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A Discourse on Literacy and Community: Research Relationships for Preservice Teachers

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By Karen Broaddus and David Landis

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Abstract

This written dialogue between two university researchers explores how different forms of preservice teacher inquiry work as active components of language arts coursework in elementary education. We will discuss
issues of design and implementation:

1. Theoretical contexts for including research in teacher education
2. Selecting settings for preservice teacher research
3. Defining research tasks
4. Examining professional research relationships
5. Forms for reflection
6. Analyzing research outcomes

Our positions will be illustrated using the results of two distinct examples of literacy research: a study exploring the experiences of two preservice teachers conducting individual case studies of literacy development and a study examining a classroom-based research experience for one undergraduate.We will examine the role inquiry played in establishing professional relationships and how the three preservice teachers' use of language reflected their situational contexts-- the social and cultural messages embedded in their stories of teaching and learning.

Background

Karen Broaddus and David Landis are university professors who supervise preservice teachers conducting field-based literacy research in elementary and middle schools. The following written dialogue began as an informal conversation between these two researchers. The focus of the discussion quickly turned to the issues involved in supporting novice teachers as they explore literacy using inquiry-based methods. Both Karen and David have had recent experience using qualitative research methods in their courses with preservice teachers. For this discussion, they will present research conducted by three of their students. Karen shares portraits of two preservice teachers, Jackie and Ashley. Jackie conducted a semester-long case study of a third-grade student who had difficulty reading fluently and often refused to write. Ashley conducted a similar case study of a fourth-grade student who had reading comprehension problems. In

contrast, David's work with preservice teachers has focused on classroom-based research.He will describe his work with preservice teacher Lynn and cooperating teacher Allison in a fourth-grade classroom. In the following dialogue, Karen and David will examine how different settings and research tasks affect learning experiences for preservice teachers.

Overview

Karen: Through this conversation, I would like to explore different ways of using inquiry methods in preservice teacher education in the language arts. Each year, I consider how to set up effective field research experiences that encourage preservice teachers to reflect on the complexity of children's language and literacy development. I attempt to place my students in research environments in which they feel they are able to pose personally relevant questions about educating children in the language arts. How does conducting this type of field-based research affect preservice teachers' relationships with children, parents, and teachers? In turn, how does acting as a researcher in a new community influence preservice teachers' perspectives about language arts education?

David: I began to look at settings in order to explore preservice teachers' views about their research experiences. According to Erickson and Shultz (1992), understanding educational experiences requires close attention to what the student brings to the setting and to what is present in the setting-- the people, artifacts, and social relations. The importance of field-based research is presented in Mosenthal's (1996) study of one preservice student who viewed her learning in terms of the practices that appeared appropriate for her work with elementary students. In essence, she evaluated her work according to her standards for good teaching. As I considered what might be meant by preservice teachers' views (Dixon &Green, 1996), a key concept that informed my approach was interaction or the contributions of people to what is happening at a particular location in time.

Karen: The community setting and research relationships deserve careful consideration as we design studies that involve preservice teachers as practitioners. Wagner (1997) discusses distinctions among three different areas of researcher-practitioner cooperation in research: data-extraction agreements, clinical partnerships, and co-learning agreements. Research may alter the social environment within a school, and Wagner concludes,"Organizational features of educational research projects represent social interventions in their own right" (p. 20). Research relationships not only change communication within the immediate setting, but also may change an individual's relationship with an institution. However, these social elements of research design are often not examined at the university level. I would like to talk with you more about how we as researchers design multilayered studies that explore the social settings of research experiences for preservice teachers.

Theoretical Contexts for Research in Teacher Education

David: My approach to exploring preservice teachers' views is based on readings in cultural anthropology (e.g. Geertz, 1983; Spradley,1980) and interactional sociolinguistics and ethnography (e.g. Green and Bloome, 1997). These constructs focus on individuals' actions with language and describe their language and actions as social and cultural processes.I was interested

in finding out more about preservice teachers' viewpoints on the projects they planned and implemented while enrolled in a reading/language arts methods course. In order to look more closely at such views, I investigate the interactions of one preservice teacher, Lynn, with her cooperating teacher, Allison. I selected this case because of the opportunity to audiotape and videotape in Allison's classroom. My goal was to understand the field-based lessons and projects as a preservice teacher might. Lynn's relationship with her cooperating teacher-- their everyday routines and practices-- both supported and challenged my interpretations. I found my research examining Lynn's and Allison's interactions. During the semester, they developed particular topics of conversation and ways of engaging in discussions with one another. Through their conversations, they developed a repertoire of social routines, a shared world of experiences, and I noticed how they mutually influenced one another (e.g. Lindfors, 1991). I also noticed that their developing interactions were markedly different from the interactions that I had with Lynn.

