

# Competing Centers of Gravity: A Beginning English Teacher's Socialization Process within Conflictual Settings

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This case study follows a teacher candidate through her semester of student teaching English in a suburban high school in the U.S. Southeast. The study is part of a line of inquiry that investigates the factors that contribute to teachers' development of *concepts* to guide their instruction. In particular, this research focuses on the mediational role of *settings* in teachers' development of a teaching conception and the *attributions* made by the teacher candidate to the sources for her understanding of how to teach. Data for the research consist of observations and interviews with focal teacher Anita and key stakeholders. These data were analyzed to identify the *pedagogical tools* used during student teaching and the sources to which she attributed her learning of them. Findings indicate that Anita's initial conception of teaching was complicated by competing centers of gravity—that is, settings with conflicting notions of effective practice—that pulled her in many different directions, thus making her ability to develop a coherent approach to teaching a challenge. The study concludes with a discussion of conventional linear views of concept development and how attention to the settings of learning to teach can help explain the difficulties of learning to teach in cohesive and consistent ways.

**I**n spite of recent efforts to standardize teaching and assessment in U.S. schools (e.g., the Common Core State Standards Initiative, Race to the Top Fund), there are many conflicting views of what stands as effective teaching. To Noddings (1993) it is imperative that teachers foster a caring disposition, yet Stotsky (1999) argues against coddling youngsters with concern for their feelings. Hirsch (1987) believes that immersion in the Western cultural heritage should ground all study, while Banks (2009) argues for attention to multicultural interests and issues in the education of all students. These conflictual values, and many more, suggest that pedagogical disagreements do not rest on a single binary, as Cuban's (1993) teacher-centered/student-

centered dichotomy suggests, but on many points of difference that produce a kaleidoscope of perspectives on effective instruction, many of which, while not in direct opposition, are disharmonious when teachers attempt to orchestrate them into a single teaching approach.

Teacher candidates in university programs are surrounded by such competing and contradictory views of how they should go about their work, a problem that we have referred to in this line of inquiry as competing *centers of gravity*. These centers of gravity pull beginning teachers toward particular

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conceptions of teaching, often in ways that are difficult to resolve. In our use of this metaphor, we examine how various forces either implicitly (as in the traditions of a curriculum) or explicitly (as in the guidance of a mentor teacher) incline a beginning teacher

toward particular approaches to teaching. Their experience, rather than simply being pulled in two different directions, often more resembles being drawn-and-quartered, or perhaps drawn-and-sixteenthed, in many directions.

Teacher candidates experience not only the influence of published, often ideal-oriented thinkers whom they read in their coursework, but also pressures from more immediate sources whose judgments can affect hiring and retention, such as school-based mentors, colleagues, and administrators who are concerned with the grittiest, most concrete challenges of teaching dozens of young people simultaneously and often against their will. Even within these broad categories of the *two-worlds pitfall* (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985)—the tensions between universities and schools in vying for influence on teaching practice—there are worlds of contradiction and contention facing the choices of beginning teachers. The range of contradictory influences on early-career teachers potentially mitigates against the possibility that novice educators will develop a coherent approach to instruction that meets any particular standard for effective teaching, however defined.

In this study we analyze the influences that bear on one teacher candidate, Anita, during her student teaching experience with ninth-grade students at a suburban high school. (The names of all people and places described are pseudonyms.) To understand how Anita navigated and attempted to resolve the conflicting settings in which she worked to develop a conception of effective teaching, we inquire into the following questions:

1. What pedagogical tools did she employ during student teaching, and to what sources did she attribute her understanding of how to use them?

2. To what degree did different sources identified as attributions by Anita provide compatible approaches to teaching and learning?

## Theoretical Framework

To frame this study, we put the Vygotskian perspective that has informed this line of inquiry in dialogue with the scholarship on teacher socialization as a means of understanding teachers' thinking. Teacher socialization was a major emphasis of teacher education research from the 1970s through the 1990s, following Lortie's (1975) classic sociological study of how teachers learn what they know about teaching. In Lortie's analysis, much of teachers' knowledge is predicated on their apprenticeship of observation, that is, what they know implicitly about teaching from having been taught. Zeichner and Gore (1990) provide a comprehensive review of this scholarship, casting a broad net to synthesize work centered on the socialization processes of people who go into teaching in a variety of professions, from preschool to medicine. They review research that examines teachers' experiences as students prior to college, during college, including teacher education programs, through practica and student teaching, and in their subsequent teaching careers. Their review is not entirely conclusive, given the differences in findings across the many fields and approaches taken by researchers. What they do demonstrate in abundance is that teachers' beliefs about teaching are informed by a variety of experiences throughout their lives, from single inspiring teachers from their past (or in some cases, from negative examples of uninspiring teachers) to their collective knowledge based on the whole of their education.

Zeichner and Gore (1990) find three epistemological stances informing research on teacher socialization. The reigning approach up to the point of their review is grounded in *functionalism*, a perspective located within Comtean and Durkheimian sociological positivism that treats society as the precursor and context for human action. Zeichner and Gore associate this position with the assumption that objective documentation is available to explain phenomena and predict how events will turn out so as to account for the structure and process of the existing social order and how it sets the stage for new human activity, often in ways that appear fatalistic.

The second paradigm that influences studies of teacher socialization, the *interpretive* view, is grounded in German philosophers such as Dilthey, Husserl, Kant, and Weber. From this perspective, functionalism's effort to unearth objective reality is misguided. Rather, those working from this epistemology view *subjective experience* as the source of understanding the

fundamental nature of the social world, with methodologies such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, and ethnomethodology serving their inquiries into how individuals experience their worlds, as opposed to functionalism's external effort to describe those experiences objectively.

Finally, Zeichner and Gore (1990) describe the *critical* tradition, which generally derives from Marxism to critique the manner in which schools, like other large social institutions, are intentionally designed (i.e., produced) as a means of social and cultural reproduction. Critical theorists give particular attention to race, gender, social class, and other identifiers to understand issues of power and control in school institutions such that inequities can be identified and challenged. In this view, reality is a social construction that is sustained by powerful interests whose hegemony undermines the opportunities of those lacking power. Zeichner and Gore note that this perspective provides far more in terms of critique than it does in terms of empirical analysis.

The research program within which our study falls is similarly concerned with teacher socialization, with a focus on how teacher thinking takes shape through tool-mediated action in social contexts. This perspective both shares with, and departs from, tenets from the paradigms identified by Zeichner and Gore (1990). It shares the interpretive tradition's interest in attempting to represent the teacher's emic view of experience by means of observation-based interviews through which the participants make attributions to influential sources in how they teach. Although hardly positivistic in the sense of determining an objective reality, it does rely on the brokerage of outside researchers to access teachers' experiences, perspectives, and attributions and then study them through an analytic method from outside the participant's purview. The analytic process also relies on the participants' frequencies of identifying pedagogical tools and attributions of influence to identify the centers of gravity that we see helping to shape their development of an approach to teaching, although we would not characterize our reliance on frequencies as positivistic (see Smagorinsky, 2008, for a refutation of the belief in the inherent positivistic nature of data coding). The approach is also grounded in Vygotsky's Marxist perspective, although it relies on empirical methods to draw out the participants' situated experiences rather than using Marxist principles to construct critiques of the social order.

The approach we take thus shares concerns of prior studies of teacher socialization without being located easily within any of Zeichner and Gore's (1990) three categories. Rather, it derives from what Cole (1996) refers to as *cultural psychology*, in particular Vygotsky's (1987) perspective on concept development as a fundamental aspect of human development in social con-

text, including how one becomes acculturated to participate in social groups (see Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). One consequence of taking this approach is that we do not limit ourselves to viewing the developing of a conception of how to teach as following from a single, powerful cause. Rather, our attention to the role of mediation—the social, cultural, and historical means by which thinking is accomplished through engagement with tools and signs—suggests that teacher socialization may involve many influences, not all of which are in mutual accord.

Vygotsky (1987) argues that people develop concepts to guide their thinking and action in two primary ways. They develop *spontaneous* or *everyday* concepts through their immersion in situated activity. People with exposure to formal instruction also develop *scientific* or *academic* concepts in environments such as school, where the abstraction of generalizable principles is a primary focus. Vygotsky (1987) emphasizes that neither everyday nor academic concepts is sufficient for robust conceptual understanding. Rather, one's experiential knowledge must work in dialogue with formal knowledge so that theoretical understandings are grounded in concrete action, and so that concrete action is undertaken with attention to formal principles. For teacher educators, this synthesis typically involves the consideration of everyday experiences during school-based practica in light of theoretical understandings emphasized in campus-based readings and discussions. Students might read about “student-centered instruction” on campus, for example, and then consider the teaching practices observed in schools in light of the concept's formal definitions and theoretical extensions as elaborated in scholarly sources and campus classroom discussions.

