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Negotiating Meaning with Educational Practice: Alignment of Preservice Teachers'
Mission, Identity, and Beliefs with the Practice of Collaborative Action Research

by

Jan Marie Carpenter

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership:
Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

The case studies examined how three preservice teachers within a Master of Arts in Teaching program at a small, private university negotiated meaning around an educational practice—collaborative action research. Preservice teachers must negotiate multiple, and often competing, internal and external discourses as they *sort out* what educational practices, policies, organizational structures to accept or reject as presented in the teacher education program. This negotiation is a dynamic, contextual, unique meaning-making process that extends, redirects, dismisses, reinterprets, modifies, or confirms prior beliefs (Wenger, 1998).

Korthagen's (2004) model for facilitating understanding and reflection was used to explore the process of negotiating meaning. Known as the Onion Model, it includes six levels: the environment, behavior, competencies, beliefs, identity, and mission. When alignment occurs between all levels, Korthagen explained that individuals experience wholeness, energy, and presence. In contrast, tensions can occur within a level or between levels of the Onion Model and limit the effectiveness of the preservice teacher regarding the area in question. Reflecting on the collaborative action research experience through the layers of the Korthagen's model may allow preservice teachers (and professors) to identify degrees of alignment and areas of tension as preservice teachers negotiate meaning. Once identified, areas of tension can be deconstructed and better understood; self-understanding can empower individuals to assume an active and powerful role in their professional developmental.

To explore how preservice teachers negotiated their identity regarding collaborative action research, the following research questions guided the study: (1) How do preservice teachers' trajectories align with the practice of collaborative action research? (2) How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? (3) How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? Triangulated data from interviews, observations, and document analysis was collected, analyzed, and interpreted to provide insight into preservice teachers' process of negotiating meaning around a nontraditional educational practice.

Each participant traveled a unique and emotional journey through the process of collaborative action research and their personal trajectory did influence the way they negotiated the practice of collaborative action research. Findings included: (a) each participant had a dominant trait that influenced areas of alignment and misalignment between their trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research; (b) some participants exhibited visible misalignments while the misalignments of others were hidden; (c) participants relied on personal strengths to reestablish the perception of alignment as they negotiated meaning through the practice of collaborative action research; (d) the way misalignments were negotiated limited the transformational potential of the learning experience of collaborative action research; and (e) participants' expectations for their future use of the practice of collaborative action research aligned with their dominant traits.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Motivated by a sense of mission, individuals enter a teacher preparation program with a belief system about education and a vision of self as teacher already established (Laughran, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Wenger, 1998). Throughout the program, each individual's mission, vision, and prior beliefs intersect with contextual experiences to shape a unique trajectory into the educational field (Wenger). Contextual experiences include the introduction of educational practices, influences of significant people, and new paradigms for professional identity. When discrepancies occur between an individual's original mission, vision, and/or belief and a contextual element, the individual must negotiate or *sort out* the incongruity. Wenger explained, "A sense of trajectory gives us ways of sorting out what matters and what does not, what contributes to our identity and what remains marginal" (p. 155). Preservice teachers must negotiate multiple, and often competing, internal and external discourses as they *sort out* what educational practices, policies, organizational structures to accept or reject as presented in the teacher education program. This negotiation is a dynamic, contextual, unique meaning-making process that extends, redirects, dismisses, reinterprets, modifies, or confirms prior beliefs (Wenger). When this negotiation process is intentional, explicit, and results in transformed practice, Wenger frames it as an experience of learning. Because this type of learning goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills to transform who a person is and what that person can do, learning is an experience of identity construction (Wenger). The case study analyzed this process of negotiation as

preservice teachers enacted an educational practice—in this case, collaborative action research.

While an individual's trajectory into teaching is multi-faceted, assessment in teacher education tends to concentrate on the evaluation of candidates' competencies regarding the knowledge and skills taught in the program (Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009). Evaluation of competency is necessary and establishes to what degree a preservice teacher is *able* to implement a practice; an individual's trajectory, however, also includes *willingness* and *desire* to implement the practice. Willingness implies compliance with external mandates or collegial agreements around a practice whereas desire includes a proactive stance from the teacher—the teacher is intrinsically driven to initiate a practice or to seek employment where the practice is valued. Beliefs and attitude shape (a) how individuals locate self in a social landscape; (b) what individuals care about and what they neglect; and (c) what individuals attempt to know and understand and what they choose to ignore (Wenger, 1998). Because an individual's unique experience, perceptions, and processing impacts how they fulfill their role as teacher, many advocate for the explicit focus on personal and professional identity development, reflection, and self-understanding in teacher education (Alsup, 2006; Cranton, 2001; Loughran, 2006; Meijer et al.). However, due to the internal and ambiguous nature of these elements, pedagogical decisions regarding the development of personal and professional identity are more challenging than the teaching and assessment of professional competencies.

Meijer and colleagues (2009) suggested that professors support preservice teachers in the development of professional competencies while facilitating awareness of

how those competencies align or conflict with their unique beliefs, identity, and mission and with their distinctive contextual elements. To facilitate this process, Meijer and colleagues encouraged professors to use core reflection based on Korthagen's (2004) *Onion Model* (see figure 1.1). This model was developed as a method to scaffold the analysis of multi-layered challenges and influences experienced in education. With an emphasis on wholeness and *presence*, the goal is for preservice teachers to experience alignment between and within internal (i.e., mission, identity, and beliefs) and external elements (i.e., competencies, behaviors, and environmental/contextual realities) as they encounter educational dilemmas. When alignment occurs across all levels, preservice teachers are able to implement educational practice with authenticity (Korthagen). If preservice teachers identify with a practice, believe in the constructs of the practice, and understand how the practice aligns with their mission, they are likely to implement it as inservice teachers as long as contextual elements are conducive. However, when conflicts arise within or between levels, preservice teachers must *sort out*, or negotiate resolution of the conflict. Negotiation can be an explicit or implicit process; without identifying and reflecting upon the conflict, tacit beliefs influence powerfully the decision-making process (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995) and practices may be resisted, implemented without authenticity, and/or disregarded without comprehension of the underlying rationale. The Onion Model may provide a useful tool to assist professors and preservice teachers in the identification of misalignments and to focus dialogue toward understanding of the negotiation process (Meijer et. al.).