Karen: Social relationships are a powerful part of the research process. The relationships preservice teachers develop when they are researchers are quite different than the relationships they develop as student interns in field settings. Perhaps a discussion of what definitions of research best fit our work with preservice teachers should be one focus in this conversation. Richardson (1994) provides an excellent overview of the differentiation between formal research and practical inquiry. Formal research provides the type of information that stretches the boundaries of what has been established as common knowledge in the areas of teaching and learning.Practical inquiry is more likely to lead to a deeper understanding of daily issues in the classroom; this research setting allows teachers to reflect on personal beliefs. As a result, classroom change is more likely to emerge from the contexts of practical research. For preservice teachers who a truly novice practitioners, practical research provides an opportunity to look closely at individual students, teaching practices, and the social and cultural contexts of learning. It is firsthand experience connecting theory and practice by posing questions within specific settings.

David: Questions that I posed tended to focus on how interactions were constructed by Lynn, Allison, and their students. For example, their conversations and writing could be considered as "texts" representing their daily life in that particular classroom (Bloome and Egan-Robertson, 1993).Talk and gestures that class members created could serve as "resources" that could be taken up by other people through interactions. In the present study, the communications between Lynn, her students, and Allison served as texts that represented their ongoing experiences. Following Dixon and Green (1996), these texts are understood a) as produced through local interactions, b) are shaped and reshaped over time, and c) are representative of the social, cultural, and historical knowledge needed in order to participate in activities at the field site.

Karen: I am intrigued by your explorations of language as text.I have found that the language of preservice teacher researchers reveals understandings about issues of power in the relationships they form as researchers. Kleinsasser (1988) notes that the very label 'student teacher' is an oxymoron for everyone involved in the learning situation. How are interpersonal relationships cultivated when one is both a teacher and a learner? Status is rarely clear in a school environment, and preservice teachers often find themselves at points of transition where they are forced to renegotiate their roles. Cole and Knowles (1993) raise thought-provoking questions about how such research relationships evolve. Knowles speaks from experience. His own

relationship with one preservice teacher, Elizabeth,was threatened because the roles in their research partnership were not clearly delineated. Elizabeth had become a source for information on teacher development rather than a principal researcher in their project. As a result,she chose to remove herself from the study. I have found it useful to use the matrix Cole and Knowles set up as an organizational framework to help researchers consider technical, personnel, procedural, ethical, political, and educational issues that may arise in collaborative research relationships with preservice teachers. In my own research, I scheduled regular sessions where university students' concerns or questions about research relationships were discussed. It was in this informal setting that the conversations most clearly revealed the complexity of research interactions. The preservice teachers kept returning to this type of storytelling as a means of discussing research relationships.

David: In my study, I also found that a striking pattern of interaction was the telling of stories by Lynn, the preservice teacher, and Allison, the cooperating teacher, as they talked about teaching and learning. The stories they told tended to focus on how various activities worked or did not work with their students. Conle (1996) explains that storytelling is a way to build knowledge about teaching. The preservice teachers in her study related specific items and experiences to one another and created metaphors that were useful for developing their understanding of teaching.The analysis by Conle helps to explain how storytelling was used by Lynn and Allison to jointly construct and share knowledge about teaching in fourth grade. I found it interesting how this knowledge was intimately tied to interactions. Cortazzi (1993) explains that stories represent "event-structured knowledge" or specific, situated understandings. Stories could provide insight into ways that preservice teachers develop understandings about teaching and learning through the interactions at their field-based settings.What are your thoughts about the field settings for your students?