To Vygotsky (1987), concept development unfolds through a sequence of conceptions that, over time, are refined as an individual discards inconsistencies and ultimately shapes the notion into a unified set of principles. For instance, Vygotsky gives the example of how children typically assume that a whale is a type of fish because it looks like one. The concept of a fish emerges from this “pseudoconcept” when one begins to differentiate between mammalian piscine creatures and the ahirsutistic natatorial faunae that belong within the classification. Vygotsky's (1987) examples tend to frame the problems of concept development in terms of biology, such as his example of what is truly a fish and what is not.

Social conceptions are much more difficult to define clearly than are biological concepts, because there is substantially less agreement on what a good society is comprised of and how one becomes socialized to participate fruitfully within it. Ideology and culture contribute to specific conceptions of what something might be, from effective teaching to effective schools.

The development of a social concept is less a process of discarding discrepant data, as would be the case in eliminating animals from a biological classification, and more a challenge of figuring out what the data are serving to construct and which data are then discrepant. "Social justice," to give but one of many examples, means different things to different people (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009), so arriving at a unified conception requires one to define and illustrate it against an ideology, rather than against a set of indisputable biological features. Because competing beliefs are at work in the formation of any social concept, the process is inevitably difficult and the state of the concept is continually under development and amenable to critique (Smagorinsky, 2011).

This line of inquiry is thus concerned with teacher socialization, although from a perspective concerned with human development as it is mediated by cultural practice in social settings. Concept development does not take place solely between the ears, but rather is a fundamental aspect of human development in social settings. We employ the term *setting* in a specific way, following Lave's (1988) distinction between *arena* and *setting*. An arena is comprised of the indisputable set of corporeal features of a place, such as a school's physical plant. Setting, in contrast, refers to the manner in which one interprets and constructs that arena, such that a single arena, a school, can be constructed as different settings by different people who regard or experience it. The school thus can serve as a site for conflicting constructions of setting (Smagorinsky, 2010a), with novice teachers having less agency than established teachers in asserting any one interpretation of school and its purposes and practices.

Vygotsky's (1987) approach to concept development helps explain why teachers rarely go through a linear development of a social conception of pedagogy through sequentially more unified stages, as they might when learning about fish. Vygotsky asserts that concept development follows a twisting rather than linear pathway as it is mediated through a variety of experiences in settings, yet sees a progression toward a unified concept nonetheless. However, the settings of learning to teach may be so contradictory and might mediate action simultaneously in so many different directions that making progress toward any unified approach becomes problematic (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003). Indeed, what we consider to be the competing centers of gravity in learning to teach may, rather than producing any particular conception of teaching, lead instead to what appears to be a fragmented approach characterized by epistemic inconsistency. In our work, we have avoided characterizing the teachers themselves as erratic. Rather, we have argued that the settings of learning to teach are at odds with

one another, both inter-setting and intra-setting, leading teachers to act in inconsistent ways in their instruction to meet competing, if not always binary, expectations for their practice and their students' outcomes.

Tulviste's (1991) heterogeneity principle helps to illuminate this problem in Vygotsky's (1987) conception. Tulviste argues that learning to think is a function of solving problems presented by the environment. Environments, however, are internally inconsistent, and different environments both pose different sorts of problems to solve and provide participants with different ways of solving them. Tulviste's heterogeneity principle affirms that one may simultaneously hold conflicting perspectives, because the settings of human development provide channels for such different ways of thinking to develop. This possibility is particularly ripe in an institution such as a school, where multiple constructions of the setting lead to conflicting beliefs about the purpose and process of activity, in spite of superimposed efforts to provide a single teleological direction, such as the Common Core State Standards.

Some might argue that diverse, even contradictory influences on beginning teachers may, rather than producing conceptual confusion, enable them to question the meaning of effective teaching in mature, principled ways. This process could conceivably help them think in phenomenological, critical ways about their prior and current experiences and construct a vision of their future teaching. We do not discount the possibility that such fruitful outcomes might follow from immersion in conflictual settings, and we laud those who follow that pathway and those teacher educators whose program structures and priorities cultivate such a perspective. In this study and others in this line of inquiry, however, conceptual conflicts across the settings of learning to teach have produced a less satisfactory and productive result.

We should also note that by using the terms *concept* and *conceptual* in relation to Anita's teaching, we cannot be as precise as we would hope. A conception of teaching broadly speaking (e.g., "authentic," "hands-on," "student-centered," and other Progressive values) must be parsed to meet the many demands of teaching: the strands (literature, writing, language, speaking, listening, and newer competencies based on technology), the disposition (caring, supportive, nurturing), the method (explicit, immersive, and other approaches), and much else, each requiring a conception of its own. Our study is typical of research in this area where we are limited to what the data afford us, and our data do not enable such perspicacity of analysis. Further, as we have noted, each of these conceptions may be interpreted in different ways, thus leading to the amorphous character that we have previously ascribed to them. We therefore proceed with the understanding

that our categories are broader than we prefer, but no more narrow than we believe we can responsibly assert.

In this study we look at the settings of learning to teach experienced by Anita, a volunteer participant in research designed to understand the transition made by teacher candidates between university programs and their first jobs. Over the course of the project, the various participants' transitions have been characterized by conflicts over which conception of teaching is foregrounded in different settings and how those conceptions are defined and impressed on the beginning teachers (e.g., Bickmore, Smagorinsky, & O'Donnell-Allen, 2005; Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003; Smagorinsky, 1999; Smagorinsky, Cook, Jackson, Moore, & Fry, 2004; Smagorinsky, Gibson, Moore, Bickmore, & Cook, 2004; Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002; Smagorinsky, Wilson, & Moore, 2011). These studies have tended to confirm Vygotsky's (1987) postulation of a twisting path as a fitting metaphor for this process, although these studies further suggest that in teaching, the destination for that social pathway is not as clear as Vygotsky's analogy suggests based on his biological examples. That is, Vygotsky's metaphor suggests a journey toward a stable concept that is marked by twists and turns through mediational settings. Our studies suggest that because the social concepts that guide educational practice are eternally disputed, the destination itself, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, seems to shift locations as one begins to approach it.

## **Context of the Investigation**

The research took place in a school and university in the southeastern United States. We next provide an overview of the research and then describe key people and institutions central to the analysis.

## **Research Overview**

The research was funded by a U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement grant to the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement (CELA), awarded as a whole to study the domain of English teaching in U.S. schools. With the end of the funding period, our ability to follow Anita's career diminished, and we were not able to locate her for a member check once the analysis of her case was underway. Anita's case is not broadly generalizable to all beginning English teachers. However, we see her case, like the others from this corpus, representing a type of experience that teacher educators should find recognizable in teacher candidates and early-career teachers: the bright and promising teacher who



appears well-aligned with university values, who in short order gravitates to the influences available in schools. This limited generalizability has value in understanding types of cases, if not all cases (Smagorinsky, 2011).

## University Program

The teacher education program that enrolled Anita was housed in the state namesake university's College of Education. Anita was part of a cohort group of 20 preservice teachers who were team-taught by two English education professors (both tenured women, neither of whom was involved in the conduct of this research). Like most cohorts coming through this program and most others, Anita's was overwhelmingly comprised of people like her: young, white women from middle-class backgrounds.

The classes taught by the university faculty were not available for observation, given that the recruitment period began toward the end of the first semester of the students' senior year and prior experiences were available only through "back-mapping," that is, reconstructing experiences through retrospective interviews. This measure was employed to maximize the efforts of the research team, beginning data collection relatively late so as not to expend precious interview and observation time and resources on those who withdraw from the study. Our data from the university program thus rely on corroboration from different perspectives on the focal participants' experiences.