Figure 1.1

Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model

Problem Statement

During the teacher preparation process, there is continual potential for misalignment between an individual's predetermined trajectory into education and practices required in teacher education (Laughran, 2006). A trajectory serves as an initial measure for what an individual expects in a teacher education program. When an individual's mission, identity, and beliefs about teaching do not align with the purpose and premises of a practice such as collaborative action research, that individual must negotiate internally how to enact the requirements of the project. This is problematic if a person's trajectory is so firm that it is not open to revision or if the misalignment remains unidentified and unexplored. A firm trajectory or unanalyzed misalignment may cause a

preservice teacher to resist, implement without authenticity, and/or disregard an otherwise beneficial practice.

The negotiation process is further complicated by a preservice teacher's position as a novice who is seeking acceptance within a professional community (Wenger, 1998); professors, cooperating teachers, and supervisors serve as exemplars of teaching, provide instruction regarding educational best practice, and fulfill an evaluative role for preservice teachers. Each significant adviser exerts authority as he or she communicates expectations for acceptance into the educational community; yet often different advisers' values, paradigms, and behaviors set contradictory expectations. This is problematic for preservice teachers as they negotiate power relationships in the enactment of their role as teacher. As they implement educational practices, they are cognizant of the need to meet multiple expectations, gain acceptance in the community, and attend to their own goals. Preservice teachers may experience disequilibrium as they determine whose influence to value and may accomplish a task for the purpose of meeting requirements or gaining approval without realizing ownership of the practice.

Yet another problem is a potential gap between a preservice teacher's ability to implement a practice and his or her willingness or desire to participate in the practice as an inservice teacher. Demonstrating competency within a teacher education setting does not ensure that a preservice teacher values the practice enough to later initiate the practice, or to implement it with authenticity once teaching fulltime. A teacher may disregard a practice or fail to experience the full potential of a practice because of conflict(s) that remain unidentified or unaddressed (Korthagen, 2004). For that

individual, unaddressed conflicts may prevent the use of a practice that would be beneficial for the students and/or empowering for that teacher.

Recent political pressure has provided reason for professors to take increased interest in what preservice teachers are taking away from their programs. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared that the nation's teacher education programs are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the 21st century classroom (Cruz, 2009) and advocated for teacher education programs to be held accountable for the actions of the teachers they prepare. Duncan encouraged states to follow Louisiana's lead in creating policies that attach the test scores of students to their teachers and to trace back from those teachers to their preparation program. If teacher preparation programs become increasingly more accountable for the decisions of former students, the manner in which former students teach after leaving a teacher education program will be of greater concern to professors. Evaluating the effectiveness of practices taught in teacher preparation programs will provide valuable insight; however, determining if, and to what degree, inservice teachers are implementing practices taught in the program are important elements as well. A starting point is for professors to explore how preservice teachers internalize educational practices and their willingness and desire to implement those practices after graduation.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Seeking to understand how individuals negotiate new educational practices, I conducted a case study of preservice teachers as they participated in a required practice valued by the teacher education program where this study occurred—collaborative action

research. I used Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model as a lens to explore the intersection of individuals' unique trajectories and the practice of collaborative action research. This exploration included an analysis of how preservice teachers' trajectories align with the practice of collaborative action research, how individuals negotiate meaning regarding collaborative action research, and their vision for future use of the practice.

Understanding how preservice teachers navigate educational practices has pedagogical implications for professors. If professors can assess how preservice teachers internalize practices as well as how competent they are in applying a practice they can better assist preservice teachers as they negotiate new practices. If the Onion Model is useful for the identification of misalignment between an individual's trajectory and the purposes and premises of a practice analysis of the discrepancy may result in the ability of an individual to re-vision the role of teacher to include a practice that might otherwise be resisted or rejected. How preservice teachers internalize and enact a practice in a teacher education program will likely indicate their willingness and desire to implement a practice.

In addition to pedagogical implications, Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model may provide a useful tool for self-reflection when individuals experience conflicts or want to deconstruct new practices in their role as either a preservice or an inservice teacher. Perceiving professional identity as a socially constructed process of always becoming (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Cranton, 2001; McLean, 1999; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Wenger, 1998), individuals will continue to negotiate, mediate, reflect, construct, and consent to their identity as teacher. Understanding that process can empower individuals

to assume an active and powerful role in this developmental process (Britzman; Cranton). Cranton stressed that teachers need to “look at what [they] believe, how [they] came to believe it, why [they] still believe it, and what the consequences are of continuing to believe it or choosing not to believe it” (p. 104). The Onion Model may provide effective methodology for focused reflection regarding beliefs that impact actions; identification of misalignment between personal trajectories and educational practices can facilitate clarity in self-understanding and can lead to greater empowerment of options.

The following Research Questions guided the study: (1) How do preservice teachers’ trajectories align with the practice of collaborative action research? (2) How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? (3) How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice?

Definitions of Terms

The primary focus of the study is how preservice teachers negotiate meaning around a new and nontraditional educational practice—in this case, collaborative action research. Korthagen’s (2004) Onion Model will be used to deconstruct individual’s experience with the collaborative action research process. Therefore, the following section contains Korthagen’s definitions for the six levels of the Onion Model: mission, identity, beliefs, competencies, behavior, and environment. In addition, negotiation, trajectory, collaboration, and action research are defined as used for this study.

Mission. Korthagen (2004) explained that mission is what is deep inside a person that moves him/her to do what he/she does. It is a level of deep meaning sometimes connected with issues of spirituality, calling, and/or connectedness to a greater whole. Mission is “deeply felt, personal values that the person regards as inextricably bound up with his or her existence” (p. 85). For this study, mission serves as the reason an individual wants to teach and their major goal(s) in teaching.

Identity. Identity is defined as “beliefs people have about themselves” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 81). These beliefs are constructions of self—shaped by such influences as past experiences, future visions of self, and the description of self by others (Alsup, 2006; Borich, 1999; Hamacheck, 1999; Korthagen). Because educators teach who they are (Palmer, 1998), both personal and professional identity are relevant to this study. Beliefs about identity are often accessed through the words of self-description. Therefore, the researcher listens for self-described personal and professional characteristics of participants.

Beliefs. Beliefs are deep-rooted paradigms of thought. According to Korthagen (2004), “the beliefs teachers hold with regard to learning and teaching determine their actions” (p. 81). People are able to easily access and articulate certain beliefs while others remain tacit (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995). The researcher listens for the communication of beliefs communicated explicitly as well as encouraging preservice teachers to identify tacit beliefs that may be influencing their actions.