Selecting Settings for Preservice Teacher Research

Karen: I struggle with the complexity of supporting preservice teachers in conducting research projects in diverse field settings. I have been experimenting with limiting the focus of research to individual case studies of children who are experiencing difficulty learning to read and write. I have found that the problems and issues that arise from the intensive study of one child as opposed to the study of a classroom of children are unpredictable and sometimes ethically or culturally acute in a particularly personal sense. The "average" child is nonexistent. Each of the preservice teacher's stories underscores the powerful research experience of coming to know an individual learner. Reflections revolve around family and community contexts for literacy; these children usually come from strikingly different backgrounds than the preservice teachers. This discrepancy often leads the preservice teachers to reflect on their own experiences learning to read and write. I find this connection between personal history and the selection of a case study to be fascinating. How did you arrange research placements in field settings? What type of data have you found to be most useful to collect?

David: I agree with you about the significance between the connection between research selection and personal history. I'm reminded of the decision to focus on Lynn because of arrangements that her cooperating teacher had made for videotaping of the lessons. In order to build my understanding about Lynn's personal history and her experiences at the field site, I

selected particular research tasks: observing her field teaching, writing reflections about my observations, conducting several informal interviews and one formal interview with Lynn during the semester, videotaping three extended conversations between Lynn and her cooperating teacher, and reviewing written work such as the reports of the research projects that Lynn accomplished. The final sources of data for this investigation included participant observation in 8 hourlong lessons, 100 pages of field notes, 8 hours of videotaped lessons, 5 hours of video and audiotaped interviews (involving Lynn, her cooperating teacher at the field site, other students enrolled in the methods course, and myself), and 180 pages of preservice teachers' written artifacts. I conducted a topical and thematic analysis of conversations and interviews in order to account for as much of what was said as possible. I held conversations with the cooperating teacher and Lynn in order to check my interpretations with them, and I engaged in cycles of raising questions and answers about what I observed. How did you arrange research field settings for the preservice teachers and collect data on their experiences?

Karen: My study examined the issues involved when two preservice teachers, Jackie and Ashley, undertook intensive, semesterlong literacy case study research projects. My study of professional relationships-the social and cultural contexts of research-included individual interviews at the beginning and end of their research, and a group interview during the research. I observed two tutoring sessions, and I observed both preservice teachers weekly during their fiveweek field placement in the language arts classroom. Further data included my research log, both preservice teachers' research logs and final case studies, transcripts, videotapes, and audiotapes. Considering personal history was an important aspect of this study. Both of these preservice teachers were in their early twenties and came from upper middle class, suburban families in the midAtlantic states. Jackie was European American; she was an only child who had moved several times in elementary school. Ashley was Korean American; her family had emigrated from Korea when she was in third grade. Both women were in their fourth year of a five-year degree program; student teaching would take place during the year after the research.

The research setting was a professional development school in a small city; the school was located between a low income, public housing project and a middle class neighborhood. Jackie's case study child was third grader J. J.; he was enrolled in the gifted program, but had difficulty reading fluently and often refused to write. Ashley's case study child was Ann, a fourth grader who had reading comprehension problems and was physically handicapped. Both children came from middle class, African American families. Interestingly enough, Jackie and Ashley each chose a case study child whose literacy experiences paralleled difficult situations in their own school histories. Jackie described the isolation she felt when she was designated as a gifted student; third grade was a particularly trying year for her. She empathized with J. J.'s reluctance to write. Ashley chose to study a fourth grader, Ann, whom the teacher felt needed individual attention, particularly since she was frequently taken out of class for special programs. Fourth grade was also a difficult time for Ashley when she received special support as she adjusted to her move from Korea to the United States. In many instances, these two women were using the research tasks to explore issues that were part of their own personal histories. What role did the assigned research tasks play in your study?

Defining Research Tasks

David: The teaching that Lynn did became her research much more so than the research tasks (see Table 1) that I assigned. For her course requirements, Lynn completed four research projects and also planned and delivered eight hours of instruction at her elementary school. The first research project involved interviewing a student who spoke English as a second language about personal experiences in American schools. The second task was to talk about schooling with the parents of a child with special needs. All of the preservice teachers wrote brief reports describing these conversations and conclusions that were drawn. The third research project was to plan and carry out a program of assessment and evaluation for one student over the course of the semester. Each preservice teacher completed a report describing what had been done and providing interpretations of the results. The fourth project involved arranging notes and reactions to instructor and studentselected readings, discussions, and other written materials across three portfolios. University students designed these portfolios to demonstrate and analyze their progress towards course goals. Teaching became research for Lynn through the questions that she posed. What type of academic activities do children enjoy? What methods and procedures work with children? Her efforts in the field began to focus on answering these two questions.