According to an interview conducted by Cynthia with the two tenured faculty members, corroborated by other data available to the study, the program was designed to be field-based, with each teacher candidate required to take a yearlong field experience under the guidance of a mentor teacher from an organized field-based team who sustained a formal relationship with the university faculty. The mentor teacher collaborative maintained strong ties to the university faculty through periodic meetings, including summer meetings often funded by state agencies, during which both mentor teachers and university faculty shared their expectations for the program, their priorities in working with teachers, and the various practices through which the teacher candidates would be apprenticed into the profession. Regarded as a school-university partnership with shared authority, this program and its university faculty had won several state and university awards for their service and instruction in teacher education.

Anita spent 12 hours a week in the school throughout the fall semester and student taught during the spring semester, all in the ninth-grade classroom of Will, her mentor teacher. In the fall Anita and others in her cohort

took three campus-based courses in instructional planning, adolescent literature, and classroom inquiry, with the team-teaching approach taken by her professors tending to merge the classes into a single, comprehensive course of study. In the spring, in addition to their student teaching, the teacher candidates took a campus-based reading course and attended a seminar during which they discussed their student teaching experiences. Neither of these classes was available for observation during the course of the study.

The underlying philosophy of her professors' approach to teacher education was *making connections*, with an emphasis on understanding students' interests and teaching toward those interests. The program also fostered connections between the schools and the university program. The university program thus used extensive field experiences and their relationship with the mentor teacher group as a way for university-based students and faculty to stay connected to what was happening in the schools and for teachers both to contribute to the program design and stay informed about the professors' activities.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the consequences of this emphasis for participants in the research. Before and after student teaching, the cohort of participants, including Anita, produced group concept maps in which they constructed a graphic representation of their understanding of effective teaching. In dramatic contrast to the concept maps drawn by students from the elementary and secondary programs at Peter's previous site of employment, where the study was first run, students from Anita's cohort did not attend at all to teaching practices. Rather, they placed students in the center of the designs and identified factors that affect students' lives. These concept maps suggest that, through their participation in this program, the students had adopted a student-centered perspective without necessarily associating it with specific teaching methods. In contrast, teaching methods figured prominently in the concept maps produced by the secondary and elementary research participants at the first research site (Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopak, & Moore, 2002). The discussions that surrounded the production of these concept maps, reported in other case studies from this corpus (e.g., Smagorinsky et al., 2004), along with interviews with the faculty and other data from the cases, confirmed this emphasis of student-centeredness in the university program.

## Site of Student Teaching

Anita's yearlong field experience took place in Ebenezer County High School (ECHS), the namesake school of a county undergoing a transition from a

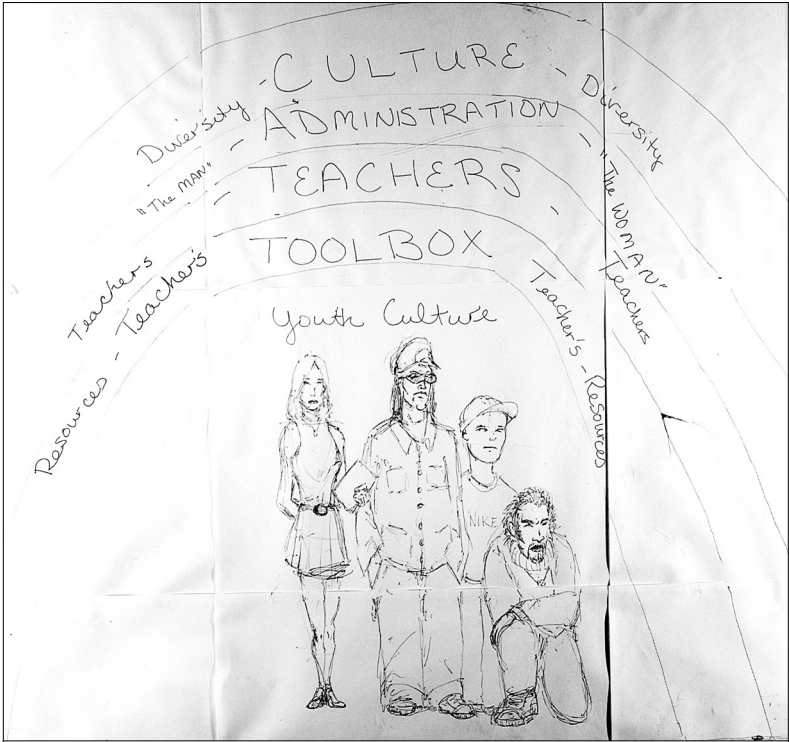


Figure 1. Concept Map prior to Student Teaching

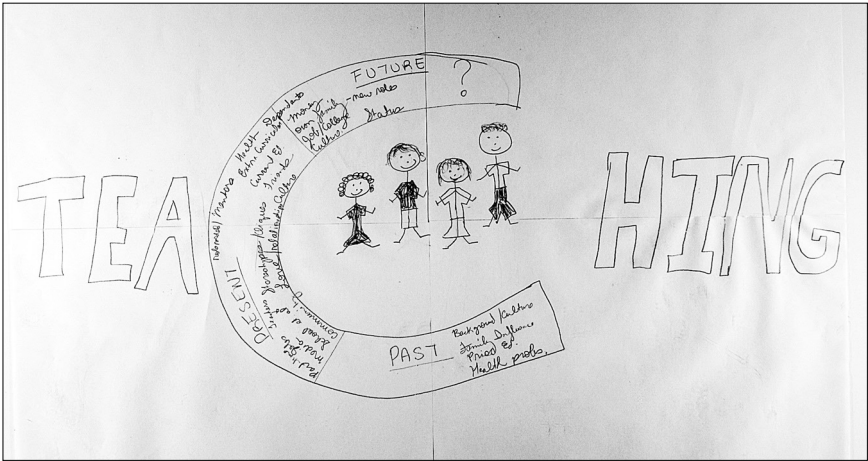


Figure 2. Concept Map following Student Teaching

sparingly populated rural community to one that was larger, more affluent, and more suburban in character. The county's population was around 26,000 at the time of the research, about 90 percent of whom were white, 6 percent black, and 3 percent Latin@,<sup>1</sup> with a population density of 141 people per square mile. About 6 percent of the total population lived below the poverty line. These statistics generally reflected the school demographics and the characteristics of Will's students. Although we were not able to visit other teachers in the school during the research, we were given no reason during the data collection to believe that Will's teaching represented an aberration from the traditions practiced at ECHS.

### Focal Teacher and Field Mentors

Anita was a lifelong resident of the state who had grown up in a planned community of suburban demographics outside a major U.S. city. She was a college senior who had transferred from a regional university in the state to the namesake university after her sophomore year. She was thus a traditional student in terms of graduating from college four years after high school and becoming certified to teach through an undergraduate teacher education program that also accommodated master's students seeking certification. The university as a whole is the state's most competitive comprehensive state university, accepting roughly 60 percent of its applicants and having earned a "more selective" designation from the 2010 *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings, which also rated the College of Education's secondary education programs in the national top five. As a student in an award-winning program housed in a highly regarded College of Education in a more selective university, Anita had the profile of an intelligent, well-prepared teacher candidate.

Anita's mentor teacher, Will, was a 12-year teaching veteran who had begun his career teaching English after completing a master's program in music. A resident of Ebenezer County, he learned of teaching openings in the expanding school system and was hired, with his primary influence being a colleague who mentored his early-career instruction. He eventually became involved with the university program's mentor teacher group. Anita's university supervisor was Clare, an early-career teacher who had returned to the university to work full-time on a master's degree, which provided an assistantship for which she supervised student teachers.

## Method

### Data Collection

Cynthia collected Anita's case through three *observation cycles* that occurred during the spring semester during which she did her student teaching. Each cycle consisted of a pre-observation interview, two classroom observations recorded via field notes, and a post-observation interview. The three cycles occurred during the second week of March, the first week of April, and the third week of April. Although the interview protocols varied slightly across the three observation cycles, they generally followed the pattern of the questions listed in Figures 3 and 4, with the emphasis on prompting Anita to provide an account of her recent instruction and the sources to which she attributed her understanding of those practices.

1. Describe the Language Arts instruction that's taken place in this class for the last two weeks.
2. What were the main influences behind the instruction that took place during this time?  
[If not mentioned, prompt for influence of preservice program]
3. Describe the lesson(s) [unit] that you will teach during my observation.
4. Tell me about how you decided to teach the lessons [unit] this way. What kinds of things did you take into consideration?
5. Can you think of any other things that influenced the way you planned these lessons?  
[If not mentioned, prompt for influence of preservice program]
6. How do you anticipate that the lesson(s) [unit] will go? Why?

