home literacy practices	C	S		
	b. Validates home literacy practices	C	S		
	c. Uses home literacy practices as a bridge to classroom practices	C	S		
	d. Provides authentic literacy experiences based on students' community context	S	S		
3. Engages students in higher level thinking with text	a. Encourages students to predict before reading	S	C	S	S
	b. Encourages students to draw inferences during and after reading	C	C	S	C
	c. Allows for creative responses to text	S	C		
	d. Provides high level engagement with text for all students	S	C	S	
4. Modifies content for relevance to students' lives	a. Uses multicultural literature		S		
	b. Intentionally chooses texts and other materials to reflect students' cultures		C		
	c. Allows students to choose from a variety of texts	C	C	S	
	d. Allows students to choose responses to literature that are personally relevant	S	C		
	e. Activates students' prior knowledge to connect with concepts being taught	C	C	S	S
5. Structures	a. Determines students' learning	S	C	S	

participation in a variety of ways	styles and uses them to inform lesson planning					
	b. Uses knowledge of culturally- based learning preferences to plan lessons	S	S			
	c. Scaffolds student “ownership” of literacy	S	C			
	d. Delegates authority to student groups while holding them accountable	C	C	S		
	e. Provides opportunities for interaction among students	C	C	C	S	
	f. Provides access to abstract concepts in multiple ways	S	C	S		
6. Values home culture/language	a. Validates students’ home language, dialect or way of speaking		S			
	b. Uses students’ home language as bridge to learning standard English	S				
7. Social justice-fosters equality of educational outcomes	c. Promotes bi-literacy	S				
	a. Allows equitable time to all reading groups	S	S	S	S	
	b. Provides consistent rigor in expectations for all reading groups and individuals	S	C			
	c. Provides authentic reading and writing experiences	S	S			S
	d. Systematically teaches reading, writing and language skills to all children	S	C	S		
	e. Makes all instructional tools available to all students, regardless of reading level	C	C			
	f. Makes all grade-appropriate content and concept-building available to all students regardless of reading level	C	C	S	S	
	g. Assesses students based on both group and individual work	C	C			

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