Interviews
classroom teacher February 18, March 3, April 21
university instructor March 4
parent(s) of a a child with special needs April 12
with student speaking English as a second language April 12
Observations
week-long participation in elementary school classroom March 3-7
three students' reading and writing February 6-April 10
Teaching
series of eight reading and writing lessons February 6-April 10
Evaluation
semester self-evaluation April 30
portfolio and reading journal (self, peers, instructor) February 19, April 12 ,April 30
Primary Language Record (student evaluation) February 6-April 10

Table 1. Assigned Research Tasks

I had hoped Lynn would do more with two of the course projects--the interviews of parents and students. These two tasks seemed to me to have a more clearly defined formal research orientation along the lines of the distinction you made earlier; however, I noticed that Lynn redefined the research angle so that she could focus on what was of immediate importance to her teaching in the classroom. As I reflect on your approach with your two university students and my approach with Lynn and my reading and language arts class, I feel that the main difference in our two studies of preservice teacher research is the particular setting of the research experience for the preservice teacher. The tasks and structure required for a case study versus the projects and teaching required for a classroom study resulted in different types of questions being asked. My methods course students essentially responded in ways similar to Lynn by redefining the more formal research tasks and redirecting them towards answering particular questions they had about teaching in their field settings.

Karen: I think there is a significant difference in pursuing a series of research projects and undertaking one case study. I have also included undergraduate research in literacy methods courses in group and individual formats with differing results. For this particular study, I wanted to intensify the emphasis on qualitative research methods by designating independent study credit for a case study research course. Both of the elementary school children in the studies were already working with the preservice teachers in a group setting for a language arts methods course. Their dual placements as both classroom teachers and tutors allowed Jackie and Ashley numerous opportunities to study the varied contexts of literacy as they conducted their case studies. To establish a deeper understanding of the child's performance in school, J. J. and Ann were each given informal reading assessments, a developmental spelling inventory, and an informal writing assessment. Ashley and Jackie's research tasks (see Table 2) included audiotaped interviews of the child, the child's parents, the classroom teacher, and a resource teacher. Written reflections and partial transcriptions were recorded in a research log, and each transcribed one full interview. Each tutored her child in the language arts for at least 10 sessions and recorded sessions on videotape and audiotape.

	Jackie	Ashley
Interviews		
Parent	Mrs. Johnson March 29 Mr. Johnson April 28	Mrs. Cary May 5
Child	J.J. April 18	Ann April 7
Classroom Teacher	Mrs. Kennedy March 10 April 28	Mrs. Heaton March 9 May 9
Teacher for Special Services	Gifted education teachers (2) April 29	Resource teacher (Mrs. Bates) May 6
Observations		
Language Arts	April 14	April 28
Special Services	Gifted program April 13	Resource April 29
Other	February 24	April 15
Tutoring		
Audiotape	April 19	May 5
Videotape	April 28	May 6
Research Journals		
	February 11 to May 2	February 1 to May 6
Assessments		
	Informal Reading Inv March 29	Informal Reading Inv April 25

Table 2: Preservice Teacher Research Tasks

J. J. and Ann were observed in three settings: language arts class, Title 1 or resource classroom, and another school environment. Weekly research group meetings to discuss readings, research procedures, and data analysis supported Ashley and Jackie's research. These meetings were essential to the process; their roles as researchers were unfamiliar ones. Jackie and Ashley both discovered unexplored territory in their new positions: tutors in the school community and researchers in the local community. Discussing personal views of these roles-rethinking field

interactions with research peers-allowed these women to explore autobiographical contexts to prior beliefs. The language they used to describe this professional status and their developing knowledge from extensive study of one child brought to the forefront social and cultural issues that had not been mentioned during their prior field experiences. They clearly focused on these newly established research relationships.