**Figure 3.** Pre-observation Interview

1. How do you think the lesson(s) [unit] went?
2. Were there any points where you departed from your teaching plan? If so, please explain which parts, what you did, and why you did it.
3. Which concepts did you emphasize in the lesson(s) [unit]?
4. Which parts do you think were hard for the kids?
5. How will this lesson [unit] help you assess students' learning?
6. How do you think the lesson(s) [unit] worked for the whole range of students in the class?
7. At this grade level, what are the concepts that you think are most important for students to learn?
8. If this were your classroom, would you teach the lesson(s) [unit] in the same way you did when I observed you?  
If so, how would you teach it? Why?  
If not, what would you do instead? Why?
9. What instruction will follow the lesson(s) [unit]? What will be your role in planning it? What will influence your thinking in planning what to do next?
10. Is there anything else you can tell me about the classes I've observed?

**Figure 4.** Post-observation Interview

Additional data came from (1) a gateway interview with Anita at the semester break between the fall practicum and spring student teaching experience, during which she provided background on her apprenticeship of observation, her beliefs about teaching, her university coursework in teacher education, and her prior field experiences; (2) an interview with university supervisor Clare; (3) an interview with mentor teacher Will; (4) an interview with the university professors who team-taught her classes; and (5) the two concept map activities described previously. Cynthia collected all data, and the interviews were then professionally transcribed through a provision in the funding budget. Peter and Darren conducted the analysis and wrote the manuscript as part of a research apprenticeship under Peter's guidance during Darren's doctoral studies.

## Data Analysis

We used the following major categories for our codes, developed in previous research in this line of inquiry. The prototypical scheme was collaboratively developed by Peter and colleagues from another site where the investigators conducted a parallel study (Grossman et al., 1999). The codes were then refined in subsequent studies from this data corpus, with the investigations at the different original sites taking on a local character in relation to the unfolding cases. The major coding categories included *area* (i.e., the curricular strand or instructional focus identified by Anita), *pedagogical tool* (i.e., the means through which Anita enacted her instruction), and *attribution* (i.e., the source to which Anita attributed her knowledge of the tool and how to use it). These three broad categories were initially identified to represent the primary foci of what we interpreted to be a Vygotskian analysis of learning to teach, in particular the construct of the *tool* through which one acts on one's environment and the *attribution* to its source, which suggests the setting of learning to teach by means of that tool within the contours of the discipline of English. The *area* code enabled us to understand which strands of the English curriculum served as the locus of her instructional emphasis.

Specific codes within these major categories were developed in an emergent, dialogic manner by Peter and Darren in their collaborative analysis of the data. (See Smagorinsky, 2008, for a rationale for a collaborative approach to reliability in coding that takes into account researcher reflexivity and subjectivity in data analysis, with the coding decisions serving to make evident the researchers' perspective on the data without claiming that perspective as definitive.) Tables 1–4 list codes within the following areas developed through this process:

- › Table 1 reports the codes and frequencies for the *strand* of the curriculum in which Anita’s instruction during student teaching fell
- › Table 2 lists the pedagogical *tools* through which Anita taught during student teaching
- › Table 3 reports the codes and frequencies for the *attribution* she made to the source for each pedagogical tool she used during student teaching
- › Table 4 focuses solely on mentor teacher Will and the pedagogical tools he impressed on Anita during student teaching

By coding the data in these categories, we sought to understand the factors that influenced Anita’s emerging conception of how to teach English and how she managed the conflicts provided by the different settings in which she was socialized to the profession.

**Findings**

We next report what we found to be the centers of gravity that Anita experienced during her process of socialization, from her apprenticeship of observation to her university coursework to her student teaching.

**Apprenticeship of Observation**

Our coding included attention to the *areas* of teaching that Anita described in her gateway interview when discussing her apprenticeship of observation, and the *attributions* she made for the sources of influence on her thinking about what kind of teacher she hoped to become. The *area* codes suggest that her experiences as an English student were weighted roughly evenly between *literature* (11 coded instances) and *writing* (9 coded incidences); we did not find anything in her interview that we coded as the *language* strand of the curriculum, which typically includes attention to English grammar, a persistently challenging strand for beginning teachers to address instructionally (Smagorinsky et al., 2011).

Table 1. Curricular Strand				
STRAND	OC #1	OC #2	OC #3	TOTAL
	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage
Language	0   0%	0   0%	4   14.3%	4   4.9%
Literature	33   91.6%	12   70.6%	23   82.1%	68   84%
Writing	3   8.4%	5   29.4%	1   3.6%	9   11.1%

**Table 2.** Pedagogical Tools

CATEGORY	OC #1	OC #2	OC #3
	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage
<b>Behavior</b>			
Character education	2	7	2
Discipline	5	5	6
<b>Subtotal</b>	7   26%	12   44.4%	8   29.6%
<b>Closed-ended Teaching</b>			
Lecture	0	1	1
Literary terms	0	7	9
Plot line	0	0	2
Quiz/test	7	2	12
Quiz/test preparation	3	0	0
Workbook and study guide	3	0	3
<b>Subtotal</b>	13   26%	10   20%	27   53%
<b>Open-ended Teaching</b>			
Discussion web/Sociogram	1	0	2
Making learning accessible (relevant, fun, personal, hands-on)	7	1	0
Multiple intelligences (flipbook, drawing images, symbol creation, visualizing literature)	8	0	3
Performance (coffee house, presentation, students leading discussions)	2	1	0
Small-group discussion	8	0	0
Symbol interpretation	8	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	34   83%	2   4.9%	5   12.1%
<b>Planning</b>			
Syllabus	4	0	0
Thematic teaching	8	0	0
Time Considerations	4	0	3
<b>Subtotal</b>	16   84%	0   0%	3   16%

During the interview Anita was prompted to describe good (13 coded instances) and bad teachers (7 coded instances) from her experiences as a student. Regardless of grade level, from kindergarten to university professors, she valued teachers whose instruction was designed to motivate students to learn through a disposition to care, encourage, nurture, and push students by engaging them in creative, activity-based, hands-on, personalized, meaningful, and expressive instruction through which diverse learners could suc-



**Table 3. Attributions**

ATTRIBUTION	OC #1	OC #2	OC #3
	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage	Frequency/Percentage
Colleague (teachers, cohort, chair)	4   33.3%	4   33.3%	4   33.3%
Curriculum Materials	6   60%	0   0%	4   40%
Mandate	3   37.5%	3   37.5%	2   25%
Mentor Teacher	8   30.8%	10   38.5%	8   30.8%
Self	11   68.75%	1   6.25%	4   25%
Students	3   15.8%	10   52.6%	6   31.6%
Teacher Ed Coursework	3   37.5%	0   0%	5   62.5%
University Supervisor	1   33.3%	0   30.8	2   66.6%

**Table 4. Mentor Teacher**

CODE	FREQUENCY
<b>Block Schedule</b>	
Eliminate material from curriculum	4
Homework	1
Pacing chart	2
<b>Character Education</b>	
Character education (unselfishness, responsibility, study habits)	3
Character modeling	2
<b>Developmentally Appropriate Teaching</b>	
<i><b>Behavioral Expectations</b></i>	
Balanced approach to discipline	1
Developmental teaching	1
Establishing behavioral boundaries	1
Providing students latitude	3
<i><b>Curriculum Sequence</b></i>	
Lesson plans	1
Making learning relevant	2
Provide foundation in ninth grade	1
Sequence task by difficulty	6

ceed academically. In contrast, she felt that teachers who provided negative examples were apathetic and disengaged from students, and that those who instructed through lectures, memorization, worksheets, and tests designed to promote students' learning of authoritative interpretations were teaching

so that students' primary job was to "cram" for tests, as she phrased it. We next describe more specifically how she characterized the influences from her apprenticeship of observation on her conception of the kind of teacher she hoped to become.

### *Good Teaching*

**Anita described good teaching as involving hands-on, interactive instruction provided by teachers who pushed her intellectually by emphasizing ideas rather than form and who, as a result, taught her how to think.**

Anita described good teaching as involving hands-on, interactive instruction provided by teachers who pushed her intellectually by emphasizing ideas rather than form and who, as a result, taught her how to think. Anita described her 10th-grade English teacher as "just wonderful" because of her interactive approach. When the class read *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she said, the class divided into small groups, and each group was responsible for teaching three chapters of the novel. "That," said Anita, "was what made me know that I wanted to be one of those hands-on people." This teacher further ran an activity-based class involving creating writing, writing in response to nature walks, and other open-ended means of expression. This instruction often included high levels of interaction that engaged students with one another, the teacher, and the material such that the class was enjoyable and promoted learning at the same time.