Competencies. Competencies are the knowledge and skills a person has obtained (Korthagen, 2004). Korthagen clarified that competencies provide the ability or potential

for behavior, but circumstances and beliefs determine whether or not the competencies are implemented. Formative and summative assessments of the preservice teacher's action research project provides evidence of competencies for this study.

Behavior. Behavior is the way in which one acts (Korthagen, 2004) For this study behavior refers to how a preservice teacher enacts the role of a collaborative teacher-researcher. Actions are most often observable representations of mission, identity, beliefs, and competencies that allow others to draw conclusions about a person. Behaviors in the study may originate from an individual's self-assessment or from the observations of colleagues, professors, or the researcher.

Environment. The environment is the physical context in which a person operates—the school, the students, and the classroom (Korthagen, 2004). However, the environment also includes the greater political, geographical, and historical setting in which the school is set. The complex environment for this study includes the university classroom in which the collaborative action research project is developed, analyzed, and interpreted and the public school sites where individuals implement the action and collect data. Each context includes multiple influences (i.e., licensure requirements, district mandates, political policies such as No Child Left Behind) and significant individuals (i.e., colleagues, cooperating teachers, administrators, professors) that exert pressure on the development of the collaborative action research project as well as on each preservice teacher's perception of the value of the practice.

Trajectory. Each preservice teacher enters a teacher preparation program with a socially constructed vision of self as teacher, mission for teaching, and belief system

established (Laughran, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Wenger, 1998). These social constructions create a path or trajectory that includes a reason for entering a teacher education program, their targeted outcome and expectations for arriving at that target. For this study, the trajectory includes each individual's mission, identity, and beliefs about teaching. The researcher seeks to understand areas of alignment and misalignment between an individual's trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research.

Negotiate. When preservice teachers experience misalignment between their trajectory and an educational practice, between multiple and conflicting internal beliefs, and/or between their educational paradigms and that of a cooperating teacher or professor, the preservice teachers must negotiate meaning regarding the discrepancies. Filled with issues of power, authority, pressures, and integrity, the preservice teacher must determine whose voice, agenda, and expectations to meet. This is a meaning-making process that extends, redirects, dismisses, reinterprets, modifies, or confirms original conceptions (Wenger, 1998). Although the negotiation process is internal, the decisions impact how the preservice teacher enacts the practice, how or if the individual will implement the practice once an inservice teacher, and impacts how that preservice teacher positions self within the educational community.

Collaboration. Collaboration is the collective endeavor of an interdependent group who share responsibility for an outcome with the goal of growth and the construction of professional knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2003; Senge et al., 2000). Rather than efficiency or expediency, the value of collaboration is multiple

perspectives that provide a greater depth of knowledge than one could obtain alone. In collaboration, the process is as important as the end product.

Action Research. Action research can be defined as “classroom-based studies conducted by teachers of their own practice and resembling university-based research in methods, forms, and reporting conventions” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992, p. 300). In this study, successful completion of an action research project is a requirement for preservice teachers to receive a Master of Arts in Teaching degree.

Summary

Individuals enter teacher education programs with a mission, a vision for professional identity, and educational beliefs established. These socially constructed elements create a trajectory into the educational community for preservice teachers. As they proceed through the program, preservice teachers encounter new practices, paradigms, and expectations that either align or conflict to varying degrees with their trajectory. They also experience incongruities between expectations of significant authoritative figures. Preservice teachers must negotiate meaning around these misalignments and discrepancies as they enact the role of teacher and seek acceptance within a new community. Without identifying and exploring the conflicts, preservice teachers may resist, reject, or implement practices without authenticity.

Professors are in a position to assess preservice teachers’ competence regarding the implementation of practices, but typically do not have access to the internal processing of preservice teachers and are not able to assess individual’s willingness or desire to implement a practice as they move into inservice teaching. Korthagen’s (2004)

Onion Model may provide professors with a tool to assist preservice teachers in the negotiation process. This process may also provide insight into the willingness and desire of individuals to implement practices beyond the teacher education program.

The case studies focused on how preservice teachers negotiated the practice of collaborative action research—a practice identified as new to the preservice teachers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Preservice teachers negotiate new educational practices throughout their teacher preparation programs. Understanding how preservice teachers negotiate a new educational practice, collaborative action research, is central to the study. In particular, I sought to understand how an individual's unique trajectory influences the negotiation of the new practice.

A review of the literature revealed theoretical and research evidence related to this purpose. Pertinent literature was grouped into four sections: (1) the identification of influences on the mission, identity, and beliefs of preservice teachers; (2) the role of the teacher and foundational premises of action research; (3) the history and current status of action research within the public school system; and, (4) preservice teachers' negotiation of mission, identity, and beliefs in teacher education programs.

The purpose of the first section is to establish various influences that exert pressure on the development of preservice teachers' mission, identity, and educational beliefs. Prior beliefs fulfill an active, yet often tacit role in the negotiation of meaning around new ways of thinking about educational issues. Paradigms presented in teacher education and behaviors and values of cooperating teachers further shape the beliefs of preservice teachers.

Because the case study examined areas of alignment between the trajectory of preservice teachers and the practice of collaborative action research, the second section of the literature review explores the purpose, the role of the teacher, and foundational premises of collaborative action research. This section describes the influence of a teacher education program when it provides instruction in the practice of collaborative action research. It also delineates the aspects that will be compared with a preservice teacher's trajectory to determine alignment or misalignment. To identify alignment between a trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research, the researcher conceptualizes comparing an individual's mission with the purpose of the practice; an individual's identity with the role of teacher in collaborative action research as determined by the preservice teacher; and an individual's beliefs with foundational premises of the practice.

Because an individual's prior beliefs and the influence of a teacher education program intersect with the influence of significant individuals within a practicum setting, the third section of the literature review addresses the history and current status of collaboration and action research in the public school system. It also positions these within a greater context of educational reform movements. While a preservice teacher may perceive his/her practicum environment as indicative of the real world, the reality is that the educational world is fragmented rather than unified regarding practices, paradigms, and organizational structures. Additionally, individuals working within schools have developed varying beliefs, commitments, and interests regarding practices. A cooperating teacher may reinforce or criticize the practices taught in a teacher

education program which causes further need for preservice teachers to negotiate meaning regarding identity and role.