Professional Relationships in Research Interactions

David: Your comments about field interactions remind me of comments about social relations between students and teachers described by Witherell and Noddings (1991). They note that teachers can attempt to enter into their students' worlds, but students, by virtue of their differences in age and life experiences, do not necessarily attempt to enter into their teachers' worlds. However, these differences in relations are not necessarily left unchallenged. During the course of a semester, the cooperating teacher and Lynn attempted to minimize the effects of the differences in relations while I, as the university instructor, let the differences go unchallenged. Lynn's decisions about where to focus her time in research tasks were influenced by storytelling and specifically by the efforts she shared with the cooperating teacher and her students to confront asymmetrical relations. As in the following exchange during their last conversation about the semester, Lynn's focus in conversations with Allison was often quite practical. Her emphasis remained on teaching experiences rather than research tasks:

Allison: Are there any supplies you might need? Any assistance you need?
Lynn: Maybe make sure they do the journal.
Allison: Okay.
Lynn: The just can't seem to remember.
Allison: They probably can't.
Lynn: I gave it to Fernando.
Allison: They should each have an entry in it by this Thursday?
Lynn: Uhuh. I had this whole big thing planned out to talk about their journal. We were going to do a writing share kind of thing where we write and then tell what we remember from they said. And they're like, "Oh none of us did it." And I was like, "Oh no!" (covers her face with her hands).
Allison: Did they show any kind of emotion?
Lynn: Nell was like...ready to cry because I think she felt like it was her fault. I watched her dig it out from her desk.
Allison: They all dig.
Lynn: I think she felt like, "Oh I forgot and I didn't give it to these guys."
Allison: What did you learn?
Lynn: I learned not to rely on them doing what you ask.
Allison: Always have a backup plan.

In this instance, what counted as a story for me as a researcher was a sequence of talk representing a "chronological sequence of events abstracted from experience" (Solsken & Bloome, 1992, p. 11). Storytelling was used by the cooperating teacher and Lynn to negotiate their own professional relationship as well as to build knowledge about elementary students and what makes for successful writing instruction.

Karen: I also discovered that Jackie and Ashley found the task of negotiating professional associations with experienced teachers and a supervisor to be quite challenging. However, the research actually provided a context in which they could interact with other educators professionally. Even with common points in research design, I was struck by the amount of guidance these novice teachers needed to effectively use qualitative methods. This type of methodology was unfamiliar to them; however, they discovered that by following these procedures they were placed in situations in which they had to discuss issues that had been left ignored in past field experiences. For example, the research relationship with a teacher over a semester gave Jackie and Ashley the opportunity to address differences of opinion about academics in a non-threatening fashion. With her Korean background, Ashley was surprised at the lack of respect and discipline she saw in Mrs. Heaton's fourth grade classroom. Although Ann was cooperative in class, Ashley found the environment distracting. In addition, Ashley did not understand why Ann's comprehension problems were not seen as an issue in school. With Ashley's strong beliefs about honoring her elders, she felt uncomfortable questioning the expertise of Ann's teachers, even when the information she was discovering about Ann's difficulties with reading comprehension and writing seemed quite different from how Mrs. Heaton described Ann's performance in class. Through their discussions of Ann's struggles with problem solving in mathematics, Ashley and Mrs. Heaton decided to explore the types of activities that Ann could handle with ease. They compared these strengths, such as fluency in reading, to the areas of critical thinking where Ann's performance broke down. An analysis of the reading tasks in the classroom lead them to discover that Ann was not required to go beyond answering simple factbased questions with the text available as a resource.

Ashley's interest in Ann's comprehension actually improved communication with the resource teacher, who had noted similar problems in reading and writing. In another example, Jackie's research helped her to view education from the perspective of Mrs. Kennedy, her cooperating teacher who had taken over J. J.'s classroom midyear. This statement emphasizes how the research experience increased the Jackie's awareness of diverse philosophies of teaching:

I was really positive about what she [Mrs. Kennedy] did in her classroom and what she tried. Maybe it will make me more understanding of my colleagues and...different philosophies when I go into a school because I have actually seen her struggle at this school where a lot of people have sort of the [local university] philosophy and she doesn't. She comes from a totally different type of training.

Jackie and Ashley's research questions came out of using qualitative procedures and from reflecting on teaching or tutoring experiences.