Anita appreciatively described teachers who imposed high expectations on their students. Such demanding instructors, she said, were "very, very hard on me and really expected a lot." Her junior year English teacher, she said, "really pushed me to work hard in English, 'cause she knew it was something I was good at." Anita continued, "She always pushed me to speak in class. She pushed me to express my ideas. She pushed me to take risks when I wrote papers [and] not do the general, you know, reiterate what the teacher says." This willingness to push students to higher levels of achievement was a quality that Anita admired, appreciated, and hoped to emulate.

Anita preferred teachers who were primarily interested in the quality of the ideas that she generated in response to the course. Their encouragement of risk-taking as a way to promote thinking was reflected in Anita's belief that a good teacher—those whom she said she "got the most from"—is one who "encourages you to come up with your own ideas rather than simply restating what [the teacher] said, because that's what you think is the most important." These teachers "led me there and then allowed me to look for myself or try to figure out for myself and then came back and talked about it with me." She appropriated this belief into her own sense of herself as a

teacher, saying that “I want to teach my students to think for themselves. I want them to analyze. I want them to look deeper. . . . If they can do that with a piece of literature, they can do that in life.”

### ***Bad Teaching***

Anita disliked teachers who expected students to memorize single, correct answers and interpretations and report them back on tests. One university English teacher, she said, “didn’t want you to understand. He wanted you to memorize. He wanted you to understand what he thought was important, not necessarily discuss what you thought was important.” Such classes involved little interaction because the teacher did most of the talking, leaving students in a primarily receptive role. Teachers who dominate classrooms, she said, “don’t really teach you . . . . They’re so into what they are talking about they’ve forgotten that you’re teaching it to somebody.” The lack of interaction, she felt, prevented such teachers from developing caring connections with students. Such teachers might be quite knowledgeable about their domain but not interested in what students make of it. Bad teachers in K–12 schools, she said, “don’t care, they don’t want to be there, they don’t want to teach you. They just want to give you a worksheet, they want you to be quiet, they don’t want to give you a chance to talk, and they don’t want to listen to your opinions.” Although Anita repudiated this perspective in her gateway interview, she nonetheless exhibited its traits during her student teaching, which we review shortly.

### **Pedagogical Teachers at the University**

Anita’s English education professors, she reported, were more philosophical than practical. She had hoped to learn the pragmatics of how to write a lesson plan but felt that “the books we’ve read this quarter are just so much about the philosophy instead of the practicality.” She felt that the practical ideas that she had learned had followed from trying things out on her own: “Most of what I’ve used in my school has been what I’ve thought about myself in the beginning.” Although she appreciated some of the activities from her pedagogical courses, such as writing literacy autobiographies, she found most to have little practical application.

Other required education courses emphasized differences among learners. Her Educational Psychology professor taught “a lot about learning styles and the different theories about how people learn.” Her Special Education course, she felt, taught her “about the different types of learning disabilities or physical disabilities that are things that I’m going to be faced

with as a teacher.” Anita’s teacher education program, then, emphasized understanding diverse learners without necessarily providing concrete teaching ideas in service of those ideals, an inference that is corroborated by the images in the concept maps drawn by Anita and other cohort members. The primary center of gravity provided by the teacher education program appears to be its emphasis on individual learners and their backgrounds and styles. We do not read any cultural emphasis into this focus on each individual’s uniqueness, for example, a focus on race, gender, socioeconomic class, and other categories. Rather, Anita appears to have been influenced by a conception of diversity characterized by attention to individual biographies, biological points of difference such as learning disabilities, and individual differences in learning styles.

## **Student Teaching**

With her apprenticeship of observation setting the stage and her teacher education program coursework behind her, Anita began her formal student teaching. Her yearlong placement in the school overlapped during the first semester with campus courses in the fall semester, although Anita did not refer to these university classes during her gateway interview. We next report findings based on the observations and interviews that took place during the spring semester when her student teaching began in earnest.

We should note that in identifying competing centers of gravity simultaneously drawing her toward contradictory conceptions of teaching, we infer her conceptual diffusion from her remarks at different points of the semester in conjunction with the testimony of Will in describing his own values and mentoring direction. In her gateway interview, Anita was explicitly cued to describe good and bad teachers from her past, and she thus placed the two in contrast in binary fashion as an artifact of the interview protocol. Our analysis of the centers of gravity affecting her thinking during student teaching, however, does not rely on such a clear means of elicitation. It instead emerged during our analysis of the data as we coded for pedagogical tools and their attendant attributions, and classified the tools as open- or closed-ended. Our juxtaposition of the different centers of gravity thus follows more from our analytic decisions than Anita’s explicit recognition of the effects of influences during the unfolding semester of student teaching.

## ***Curricular Strands***

We begin by reporting the broad distribution of instruction identified in Anita’s teaching and interviews. As detailed in Table 2, Anita’s instruction

focused on the teaching of *literature* (accounting for 84 percent of codes), primarily of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The *writing* that the students did was largely related to their literary study, in particular their writing of journal entries about the role of literary elements in a given work (6 of the 9 codes). The other *writing* codes were distributed among writing Shakespearean insults, writing a eulogy for a literary character, and working on an essay. Each of these writing occasions involved the provision of a prompt rather than detailed instruction in how to produce the writing expected within the assigned genre. Anita's instruction in the *language* strand occurred only in the final observation cycle and centered on the discrete study of grammatical concepts from a grammar and composition textbook.

Anita's distribution of instruction across the conventional strands of the curriculum suggests that she was influenced by traditional approaches to teaching the discipline of English, which are heavily weighted toward the teaching of literature over the other major strands of writing and language. This disciplinary emphasis has been identified over the course of more than a quarter-century by Applebee (1974), Willinsky (1991), and Tremmel (2001), with Applebee's historical review capturing the state of the discipline from its inception. The language strand, chiefly in the form of direct grammar instruction, tends to be taught discretely and ineffectively (Hillocks, 1986), and students' writing serves predominantly to advance literary understanding and is not informed by teachers' robust conceptions of writing pedagogy (Hillocks, 2006). Anita's balance of instruction, then, appears typical of early-career teachers who enter the profession with greater preparation for teaching literature than for teaching the remainder of the domain of English, particularly given that at the time of the data collection, the university program did not provide a course dedicated to writing pedagogy (Smagorinsky et al., 2011). The data suggest, then, the gravity of the dominant literary tradition of the discipline as a significant influence on Anita's instructional emphases.

### *Pedagogical Tools*

Table 3 categorizes the *pedagogical tools* that Anita used during her student teaching. We sorted them into four major categories: those that managed student *behavior*; those that involved *closed-ended teaching*, that is, instruction that centered on specific correct answers; those that were associated with *open-ended teaching*, that is, instruction that allowed for multiple possible avenues and exploratory learning; and those that involved *planning* to fit her particular teaching decisions in with larger instructional considerations.

Table 3 is arranged to detail Anita's distribution of pedagogical tools across the three observation cycles.

We interpret Anita's pattern of tool usage from one observation cycle to the next as moving from open-ended instruction that drew on planning in terms of literary themes, to an emphasis on student behavior and the development of character traits that would contribute to more acceptable conduct, to closed-ended instruction that required less creative planning and greater reliance on examinations on such curricular elements as literary terms (e.g., testing students' knowledge of metaphor, rising action, protagonist, allusion, etc.).

Anita's initial instruction was designed to make her students' learning fun and relevant through group work, multiple modes of expression, and open-ended interpretive work; that is, it corresponded to the vision of teach-

ing that she had outlined when reflecting on her apprenticeship of observation. Her students' management of these open-ended opportunities, however, led her to focus more intently on behavioral problems during the second observation cycle, with open-ended teaching virtually disappearing from her instruction while disciplinary means increased. This move toward greater control was evident in her instruction in the third observation cycle, which was characterized

**She moved from the open-ended and presumably engaging practices that she had embraced prior to student teaching to both behavioral and pedagogical means of controlling student conduct and restricting their learning opportunities to those assignments and assessments that had clear and unambiguous answers.**

by a preponderance of closed-ended tool codes. Over the course of the data collection period, then, encompassing under two months, Anita made a radical shift in orientation. She moved from the open-ended and presumably engaging practices that she had embraced prior to student teaching to both behavioral and pedagogical means of controlling student conduct and restricting their learning opportunities to those assignments and assessments that had clear and unambiguous answers.