The final section of the literature review examines recent studies of preservice teachers negotiating meaning around mission, identity, and beliefs. The studies explore negotiation of conflict between (a) prior beliefs and new ways of conceptualizing educational practice; (b) negotiation of conflict between the mission of a preservice teacher and the expectations of a teacher education program; and, (c) negotiation of conflict between constructed mission, identity, and beliefs and contextual expectations. In these studies, preservice teachers had to negotiate meaning and internal and external power differentials as they made sense of their role and of educational practices.

Influences on the Development of Mission, Identity, and Beliefs

Introduction

Although a preservice teacher's vision of self as teacher may be recent, his/her identity and beliefs regarding the role and identity of teachers have long been under construction (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; Korthagen, 2004; Lortie, 1975; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). The partial, powerful, and often idealistic characterization of professional role developed from the view of a child becomes part of an individual's trajectory (Wenger, 1998); the trajectory includes internalized beliefs that shape motivation for entering the teaching profession, vision for self as teacher, perceptions of teaching and learning, and expectations for the teacher education program. As that trajectory intersects with ideals found within the teacher education and practicum settings, foundational beliefs, which are often tacit, influence how individuals interpret the intersections

(Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Wenger, 1998). This section of the literature review includes an exploration of influences on mission, identity, and beliefs and the influences of the teacher education program and the practicum setting.

Childhood Influences on Beliefs about Education.

Significant events and influential people from childhood shape beliefs about mission, the professional identity of educators, and other educational issues. Although these beliefs often remain unexamined, they operate as a subconscious lenses through which preservice teachers filter perceptions and expectations of teachers (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 2003; DuFour et al., 2008; Hollingsworth, 1989; Korthagen, 2004; Laughran, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Wenger, 1998). Relationships with significant individuals (i.e., parents and former teachers), the persuasion of media, and critical incidents of childhood work together to shape an individual's beliefs about education.

Parents are one's earliest role models; their values regarding education shape foundational understanding about teaching (Alsup, 2006; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Individuals who have parents or close family members who are educators have particularly influential role models. Ritchie and Wilson conducted a case study focused on the professional development of four preservice teachers. In that study the researchers found that individuals with parents who are educators often chose the profession because they are accustomed to and identify with the way of life—part of their mission included the maintenance of a familiar lifestyle. Ritchie and Wilson also asserted that because preservice teacher's significant family member works in the field the preservice teacher hopes to enter, the paradigms of significant individuals often supersede the paradigms of

professors. Additionally, Ritchie and Wilson found that preservice teachers whose parents are educators have strong, but often narrow paradigms for pedagogy, role, authority, and control. When these preservice teachers were confronted with perspectives about learning and teaching that differed from their deeply rooted paradigms, they felt that their way of life and motivation for teaching were challenged as well as their valued pedagogical strategies. This intensified the disequilibrium experienced when one's paradigms are challenged.

In addition to the influence of parents, an individual's perception of a teacher's role is shaped by thousands of hours as a student in classrooms interacting with many different teachers—a phenomenon that Lortie (1975) termed the *apprenticeship of observation*. In a decade-long sociological study of teaching, Lortie found that students developed a simplistic view of a teacher's role; however, as individuals entered the teaching profession they believed their perceptions to be accurate portrayals. This caused a gap between elements that individuals expected to comprise teacher's work and the actual job requirements. Because students did not have access to teacher's work beyond the classroom or to the internal processing and decision-making of the teacher, Lortie found their limited perceptions of a teacher's role be “intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical” (p. 62). Teacher's personalities and a student's relationship with a teacher rather than pedagogical principles created rationale for educational practice. Relying on perception of past events, some teachers framed effective educators and effective educational practice in terms of what worked or what did not work for them. Other individuals credited former teachers as their inspiration for entering the

profession—again, basing their mission and potential identity as teacher on a student’s perception of the role.

The influence of the apprenticeship of observation also surfaced as an essential element in Laughran’s (2006) study of the teacher education process. Laughran found that from the perspective of a student, teaching appears simplistic, static, technically proficient, and orderly. This limited view caused preservice teachers to compartmentalize teaching into simplistic and predetermined checklists of good and bad characteristics and to expect the transference of teacher knowledge and skills in a way similar to a script or a recipe. Education was not viewed as problematic and preservice teachers expected to receive *right answers* to their educational dilemmas from external sources. The trajectories of the individuals in both Lortie’s (1975) and Laughran’s studies were grounded in students’ limited understanding of the teaching process.

Media, another form of the accidental apprenticeship of observation, also shaped beliefs about education. In Ritchie and Wilson’s (2000) case study of the professional development of preservice teachers, they found that movies, television shows, newspapers, commercials, magazines, and books created cultural scripts regarding the role of teachers, the nature of learning, and the purpose of education. These cultural scripts created contradictory portrayals of teachers and set unrealistic expectations that preservice teachers perceived as accurate. Stereotypes from pop culture provided explanation for some preservice teacher’s entrance to the profession and basis for their professional mission and identity; this included an idealistic anticipation to change students’ lives dramatically. Ritchie and Wilson framed portrayals of teachers in the

media as binary—teacher as self-sacrificing, dedicated, and valiant or inept, burned out, and overwhelmed by the inability to change society. These socially created and binary definitions of teachers infiltrated the narratives of the preservice teachers in the study—particularly in terms of what kind of teacher they did or did not want to be. After a similar study, Alsup (2006) asserted that the media positions teachers as “failure or hero, villain or angel” (p. 24) and clarified that preservice teachers relate these images of educators, both negative and positive, to teachers from their own experiences whom they also categorize simplistically as good or bad teachers. These beliefs then influenced the development of their professional identity as teacher.

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) found that the accidental apprenticeship of observation as a student and the deliberate apprenticeship of teacher education worked together to shape preservice teachers’ understandings of teaching, learning, literacy, and self. However, they noted, “It is more likely that [preservice teacher’s] intense and prolonged accidental apprenticeship most determines what these students do as teachers and who they believe themselves to be as teachers” (p. 30). Prior beliefs, whether identified or tacit, influenced strongly reasons preservice teachers entered the field, how they interpreted educational issues, how they enacted their role as preservice teachers, and what practices they later implemented as inservice teachers.

The Influence of Teacher Preparation Programs on the Beliefs of Preservice teachers.