Forms of Preservice Teacher Reflection

David: Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1994) describe how questions may be made visible when the boundaries of what counts as research and practice are pulled together or blurred:

Like other forms of action and practitionerbased research, teacher research is or has the potential to be a kind of praxis, or a research process embedded in the critical intersections of theory and practice wherein the relationships between knowers and known are significantly altered. (p. 23)

This type of inquiry needs to be both systematic and reflective; however, often teachers' voices have been missing from the field of research on teaching. Their questions are an obvious absence from the discussion, as are the interpretive frames teachers use to make sense of their classroom practices. Lytle and Cochran-Smith propose that this type of research on practice may be accomplished through data collection, analysis, and interpretation in four areas: a) journal writing, b) oral inquiries that examine educational concepts, texts, examples, and other data, c) classroom studies that explore questions about subject matters alongside students' inquiry, and d) essays about life in classrooms and schools. As you consider the research that Jackie and Ashley conducted in their case studies, what challenged your university students' beliefs?

Karen: Establishing working relationships with families from completely different social and cultural backgrounds proved most revealing for Jackie and Ashley. Racial issues, religious beliefs, family values, physical disability, and other loaded topics were explored in parent interviews and research group discussions. Race and religion were topics that emerged early in Jackie's study and forced her to reflect on her own background and views on multicultural education. Mrs. Kennedy had told Jackie that she would be working with a gifted third grader who was a Jehovah's Witness. When she met J. J. for the first time, Jackie remembered, "I was surprised that he was a black child, but I didn't have any problem with that after I discovered it I felt like an idiot I was just really mad at myself 'cause I think that I tend to be very openminded."

Later, Jackie found herself reconsidering her reactions to J. J.'s neighborhood with her research peers; she felt uneasy waiting outside of J. J.'s house for his mother to return: "The people were all of color and loud and they all seemed to know each other I didn't think I was going to get knifed but I sort of felt like I was invading someone else's territory." It was clear to Jackie that she and J. J. came from distinct communities: "That was the most uncomfortable situation I've ever really been in Once we got inside [his house], I felt very much at home but the outside was very stressful." Jackie was surprised to discover that she could communicate well with J. J.'s parents, although she was concerned that their religious beliefs as Jehovah's Witnesses curtailed his reading and writing. What was particularly interesting to me was that by the end of their research case studies, even after so much dialogue about these difficult issues, social and cultural concerns were hardly mentioned in these two preservice teachers' final case studies of the children (a written product that was only shared with me). Jackie wrote about religion within the context of J. J.'s reading materials. She never stated that he was a Jehovah's Witness or discussed the unique constraints placed on his education by his religious beliefs. Her case study focused clearly on J. J.'s learning style and the school contexts of his literacy development.

Ashley's case study described Ann and explored her academic difficulties in the area of comprehension. She discussed Ann's physical disability, but did not specify how her impairment affected daily academic routines. Ann's weight was not mentioned, even though that topic came up repeatedly in discussions about Ann's ability to move around the school. Talking about difficult topics came easily in informal conversations with the research group; committing thoughts and reactions to paper in writing did not. Formal learning, or the case study, did not

include an in depth analysis of social and cultural contexts even though it had been a focus of research. Perhaps this "report" publication did not seem to fit the type of learning that had taken place during the semester.

David: Lynn perceived learning as what was closely connected with students she looked forward to teaching in her future. Because of differences in what was shared at the field site compared with what was shared at the education center building, she defined what could be learned from her methods course in terms of what teaching ideas worked with children and what activities children liked. For Lynn, research tasks about reading and writing did not represent an immediate connection to teaching language arts. What could be learned from interacting with the elementary students and sharing that knowledge with the cooperating teacher was more tangible. Through stories, Lynn defined what course tasks really counted as learning for her (Lindfors, 1991).