### *Attributions of Influence*

We next turn to our coding of the *attribution* Anita provided of where she understood the *pedagogical tool* to originate in her thinking (see Table 4). The *attribution* codes help to identify the range of influences on her student teaching decisions, and thus the setting from which it emerged. Perhaps not surprisingly, the most frequently identified factor in her teaching was Will, her *mentor teacher*, whose influence was among the greatest that Anita cited in each of the three observation cycles and whose frequency of attribution

was roughly stable across the span of the research. She also relied with equal regularity, if less frequency, on the counsel of colleagues during the course of the research for her teaching ideas.

Other patterns in the attribution codes appear to map well onto the data reported in Figure 3 on tool use. During the first observation cycle when she engaged in open-ended teaching, Anita's primary source of attribution was herself, although one could argue from a dialogic perspective that no idea springs wholly from an individual but rather is derived from prior engagement with others. In any case, her self-attributions declined as her teaching became increasingly focused on behavior and then on the sort of conventional, term-and-form-driven approach to teaching English that required less planning and open-minded thinking on her part and greater reliance on traditional assessment materials. The second observation cycle also produced no attribution to curriculum materials, suggesting her emphasis on student behavior rather than engagement with the domain of English.

Anita's attributions to students as the impetus for her decisions might appear to support the idea that her university professors' student-centered emphasis mediated her choices of pedagogical tools and instructional emphases, but two aspects of the coding undermine that interpretation. First, Anita made a total of 11 attributions to the combination of her teacher education program and her university supervisor, a relatively small percentage of the total attributions (10.8 percent). Second, the student attributions more than tripled from the first to the second observation cycle, when Anita began to address behavioral issues in response to their classroom conduct. She continued to attribute the students for her decisions to engage in closed-ended teaching in the third observation cycle. Her attention to students as the source of pedagogical decisions, then, was not a function of making connections with them, as emphasized on campus, but a response to their behavior, which made it difficult for her to teach as planned.

We next review the ways in which Anita was influenced more specifically by the sources to whom she attributed influence, going in order from most influential to least influential. We bundle related categories of influence that were named least frequently into single classifications (curriculum materials with mandates; university teacher education coursework with university supervisor), although even when aggregated, they served as lesser influences in her attributions.

**Mentor Teacher.** Table 5 details the *attribution* codes that we applied to Will based on the interview he provided regarding the manner in which he mentored Anita during student teaching. This interview took place in con-

junction with the second observation cycle. Given his attention to students' character as a factor in their conduct, it is possible that his comments are implicitly related to the behavioral emphasis that we identified in Anita's teaching at that point in the semester.

The major factors influencing Will's conception of the discipline of English and his approach to socializing Anita toward that conception were his recognition of the constraints imposed by the *block schedule* and the ways in which the schedule affected his teaching decisions; his view of the role of *character education* in inculcating in his students a disposition to learn; and his belief in *developmentally appropriate teaching* with respect to his *behavioral expectations* for students and the *curriculum sequence* he constructed to meet their developmental needs. We next detail how each of these factors affected his mentoring of Anita.

**Block Schedule.** A recurring theme in Will's comments was the "time squeeze" that he faced in the school's block schedule. We do not see block scheduling in and of itself as a problem in teaching through the sort of hands-on approach that Anita hoped to adopt. Indeed, the rationale for block scheduling often promotes the benefits of improved relationships, more time for activity-based learning, advanced student achievement, and increased learning time, although the Internet teems with testimonials from educators who dispute the degree to which these potentials are realized in practice.

Will might well have been among those dissenters. First, he did not use activities in his classrooms, and the block schedule did not change his approach in that regard. He described compromises that he had made to what he felt were restrictions of the block schedule. Instead of increased learning time, for instance, he found that the block scheduled *reduced* class time: "If I have to lose this [instruction] and jettison this two-week unit, I was willing to let it go. I could squeeze poetry down to a one-week unit instead of two if I had to." This "squeeze" of time served to limit Anita's choices as a teacher, both in terms of the number of texts and units she could teach and the time she could devote to any one of them. Her instruction needed to conform to the departmental pacing chart, that is, the schedule for what should be taught at each point of the semester. This pragmatic need to accommodate teaching decisions to the school schedule appeared to work in opposition to the Progressive view of education that she had embraced during her gateway interview in describing good teachers from her past whom she hoped to emulate, and may help account for her gravitation to *closed-ended* instruction.



Her choices were shaped in part by the imperative suggested by Will to cut texts and instructional time, and therefore to reduce attention to learning processes and students' constructive activity. Anita's data suggest that she gravitated toward teaching practices that she had initially rejected as characteristic of bad teaching, for example, emphasizing literary terms and testing students on their recollection of them. The influence of the school schedule, channeled by Will, thus appeared to contribute to Anita's move toward closed-ended instruction, along with the unruly conduct of her students.

**Character Education.** Will referred to his belief in the role of students' character as providing a prerequisite disposition for engaging with the curriculum. Will believed in the value of teaching students habits of good character such as responsibility, unselfishness, and good study habits. As we reviewed previously, Will's school system's student body was about 90 percent white, as were Will and Anita. We see his efforts then not to re-acculturate students from outside the white mainstream to middle-class ways, as is often the case in federally funded character education grants (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2005), but rather to shape the students' dispositions so that they met the cultural expectations to which he subjected them. The disorderly student behaviors on which Will imposed this value were not in great evidence during the classes we observed, as is often the case when an outside observer is present during instruction. Rather, we gathered our understanding of student mischief from the remarks of Will and Anita during interviews.

Will's inculcation of character traits was intended to help students both in school and on their life journeys in a society predicated on the values of the Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1930). When asked to describe the most important thing he wanted his students to learn, he emphasized how students' "study habits and your responsibility toward the steps I'm making now will, on down the line, have an effect. You add them all up, and all the steps are going to wind up putting you . . . in a positive direction."

Will expressed a concern that his students exhibited society's general tendency toward "a very, very broad streak of selfishness, me-first attitude" that he hoped to address through his teaching. "It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with education. It's more of a moral approach," he said. His effort to instill a sense of social responsibility that mitigated students' self-centered orientations appeared to be at odds with the notion of individual uniqueness to which Anita had been exposed through her university program. Indeed, Will appeared to find excessive emphasis on individuality to be counterproductive in developing responsible citizens. His views on educating

young people as moral beings of high character and social conscience thus conceivably worked against the valorization of the individual learner that had been impressed upon Anita elsewhere in her education as a teacher.

**Developmentally Appropriate Teaching.** Will described the curriculum in developmental terms. Will considered “the proper use of language and composition strategies,” “what literature teaches us about life,” and “what [literature] reveals about human nature and the fact that language and our proper use of language is important in any area of life” to serve as “a gateway level for further development” for ninth graders. He thus viewed the curricular sequence in light of general biological stages that adolescents go through in their learning and growth. The developmental role served by the curriculum fell in two areas: (1) the students’ growing understanding of and gravitation toward behavioral expectations governed by teacher authority, and (2) the ordering of the curriculum to meet students’ academic preparedness.

Will wove together attention to students’ levels of maturity and teachers’ needs for appropriate disciplinary attention by giving students latitude in setting their own behavioral boundaries. Will said that “Even though I’m much more of a disciplinarian than I used to be when I first started, I still tend to be [more] easy-going about things in the classroom.” He felt that, like many student teachers, Anita was insecure about her authority role and came across as too strict, a tendency he hoped to moderate so that she could enable students to develop their own self-regulation of their behavior within a general set of expectations. His sense of students as the impetus for teaching decisions emerged primarily from their need for behavioral self-regulation so that they could develop the sense of propriety needed to serve their social needs in group settings. Their development of proper character traits thus followed from his students’ adoption of qualities of character that enabled them to act within the behavioral parameters he set.

During her gateway interview, Anita found Will’s emphasis on behavior to be a source of conflict, although one that they negotiated in a convivial way. Anita described him as “very straight-laced,” saying that the two of them “squabble a lot about the fact that he says I try to make things too fun,” with their tendency to “squabble” appearing to be amicable. In contrast, Anita said, Will sought “not to make [learning] fun but to teach them something” in the domain of English. Anita felt that rather than seeking to have students consider her class to be “fun,” she strove to “make it interesting” for them. Will, she said, was “not as group-oriented, I guess, as I am, and he’s more of a person who can stand up there and lecture. And I’m not.”