The deliberate apprenticeship of a teacher education program also shapes an individual’s understanding of a teacher’s role (Alsup, 2006; McLean, 1999; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). In a study of the development of teachers, McLean noted that the teacher

education institution through espoused values, embraced theoretical perspectives, and endorsed pedagogical strategies offers a framework for defining *good teacher* that exerts pressure on the development of beliefs. However, paradigms presented within teacher education may conflict to varying degrees with prior beliefs of individuals and/or with what they are observing in a school setting. When confronted with conflicting views, McLean said that the preservice teacher must question, “Whose knowledge counts?” (p. 74) and make decisions that are often steeped in power issues.

Clandinin (1993) framed teacher education as “the ongoing writing of student teachers’ lives, not a separate preparation for something disconnected from what came before and a readying for what is to come after” (p. 11). These stories are in continual revision; as preservice teachers encounter new experiences and new ways of knowing they must interpret them and negotiate meaning. Clandinin explained that educational experiences are sense-making endeavors—not merely of pedagogical knowledge, but also of personal practical knowledge. According to Sfard and Prusak (2005), individuals use the language of story to make meaning of self and experience; this language allows researchers access to an otherwise ambiguous process.

Teacher preparation includes practicum experiences where preservice teachers are confronted with additional values, norms, and beliefs that shape their identity as teacher (Alsup, 2006; Korthagen, 2004; Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1999). Korthagen found that observable behaviors of mentor teachers (i.e., cooperating teachers) and the unique environmental context of their practicum school provide models and definitions of teachers and teacher roles that influenced beliefs and shaped behaviors of preservice

teachers. Alsup also determined that mentor teachers had a significant effect on the development of preservice teachers. When preservice teachers were invited in to critical discussions with their mentor teacher, continual and positive growth occurred. This growth included exploration of teaching strategies and practices. Likewise, situations developed where preservice teachers felt oppressed and forced to assume a role while in the classroom. These individuals felt the need to conform to their mentor teacher's methods without the ability to explore the practices.

Schempp and associates (1999) explored power relationships between mentor teachers and preservice teachers. They found that preservice teachers felt intense pressure to try to fit in with experienced educators to find acceptance. This often involved joining the "society of the silent" (Schempp, et al., p. 157) in which preservice teachers refrained from expressing their opinion or acted in a manner they perceived as favorable to the mentor teacher even if it was contradictory to self. Korthagen (2004) explained that when preservice teachers experience conflicting beliefs, they must negotiate how to enact their role. For example, if a preservice teacher disagreed with a mentor teacher's methodology, that preservice teacher must determine whether to behave in a manner inconsistent with his/her beliefs and enact that methodology to find acceptance from the mentor teacher or to align actions with his/her beliefs and face possible criticism from the cooperating teacher. While there are additional ways to negotiate such a paradox, similar situations often appear as binary decisions to preservice teachers.

Preservice teachers, as newcomers to the profession, first enact their role within the classroom of an experienced teacher. When considering the influence of teacher

preparation, Wenger (1998) found that preservice teachers perceive their practicum environment as the *real world* and are most influenced by participation with practitioners regardless of what is taught, prescribed, or recommended elsewhere (Wenger). The influential power of a mentor teacher, along with the need to find acceptance in a new community, strongly influenced the behavior and/or the perceived expectations of teacher behavior of preservice teachers and mediated the influence of a teacher education program.

Action Research as a Teacher Preparation Requirement: Overview and Underlying Values

Introduction

For preservice teachers in the study, completion of a collaborative action research project is taught as a way of thinking about the educational process as well as a program requirement to earn a master's degree. Therefore, professors are in a position to explain, validate, and model the process as well as to evaluate the competency of preservice teachers regarding the practice. Because professors validate, model, and evaluate the process, they exert additional pressures that help to shape the beliefs and actions of preservice teachers. Because the purpose of this study is to explore how preservice teachers negotiate collaborative action research, it is important to delineate how literature frames collaborative action research. Perceiving mission, identity, and beliefs as characteristics unique to people, the review will focus on elements of collaborative action research that parallel those characteristic—the purpose, the role of the teacher, and the premises of collaborative action research as a practice. This section begins with a brief

overview of action research followed by a discussion of purpose, role of the teacher, and premises inherent to collaborative action research.

Collaborative Action Research Defined

Action research, classroom-based studies conducted by teachers of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992), involves a cyclical process with several interactive steps (Nelson & Slavit, 2008; Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2009; Yendol-Hoppey, Gregory, Jacobs, & League, 2008): (a) teachers define a problem, a new strategy to implement, or a focus for action; (b) explore the literature to develop a foundation and framework for the project; (c) create a plan of action that includes data collection, analysis, and interpretation; (d) implement the plan and analyze assessment results; then, (e) repeat the process as necessary; and finally, (f) determine the implications for their particular situation and to publish or share the results in some manner. Framed as experiences of learning, action research is becoming one way that schools organize professional development (Wood, 2007).

Origins and Purpose of Collaborative Action Research.

Action research originated by school and university-based researchers who were committed to progressive education and grounded in critical theory (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b). The goal was to establish action research as a vital element of teachers' roles thereby empowering teachers to become agents of social change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle). Although action research was often conducted by individual teachers, many advocated for ongoing collaborative research within teacher communities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle; DuFour et al., 2008; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Nelson & Slavit, 2008;

Senge et al., 2000; Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2009). The purpose of collaborative action research is to professionalize the role of teacher by providing a process where teachers become problem-solvers of contextual dilemmas and collectively generate theories to improve curriculum, instruction, and equity in education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle).

The Role of the Teacher in Collaborative Action Research

Positioning teacher as a collaborative researcher is more than an addition to a teacher's role; it necessitates revisioning or reinventing the role of teacher (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a; DuFour et al., 2008; Fullan, 1993; Reeves, 2006; Wood, 2007). This revisioning includes a shift in collegial relationships and professional stance. According to Fullan, the revisioned role of teacher requires a dynamic and complex process of reculturing traditional norms and values; he stated that this educational reform, in addition to new skills and behaviors, requires beliefs and values that cannot simply be mandated.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999b) positioned the role of teacher in collaborative action research as interdependent in contrast to the traditional role of teacher as independent and solo operator. More than an organizational structure of individual to group orientation, DuFour and colleagues (2008) also stressed the importance of interdependence in the collaborative work of teachers. They explained that bringing a group of teachers together, asking them to work on the same task, or having them work toward the same goal does not automatically make them a collaborative team. The critical element, according to DuFour and colleagues, is the development of interdependent

relationships. Teachers must view their work with colleagues as a vital element of their job. When speaking of the development of interdependent communities Reeves (2006) explained, “[Administrators] can compel [teacher’s] attendance and compliance, but only they can volunteer their hearts and minds” (p. 52). The role of teacher in collaborative action research includes an organizational change and a unique commitment to others on the team.