Karen: Since my study was more clearly focused on qualitative methodology, there was little flexibility in veering from the research focus. In fact, my students pursued additional research in the areas that pertained closely to their research questions. I found it fascinating that these college seniors remarked that this was the first time in their educational careers that they had been expected to play an active role in structuring their own learning. Ashley realized that her background in reading and language arts had not prepared her to tutor a child with such severe problems understanding text. Much like Lynn's focus on teaching, Ashley focused on questions about comprehension in her research study of Ann because it was the area where she felt most challenged in her own teaching. Jackie reflected how prior fieldwork experiences had made her feel "rushed to adopt a style" as if there were a correct way to teach the language arts. I wonder if in our zeal to immerse preservice teachers in field experiences we seem to suggest that there are immediate answers. In a sense, the answer has come before the question has been posed. After completing her research study, Jackie commented on the power of first hand experience to provide the foundation from which to pose meaningful questions: "If you don't know about it, you're not going to question it."

Outcomes of Preservice Teacher Research

David: It may be necessary to take a situated perspective about what counts as research if the field site shapes the questions that get asked, the purposes for the research, and how the methods are carried out. Green and Bloome (1997) make the distinction of this type of research that looks from the inside out and is conducted by practitioners such as teacher researchers, teacher educators, and university students. They note how important it is to make visible how the site, or the fieldbased setting, determines what counts as ethnography, or the research tasks. I think it is the emphasis on these situated understandings-the influence of the field site-that is of immediate concern for us. The questions, purposes, and theories of the researcher shape how an ethnographic perspective is realized. Field-based inquiry offers the potential to make visible various understandings about teaching and learning that are not always approached in the university class setting. The stories told by preservice teachers about their fieldbased teaching and research offer valuable insights into their understandings and how they interpret their experiences. Through the use of stories, insights are gained into the building of knowledge about teaching and learning in classroom settings.

Karen: My two students' research studies involved five different environments (see Figure 1) for learning: 1) autobiography and personal experience, 2) the case study of one child-one school, 3) social and cultural factors within a community, 4) educational issues of theory and practice, and 5) the individual perspective of reflection.
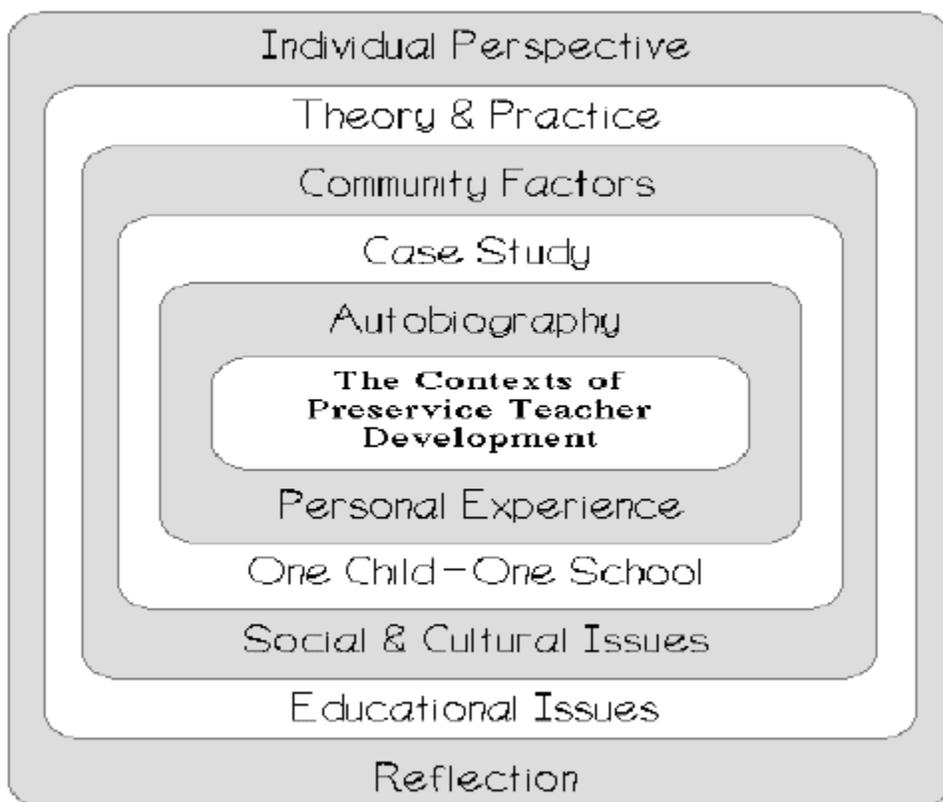

Figure 1: The Contexts of Preservice Teacher Development

Ashley felt that the research process forced her to adopt a personal stance on educational issues. She commented, "It makes me think for myself, like professionally, just how I would do the same things." Her relationship with Ann was not simple, as she described:

I just remember how I felt and how she felt, you know, the impression that I got. And it made me more keenly aware of what was going on than just being an observer in class...what to look for and what not to look for...understanding what is the objective of comparison.