Anita's comments illuminate the ways in which Will initially embodied some of the aspects of what she characterized as bad teaching in terms of preferring to lecture and emphasize content knowledge over high-interest activities; we do not infer, however, that she believed that Will himself was a bad teacher, rather only one who relied on practices she had rejected prior to student teaching. We did not observe Will's teaching, and we assume from his role in the mentor teacher group that he was respected both in his school and on campus. His differences in pedagogical preferences might not make him a model for Progressivism as valorized in university teacher education programs, which in and of itself is not a judgment about his effectiveness with students.

Anita herself, in spite of hopes to the contrary, ultimately gravitated toward Will's stance and demeanor. She found it difficult to manage students' behavior under open-ended instruction and so moved toward greater control, first behaviorally and then instructionally so as to limit their opportunities to get off task and disrupt class. Will's judgment that Anita cracked down too hard was informed by observations outside the bounds of our data collection, so we have no means by which to adjudicate their differences over appropriate means of control. What we can conclude is that, however she accomplished it, Anita's teaching became more authoritarian, in opposition to her initial goal of becoming a hands-on teacher.

One of our external reviewers wondered if we should critique the university faculty's complicit role in what appears to be a questionable match between Anita and Will. In the best of all possible worlds, such matches might not occur; but finding ideal matches between 20 student teachers and 20 teachers in the field whose administrators are open to having student teachers that year is easier said than done. We find ideals to be useful, but not always possible to implement on someone else's turf. The university faculty actually took great pains to make the best possible matches by screening teacher candidates early and allowing their available pool of mentors to choose the person with whom they would most like to work. Perhaps rather than wondering how a match could then be less than ideal, we might be impressed by how well, in general, it worked in terms of their cordial negotiation of differences.

**Students.** During her gateway interview Anita described how her students affected her understanding of how to teach. "What works on paper doesn't necessarily work in the classroom," she said. She understood that the teaching ideas she read about in pedagogical texts might work "in that classroom, but in another classroom they're not necessarily going to work." She believed

that “each group of students is different. . . . My ideal of a student, you know, who sits there and takes notes and listens to me is not going to be a reality.” As Figures 1 and 2 suggest, Anita and others from her cohort placed students at the center of a youth culture that influenced them in largely healthy and productive ways, and teachers’ attention to this orientation helped to set the stage for instruction sensitive to their personal and academic needs. Anita’s remarks suggest that she was struggling with this conception even before her student teaching got underway, even amid Ebenezer County High School’s relative affluence and homogeneity that was regarded by many as presenting minor behavioral challenges to teachers.

Anita’s attributions to students as the source of her decisions thus represented a conundrum in her developing conception of how to teach effectively. On the one hand, individual students and their immersion in youth culture should serve as points of departure for instruction. On the other hand, students appeared to take this individual emphasis as a license to behave selfishly, as characterized by Will, and not sufficiently respect the needs of the class as a whole, including Anita as a beginning teacher. During student teaching Anita resolved this problem by imposing a more restrictive environment both behaviorally and academically, a shift that Will felt did not grant them sufficient leeway to find their own means of self-regulation within the developmental channel toward appropriate social conduct and responsibility.

**Self.** Anita tended to identify herself as the source of a teaching decision with much greater frequency early in the semester than later. During the post-observation interview of the first observation cycle, she said,

Yesterday and today I’ve been trying to emphasize looking to [*Lord of the Flies*] specifically for a rationale of what we’re doing. For the beast, and the same situation, try to relate it in some way to themselves. Yesterday I related it more personally. Today I didn’t necessarily, but I did allow them opportunity to use their own opinions [and] try to relate it specifically to them, because they’re having such problems in hating this book so much, which is fine, you know. Not everybody’s going to love it.

Here Anita reported that her personal monitoring of the students’ learning led her to make choices about how to help them relate more easily to the characters of the novel as a way to help with their engagement with its action. This sort of self-attribution characterized the ways in which her initial open-ended approach led to personal decision-making as a sort of reflective practice designed to enable students to personalize the curriculum.

As Table 4 indicates, however, such self-attributions occurred only once during the second observation cycle and four times in the third. One reason for this move away from making her own decisions concerned the need to teach parts of the curriculum that she needed to cover before her student teaching ended. She thus made a concession to the problem of teaching a robust curriculum within a set time period, a need to which she attributed her focus on grammar toward the end of her student teaching within the school's pacing chart and resultant time squeeze: "The reason why I started doing the grammar stuff is because I felt like I had three weeks left and I wanted to do something with grammar, because since we have so much to cover in a very short amount of time, it's kind of, you have to kind of work grammar in where you can." We see this sort of decision as lacking the reflective component of her self-attributions from the first observation cycle, when she looked for ways to improve the quality of students' engagement with literature, rather than to find space to fit in an overlooked strand of the curriculum.

**Colleagues.** In addition to Will, Anita referred to other teachers from the school who influenced her thinking. On occasion, for instance, a member of the English Department would lend her lessons or other materials to use. While teaching *Lord of the Flies*, Anita borrowed activities "from [an English teacher's] lesson plans. He has a file of information about *Lord of the Flies*, so [he] and I went to the copier one day and he let me copy" them. We were not privy to the substance of these plans and so cannot comment on which instructional approach they supported.

Anita also described herself as a "floater," that is, a teacher moving from room to room each period as an interloper on someone else's territory. During the first observation cycle, she described one such teacher as "really weird about her room." She continued:

I have to be conscious of not making too much of a mess. . . . Somebody did something the other day, and [the host teacher] flipped out and started yelling. . . . She's almost always in there the first ten minutes of class. So the idea of getting [class] started right away doesn't work because she's in there distracting, and . . . she spreads so much stuff out that two of my students usually don't have a desk until she packs everything up because there's so many kids, and I don't have any room to put them.

This teacher constrained Anita's teaching by limiting the messiness of Anita's approach to that which could be easily and thoroughly tidied up and carried off before the bell so as not to offend, by reducing the length

of Anita's class time by staying after to conclude her own business before departing, and by limiting her willingness to engage in messy classroom activities and risk facing the wrath of the classroom's host teacher. In this case Anita's conception of teaching was affected by the political dilemma of being a student teacher violating the turf of a senior faculty member who demonstrated disregard for Anita and her students through her extended stays at the beginning of class. The effects of colleagues were thus instructional, political, and relational in helping to influence the particular practices she employed on any given day.

**Curriculum Materials and External Mandates.** Grossman and Thompson (2008) found that curriculum materials provide a primary means of support for new teachers. Anita described the constraints provided by the department's curriculum in how she selected the two novels she focused on during student teaching, *Lord of the Flies* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Anita reported that Will had given her choices from the syllabus he had constructed in relation to the curriculum, allowing her three units to choose. Her choices of the two novels and *Romeo and Juliet* followed from her personal preferences within the range of options he provided.

These choices, she said, were constrained by the parameters of the ninth-grade curriculum, itself an artifact of a canonical approach to the literature curriculum, as suggested by the classic nature of the texts from which she was allowed to choose. This canonical literary curriculum thus represented the influence of the field's dominant tradition, one emphasizing literary texts that embody a cultural heritage established over time. This tradition assumes that it is the task of students to gravitate to the cultural norms available through canonical texts, as opposed to a curriculum predicated on students' interests, as Anita's university program would prefer.

**University Teacher Education Coursework and Supervision.** Anita referred only tangentially to her university teacher education program as the source of ideas across the span of the semester. One such occasion occurred when Anita used a discussion web while teaching *Lord of the Flies*, that is, a graphic organizer designed to identify opposing perspectives on a single issue as a way to set up oppositions for argumentation. She also used a folklore unit developed on campus. Otherwise, she reported little influence of her university courses on her teaching.

Anita rarely referred to her university supervisor, Clare, as an influence on her decision-making during student teaching. Clare said in her interview that her supervision of Anita was focused on encouraging her to provide

individualized instruction without intruding excessively on the students' chosen pathways for learning. This perspective, however, appeared to have little influence on Anita during her student teaching, either emanating from the professors and their teaching or Clare and her supervision.