In addition to working in isolation, teachers are traditionally perceived as confident experts of subject matter and pedagogical strategies. Collaborative action research positioned the role of teachers as intentional and continuous learners of and within classroom practice (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999b). Being a collaborative teacher-researcher requires a willingness to be vulnerable, to question, to hold uncomfortable tensions, to be vulnerable with colleagues, to struggle, to challenge the status quo, and to pose problems (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; DuFour et al., 2008; Nelson & Slavit, 2008, Senge et al., 2000). Shifting from an expert who possesses answers to one who is also willing to question within the classroom environment is a shift in professional stance for teachers.

Educators who are willing to pose questions regarding classroom practice must add the role of creator of knowledge in addition to implementer of knowledge. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999a) explained that the traditional role of teacher has been “technician, consumer, receiver, transmitter, and implementer of other people’s knowledge” (p. 16). Operating from this definition, teachers internalize the expertise of authoritative others regarding solutions to classroom challenges; teacher voice and

experience has limited value in curricular and pedagogical innovations. Similar to Cochran-Smith and Lytle, Wood (2007) found that as researchers, teachers had the opportunity to construct their own knowledge using systematic action strategies focused on their own contextual situation.

Premises of Collaborative Action Research

At the core of the definition of a teacher's role is one's perception of what kind of knowledge is valued and legitimized. A premise of collaborative action research is that the knowledge created by teachers has unique value in the educational world. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992), if only university-based construction of knowledge is valid, then the professional role of the teacher is to learn to apply that knowledge in classroom practice. With this technical view of teaching, the teacher has no part in the generation of the formal knowledge base. Conversely, if teachers are viewed as participants in the creation and use of knowledge, then research is validated as part of their role. Cochran-Smith and Lytle asserted that the voice of the teacher is largely missing from the knowledge base of teaching and that research by teachers generates a unique practical knowledge that will add to and alter what is known about teaching and learning and will radically challenge current assumptions.

Another foundational premise of collaboration is that the collective potential and knowledge of a team is greater than that of an individual (Grossman et al., 2001; Senge, 2006) and that accessing the collective potential is necessary to meet the needs of all students within a complex and constantly shifting system (DuFour et al., 2008; Grossman et al.; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Reeves, 2006; Senge et. al., 2000). Teams of teachers

engaged in collaborative action research voice curiosity, establish common goals and shared vision, and engage in open dialogue to meet the needs of their students (DuFour et al., Grossman et al.; Senge et al.). Through this process, there is potential for individual growth and the development of community as teams work together to address contextual needs of their students.

Yet another premise of action research is that education is problematic and that the research process can facilitate understanding and solutions to educational dilemmas (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Laughran, 2006). Cochran-Smith and Lytle emphasized that as researchers, teachers problematize education “calling into question labels, practices, and processes that are so ingrained in our language and metaphors for teaching and learning that they have become reified” (p. 312). Laughran stressed that the action research process empowers teachers to create knowledge about possibilities and pedagogical responses rather than to seek answers from external sources or to find *the* solution of what works best.

Grounded in social learning theory, another premise of collaborative action research is that the unique contributions, perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of each member create a synergistic learning experience that is greater than the sum of its parts (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The emphasis is on dynamic process rather than the end goal. To create a dynamic learning process, communities require mutual respect, trust and accountability (Wenger, 1998); when these are in place, individuals are able to take risks, suspend assumptions, ask critical questions, challenge others, hold the tension of conflict, and experience personal and professional growth. In addition,

communities offer a sense of belonging and connection with others; in this sense, Wenger and colleagues noted that beyond a matter of intellectual growth alone, collaborative teams involve issues of the heart. Wenger and colleagues found belonging and connection to be intangible outcomes of extreme value to members of collaborative communities.

According to Senge (2006) valuing both dialogue and discussion is important in the collaborative learning process. He clarified that both are important elements of generative learning, but their distinctions and synergistic possibilities need to be understood. While discussion is the exchange of personal views to persuade others, the purpose of dialogue is to go beyond the possibility of any individual—to pool the collective knowledge of the group. Dialogue becomes a safe place for individuals to “become observers of their own thinking” (p. 224). Discussion is beneficial for making decisions while dialogue is essential for accessing and analyzing assumptions as well as developing possibilities. Dialogue requires an attentive stance and commitment to others. Senge stated that in dialogue,

...we pay attention not only to the words but to the spaces between the words;
not only to the result of an action but to its timing; not only to the things people
say but to the timbre and tones of their voices. (p. 75)

Important premises of dialogue include: (a) the knowledge and contributions of others have value; (b) it is important to examine one’s own thinking and assumptions; and, (c) the investment of interpersonal relationships is beneficial (Senge).

While dialogue is important to the collaborative action research practice, Achinstein (2002) found that conflict is generated during the collaborative process and how teams view conflict impacts the development and outcomes of the community and of individual growth. Divergent views surfaced as individuals took risks, asked questions, voiced assumptions, challenged others, and participated in dialogue. Achinstein cautioned against adopting a simplified and overly optimistic version of collaborative teaming and stated that conflict is a normal and essential dimension of a well-functioning community. Achinstein discovered that team beliefs regarding conflict impacted their ability to function, their level of maturity, and their growth as individuals and teams.

Achinstein (2002) conceptualized a continuum to measure team views of conflict; the continuum ranged from avoidance to embracement. When team values positioned conflict as negative, problematic, and destructive to the community, the result was avoidance, exclusion, or transfer. One team in Achinstein's study adhered to such ideals. She characterized their community as bonded with impermeable borders. Coming together around consensus, they shifted blame for conflict to others (such as students or parents), reinforced the status quo by refusing to look at differing perspectives, and forced out those who dissented from group opinion. Fullan (1993) also cautioned about collaboration in which group members are unwilling to voice differing opinions—pushed to extremes, it becomes groupthink. This uncritical conformity and unwillingness to accept conflict and ambiguity squelched learning opportunities. To a lesser extreme, Achinstein found that teams that are unwilling to hold the tension of conflict become static with limited opportunities for transformative learning.