In fact, in her research journal notes, Ashley sometimes follows her descriptions of Ann's progress with her own emotional responses: "Ann accomplished a lot today and I think she realized this too. I looked really content after our tutoring session." Ashley felt that research focusing on one child allowed her to analyze strengths and weaknesses in depth. She had never

considered that the school environment would be an important area of study. Jackie felt that the research process gave her a structure or a new lens through which to view the characteristics of individual children in a classroom. I think this is where our two research studies really differ. Jackie and Ashley were concentrating on their findings from specific research tasks such as interviews, observations, and video taping. Case study procedures clearly focus preservice teachers on individualization in literacy. As a result, they concentrate on areas that are unique to that child such as family background, ethnicity, and academic issues. On the other hand, classroom-based research projects are more open-ended. There are multiple areas of focus, and preservice teachers have to make decisions about where to spend time and energy in their inquiry. I think both types of research are challenging and worthwhile, but the learning outcomes are quite different.

David: One conclusion that I draw from our studies is that fieldbased inquiry is even more "authentic" than I realized. It seems to me that what is authentic field inquiry may be sometimes stranger, more real, more emotionally powerful, and more demanding than we and our students expected. For our students, participating in fieldbased inquiry resulted in their confronting situations, emotions, and questions that we had not anticipated. It may be that the distinction between formal research and more practical inquiry, which we discussed earlier, fades in importance. We need to focus on the particular events and interactions at field sites and how those particulars shape and are shaped by the teacher-researcher. I'm wondering if the distinction between formal research and practical inquiry doesn't tend to blur when the research situation is brought to the foreground.

Another conclusion for me is that the stories told by our students describing research settings, tasks, social relations, and reflections served as a means for building knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning. In addition, following through with our notions about field-based inquiry suggests that our preservice students should be involved with us in presenting and writing about teacher research. Such activities could serve as types of 'field sites' with their own particular settings, tasks, social relations, and opportunities for reflection. Thus, we and our students would participate in multiple inquiries. Universities need to offer research opportunities and experiential learning grants to support preservice students in these activities.

Karen: As I move toward more collaborative inquiry with undergraduates, I have found that some of the traditional roles of professor and student no longer exist. It is particularly interesting to watch how relationships change during a university semester as my undergraduates pursue literacy case studies. As these preservice teachers' areas of expertise about their children grow, so does their confidence in their ability to contribute to academic discussions. They feel the need to ask questions about a specific child, and they actively guide discussions. Another change is that questions that they pose in the university setting are not to find a "right" answer from a professor, but rather to consider alternative views and approaches to the issue. This is a particularly striking change of behavior for university students who have not been at the top of their class academically. I have had students comment that they have never been in a situation in which the professor has requested their analysis of a topic because they are the most knowledgeable individual in that area. This awareness of expertise transfers to further research; they are motivated to learn more.

I have had my preservice teachers "publish" their cases in varied forms. They always write a case for the teacher of the child. This product includes recommendations for literacy intervention in the school setting and recommendations for literacy activities at home. As a result, the schools see this type of research as a real asset to their literacy program. My students also produce a research case study (using pseudonyms) that they include in their teaching portfolio when they enter the job market. I have heard from several employers about how impressed they were with the depth of information in their portfolios; these preservice teachers' cases demonstrate their extensive knowledge of early literacy development. Case study research creates an extremely useful product for teachers, parents, and the preservice teacher.

More and more, I am finding myself working with students on conference presentations about inquirybased learning. One of my immediate goals is to include classroom teachers on research teams. This is certainly suggested by what you observed in the importance of a professional relationship between Lynn and Allison. In fact, Jackie caught me by surprise with one of her final comments about the power of inquiry in preservice teacher education: "I felt most confident in my relationship with you." Perhaps that process-developing professional associations in diverse settings-is at the heart of preservice teacher research.

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