## **Discussion**

This study has featured a “traditional” student enrolled at her state’s most selective comprehensive university, one bearing the state’s name as emblematic of its status. She was a student in a College of Education ranked among the nation’s best in secondary education, taught by a faculty who had won several awards for the partnership it had established with local schools and teachers and who had published and presented routinely on its operation and successes. The program was well-resourced, with two professors teaching a cohort of 20 students, with additional support from teaching assistants who helped with classes on campus and supervised teachers in the field.

Across the span of her senior year of college, Anita took a full-year practicum in the same classroom, with 12 hours per week in the fall and student teaching in the spring. She also took a full slate of courses in planning, the teaching of literature, and classroom inquiry in the fall and a reading course and student teaching seminar in the spring designed to help teacher candidates reflect on their experiences in the classroom in light of ideas to which they were exposed on campus. This arrangement, according to faculty documentation, provided a “seamless” connection between university and schools designed to provide a highly aligned experience for its teacher candidates, a claim made by other teacher educators in describing their relationships with schools (e.g., Schoon & Sandoval, 1997).

The competing centers of gravity, however, suggest that rather than becoming immersed in a unified universe following a single set of gravitational laws, Anita experienced dissonance not only between the two sites—the “two-worlds pitfall” of being beholden to both campus and schools during student teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985)—but within the school site as she simultaneously negotiated her differences with Will over instructional emphasis and disciplinary posture, treaded lightly in the classroom of a host teacher who resented intrusions and disorderliness, found students to be less amenable to learning opportunities than she had initially assumed, and taught a packed curriculum within the time squeeze of the block schedule.

In the context of these experiences, over the course of her semester of student teaching, Anita moved from a conception of teaching as student-centered and open-ended to one centered on examinations of established,

received knowledge. The hands-on, student-centered emphasis of the conception promoted on campus withered as she gravitated toward becoming the sort of teacher she had initially associated with ineffective instruction she hoped never to adopt. If Anita showed development as a teacher, it was in a direction completely opposite from what she and her professors had initially intended. Her trajectory of concept development was thus not the twist-

**If Anita showed development as a teacher, it was in a direction completely opposite from what she and her professors had initially intended.**

ing path described by Vygotsky (1987), because Vygotsky's notion of the concept has a clearer destination that is approached, however circumnavigationally,

with a terminus in mind. Rather, her conceptual pathway involved veers and U-turns that at times took her toward conceptual and practical endpoints that she originally had rejected as bad teaching.

This pathway provided traction in spite of the supervision of Clare, who identified strongly with the program's values; the routine opportunities to debrief, discuss, and reflect with others in the cohort through the student teaching seminar; and a course in reading during student teaching. Aside from occasional prompts from Cynthia during interviews to talk about her university supervision, Anita never referred to any of these three campus-based influences during the six interviews surrounding the three observation cycles. Her attention rather was focused on the immediacy of her teaching environment, primarily her students and mentor teacher, in making instructional decisions. This most proximal center of gravity, if we may extend our metaphor, appeared to grow in size and pull as the semester unfolded, exerting daily, pragmatic pressure on Anita to assimilate to extant school practices. Simultaneously, campus-based influences faded in weight, propinquity, and perspective in her vision of how to teach.

The field-based design of the teacher education program thus appeared to play a strong role in Anita's developmental path away from the teacher she had initially hoped to become. Although the relationships with the mentor teachers were designed for a strong sense of continuity, the realities of life in schools ultimately worked in opposition to the values endorsed on campus. Field-based programs are validated by many powerful influences in teacher education, from accreditation agencies (Cibulka, 2009) to major research efforts (Levine, 2006). These reports overlook the finding from research on teacher socialization that the schools often promote methods of instruction that require compliance and conformity, emphases that work against the constructivist possibilities of open-ended instruction. The current trend toward standardization of curriculum, instruction, and assessment found



in Race to the Top and similar programs further mitigates against the possibility that teachers will find alternatives to authoritarian instruction in the schools in which they are apprenticed into the profession.

Although this report is hardly the first to document the sort of direction taken by Anita, it undertakes its analysis of socialization through attention to the culturally mediated psychological processes that contribute to such trajectories. From the standpoint of human development, it recalls the fundamental question posed by Wertsch (1995): *Development toward what?* The Progressive pedagogy emphasized in Anita's teacher education program appears motivated by the assumption that, in contrast to traditional approaches rooted in conserving the practices of the past, an experiential education is oriented to generating a new future. If Anita's pathway is viewed as a progression, however, it heads away from Progressivism and toward the field's dominant traditions.

For teacher educators who view their work as of great value to teacher candidates, accepting these trajectories is undoubtedly unsatisfactory. Understanding Vygotsky's (1987) notion of concept development as a process of socially situated tool mediation helps to explain how this sort of pathway leads to teachers' socialization to school norms. This perspective suggests the importance of having campus-based ideals clearly related to concrete activity. When the theoretical orientation goes unaccompanied by a related set of pedagogical tools, it is sure to fade in the immediate rush and tumble of the school day. Explicit attention to brokering this transition during practica appears important during teacher candidates' experience of contradiction, even though a seminar devoted to that end was in place in the program Anita attended.

Anita's teacher education program, as we have noted, was viewed by many as exemplary and was relatively well-resourced. Other programs are far less fortunate and, we infer, are thus far less likely to provide lasting impressions on teacher candidates as they move full-time into schools. Levine (2006) argues that ill-resourced programs should get out of the business of teacher education; yet many states are dealing with critical teacher shortages that, if anything, would require increases in the number of teachers certified in universities or outsourcing of teacher education to other authorities. The overcrowding of teacher education programs would undoubtedly dilute the quality of campus-based preparation yet further and place the mentoring of teacher candidates more squarely in schools, the very institutions that many teacher education programs urge should be reimaged in the Progressive tradition.

If the question in cultural psychology is *Development toward what?*,

and if Anita's case provides an instance of typicality that teacher educators can recognize easily, the developmental pathway of many beginning teachers is anything but Progressive. This process can be accounted for by the lack of interplay between scientific/academic and spontaneous/everyday concepts in teacher candidates' campus-based instruction, and by the powerful centers of gravity available in schools that diurnally draw teachers toward traditional pedagogies and assumptions. Teacher educators thus might benefit from considering how their programs work in the reality of the intersection of universities, schools, and teacher candidates, rather than relying too heavily on the idealistic rhetoric that often characterizes educational writing, both in scholarship and in promotional encomium.

Schools are remarkably resistant to change (Smagorinsky, 2010b). Teacher educators would be advised to acknowledge their well-entrenched practices, and their effects on those who work within them, in providing brokerage between their ideas and their graduates' practice. Such a sober acknowledgment would require greater attention to the relative weight of different centers of gravity affecting teachers, recognition that competing philosophies and practices are facts of life in teacher education, and acceptance of smaller rather than greater gains in the effort to construct alternative pathways of concept development for beginning teachers.

The case we have reported comes from before the current imposition of restrictive teaching through *Race to the Top* and its incessant demand for assessments. (We feel that the Common Core State Standards have not been sufficiently field-tested for instructional impact to include among such new interventions.) If anything, this program will reinforce schools' emphasis on formal, fragmented, testable knowledge and work against teacher education programs' attention to Progressive pedagogies. We find ourselves nearly dumbfounded at the idea of offering neat solutions to the growing problem that what researchers and theorists have identified as good teaching strategies are often dismissed by practitioners and now are likely to be further discouraged by policymakers.

Perhaps working conceptually would help get at the epistemological differences among different teaching approaches. Teacher candidates could be given opportunities to study curriculum documents and other pedagogical materials written from different perspectives, identify their assumptions about teaching and learning, and consider the consequences of each for both teachers and students. This approach might not change school practice one bit. But it would give beginning teachers a better understanding of how they are being encouraged to teach, and what ends that instruction serves. It surely is not enough. But perhaps it's a start.

## Author Note

The overall research design was constructed by Pamela Grossman, Peter Smagorinsky, and Sheila Valencia under the auspices of a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement to the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement (Award # R305A60005). However, the views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the department. Thanks to Lisa Scherff, Leslie Rush, and the external reviewers of *English Education* for their guidance in shaping the final version of the article. Direct correspondence to Peter Smagorinsky at smago@uga.edu.

## Note

1. We use the term *Latin@* rather than *Latino/a* as a way to neutralize the foregrounding of either gender, in that the @ symbol locates the *o* and *a* in the same figure such that neither is dominant. See, for example, Fránquiz and Salazar (2007).

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