Conversely, teams that embraced conflict had great potential for individual and collective growth (Achinstein, 2002). Such teams were willing to participate in dialogue—they raised dissenting views, explored those views, engaged in critical reflection, and identified and critiqued their own assumptions and beliefs. These teams, Achinstein asserted, reflected characteristics of learning communities. She noted, “New types of learning are possible because dissent fosters divergent thought processes, opens up possibilities, and questions the previously unquestionable” (p. 448). Conflict, when viewed as opportunity, had the potential to lead to creative and innovative solutions and goals, strengthened teams, and provided for individual and team learning connected with renewal and fulfillment.

Yet another premise of collaborative action research is that the process has the potential to facilitate, but does not guarantee teacher learning. In Graham’s (2008) study on collaboration within a Professional Learning Community (PLC) model, he found increased teacher learning occurred in two of three grade level teams he studied. The two teams that exhibited growth created common assessments, shared instructional strategies, reviewed student work collectively, used assessment data to drive instruction, and devoted time to reflection and discussion as part of their regular practice. The third team in Graham’s study exhibited limited growth. These teachers exhibited collegiality but the relationship could not be characterized as interdependent; they helped each other out with their individual practices rather than creating and working toward a shared goal. Elements that set the learning teams apart included a clear understanding of the inquiry process, interdependent relationships, and approaching collaborative sessions with a

posture of authenticity and ownership (Graham). Similarly, Reeves (2006) determined that teacher learning occurred when the implementation, analysis, and interpretation of common assessments became the norm rather than isolated incidents or events. DuFour and colleagues (2008) emphasized that learning occurred when educators shifted in their conceptual understanding of teams from a task to a relational orientation; this included a greater value on process than end product.

Graham (2008) framed the development of well functioning teams as cyclical. As teachers developed common assignments and assessments, sought multiple perspectives of thought, worked through conflict, analyzed results collaboratively, and made meaning of the results through reflective dialogue, then used the results to inform instruction, they experienced professional growth. This growth inspired the team to repeat the process realizing the potential for continued improvement of practice and increased student learning. In doing so, trust and respect developed into interdependence between team members.

Understanding and valuing the foundational premises of collaborative action research allows alignment between an individual's trajectory and participation in the practice. Because the premises are contradictory to many norms of teaching, preservice teachers may not expect to encounter a practice such as collaborative action research in their teacher preparation program. The possibility for misalignment is great; therefore, collaborative action research is a good practice on which to examine the negotiation process.

*History and Current Educational Climate Regarding Collaboration and Action**Research**Introduction*

In classes, professors introduce the purposes, premises, and processes of practices such as collaborative action research. In the field, cooperating teachers strongly influence the beliefs of preservice teachers regarding such practices (Korthagen, 2004; Wenger, 1998). The unique experiences and beliefs of a cooperating teacher and the norms and values experienced at the practicum site help to shape preservice teachers' perceptions of the practice.

This section of the literature review provides a brief overview of the historical evolution of collaboration and action research and positions them within the current educational environment. These practices are part of reforms intended to professionalize the role of teacher—one strand within waves of reform that have shaped a complex and fragmented educational system (Fullan, 1993). Each school, situated within a larger historical, political, and social context, has a unique experience regarding the implementation or rejection of multiple reform movements. Each school experience includes particular rationale, methodology, relationships, and results regarding the implementation of reforms; unique school norms exert pressures that influence the receptiveness of individual teachers and ultimately the effectiveness of the reforms. When preservice teachers view their practicum context as representative of the real world, their practicum site becomes a comparative guide with which to critique practices taught in teacher education (Wenger, 1998). However, rather than representative of the

real world, a particular school context and an individual cooperating teacher represent one of many complex possibilities. The beliefs and practices of a cooperating teacher may align or conflict with paradigms and practices taught in a teacher education program.

Collaboration

Since the 1960s, collaboration has been a major component of organizational reforms within the middle school movement; specifically, the National Middle School Association has advocated for middle school teachers to work in collaborative, interdisciplinary teams. When implemented with fidelity, collaborative teaming has led to increased student achievement (Felner et al., 1997; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 1999). Furthermore, Flowers and colleagues linked collaborative teaming with a positive work climate, job satisfaction, a supportive environment for students, increased parental involvement. Additionally, Erb (1997) associated collaborative teaming with teacher development and ownership of unique pedagogical solutions to contextual problems. Beyond the middle school movement, others have linked collaboration with heightened results in schools and greater productivity in business (DuFour et al., 2008; Reeves, 2006; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2000; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). Despite positive findings, collaboration has not become established firmly in most schools; teachers continue to operate largely in autonomous isolation (DuFour et al.; Reeves; Senge). Additionally, where collaborative teams are established, there are varying levels of implementation and results (DuFour et al.; Lounsbury, 2001, Reeves). Although a strong advocate for teaming, Lounsbury lamented:

...behind the now common organizational presence of teams exists a widely recognized failure to exploit the powerful potential of teaming. Although readily accepting assignments as members of an interdisciplinary team and using common planning time for much collaboration on managerial matters, too many teachers put on the clothes of teaming but continued to teach essentially as they taught before when they were single runners...Teams became symbolic evidences of desired change but did not assure change in the way the classrooms were conducted. (p. v-vi)

As Lounsbury pointed out, among schools that implement the teaming concept there are various levels of effectiveness.

Action Research

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999b) have studied the origin and progression of action research. Introduced during the 1980s within a movement to professionalize the role of teacher, action research was one response to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). That document labeled schools as failing institutions and sparked a series of reform movements as education came under intense scrutiny. Although action research is prominent in teacher education, Cochran-Smith and Lytle pointed out that inservice teachers played a significant role in establishing action research as a grassroots movement.

Much like the collaborative movement, action research has met with limited success and has varying levels of implementation and effectiveness. Cochran-Smith and Lytle cited examples of action research leading to the development of alternative

assessments, opening conversation about educational inequities, and facilitating democratic changes within school. However, Cochran-Smith and Lytle determined that the action research process has been used in ways that lack alignment with the original intent. Rather than taught as a *way of knowing*, action research has been assigned as a final project; rather than a means to identify and question assumptions, action research has been employed as a strategy to increase efficiency; and rather than leading to restructuring for equity, education has often remained unchanged despite the implementation of action research.

The Educational System: Layers of Reform

Reforms that endorse collaboration and action research fall within the movement for professionalization of teachers which is one strand of initiatives in a storm of powerful and conflicting political and cultural pressures (Fullan, 1993). In a study of educational reform, Fullan (1992) organized the reform movements of the past 40 years in two distinctive categories that reflect contradictory theoretical perspectives: (1) reform movements with a regulatory focus resulting in top-down mandates which emphasize accountability and control; and (2) reform movements which empower school personnel to author and implement educational change at a local level. Current political trends support reforms that fit within the first category while collaboration and action research fit in the second category. Reformers on both sides agree that the quality of the classroom teacher is pivotal to the education of students; however, they have vastly contrasting views of the role of the teacher. Whereas the reforms with a regulatory focus seek to remove power from the local setting and place it in external

controls, reforms that localize the power, according to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999b), strive to professionalize the role of teachers. Fullan (1993) asserted that the result of powerful pressures exerting multiple and conflicting expectations on the role of educators is a fragmented and uncoordinated educational system.

Far from neutral experiences, the enacted story of each reform movement involves issues of power, knowledge, and authority that shape the experience of and expectations for teachers (Fullan, 1992). Tyack and Cuban (1995) concluded, “Reforms tend to accumulate, one on top of another, adding to rather than simply replacing what went before” (p. 63). Wenger (1998) asserted that within the context of layers of reform, teachers individually determine meaning regarding their identity and role with their prior experiences playing a dominant role in the meaning-making process. The implementation of new educational movements or mandates triggers multiple responses from educators ranging from enthusiasm, empowerment, hope, and curiosity to fear, anger, disappointment, cynicism, and disillusionment. How educators construct meaning around unique experiences shapes their identity, practice, relationships, and receptiveness to new educational approaches. For example, in their work facilitating the implementation of professional learning communities in schools, DuFour and colleagues found: (a) teachers who embraced the identity of collaborator and incorporated collaborative activities into their regular practice; (b) educators who idealize the identity without knowing how to live it out; (c) those who espouse the theory with practice unchanged; (d) educators who comply with mandates while lacking commitment; and, (e) some who reject collaboration in theory and practice.

Summary

Unique experiences and perceptions of a teacher influence the enactment of a practice. Underlying beliefs result in external behaviors that impact the classroom and school environments. While preservice teachers are influenced by the behaviors modeled by the cooperating teacher and the values of the unique environment of the practicum environment, the nature of the influence is often unknown by professors. Chance determines if a preservice teacher is placed with a cooperating teacher whose beliefs and values align or conflict with practices endorsed by the teacher education program.

Negotiating Identity, Teacher Role, and New Practices

Studies that examined how preservice teachers negotiate identity, role, and new practices (Agee, 1998; Agee, 2004; Sexton, 2008) illustrate many of the concepts described earlier in the literature review regarding the development of beliefs, the role of beliefs in the resistance or internalization of new practices, and the pressures of environmental pressures on belief systems and identity. In one study, participants faced conflicts between prior beliefs and new conceptions about educational practice (Agee, 1998). Sexton explored the negotiation of conflict between the personal mission of a preservice teacher and the expectations of a teacher education program. A third study examined how a preservice teacher negotiated conflict between constructed identity and contextual expectations (Agee, 2004). In each study, participants negotiated multiple pressures, both internal and external, to negotiate meaning around a variety of educational practices. Viewing negotiations through the lens of Korthagen's (2004)

Onion Model, participants reached varying levels of alignment within and between levels.

Prior beliefs and experiences play an active role in the process and outcomes of how preservice teachers' perceive and enact new educational practices. Agee (1998) found that preservice teachers' personal history, beliefs about the purpose of teaching a subject and about what content should be taught, and knowledge of cultural expectations for teachers impacted their willingness to make conceptual changes in pedagogical and curricular decisions. Participants validated or rejected practices introduced in their teacher education program based on their own experience. Preservice teachers who had positive associations with traditional educational practices were resistant to unfamiliar concepts that conflicted with their experience; some participants became defensive as they felt that new practices introduced by professors discredited the work of individuals they perceived as good teachers. However, preservice teachers who had negative experiences with traditional educational practices exhibited openness to conceptual change of practices. Whether prior experiences with a practice had been positive or negative, dissonance occurred when preservice teachers faced unfamiliar concepts. Agee found the dissonance to fulfill either a limiting or generative role. When strong resistance caused preservice teachers to assume a defensive stance, their ability to contemplate multiple perspectives was limited. For other preservice teachers, dissonance created intrigue—a desire to hear divergent views and to question assumptions regarding teaching practices despite some discomfort.

Sexton (2008) found that when alignment occurred between personal goals and program expectations, preservice teachers experienced consonance whereas misalignment between goals and expectations resulted in dissonance. Consonance led to a smoother journey, but offered little opportunity for professional growth. Dissonance indicated conflict that required negotiation by preservice teachers but also provided greater possibility for growth. One participant in Sexton's study entered teaching with a sense of mission that shaped a solid, static trajectory for his journey into education. The participant viewed himself as a social activist and teaching as a means to promote his ideals. He embraced university coursework, pedagogical strategies, and curricular decisions that defined the role of teacher as social activist while ignoring or investing minimal effort into those he perceived not to have value. Likewise, boundaries between himself, colleagues, and professors were drawn according to their stance regarding issues of social justice. Positioning himself on the periphery, he felt a disconnect between his identity and the way the program positioned the role of teacher. His mission became the measurement by which all practices and professors were validated or rejected.

Preservice teachers negotiate meaning when there is a gap between constructed identity and contextual expectations. Agee (2004) conducted a case study to examine how a teacher negotiated her professional identity as she attempted to incorporate multicultural literature into an English course. Throughout preservice teaching and into the first two years as an inservice teacher, the participant experienced dissonance between her desired identity and perceived contextual expectations. Describing herself as one who would facilitate understanding of racial diversity through constructivist

pedagogical methods that built on the prior knowledge of her students, she felt pressured to teach traditional literature utilizing teacher-directed strategies. Citing the demands of district policy and mandated assessments she feared disadvantaging her students by teaching according to her ideologies; the participant felt that the type of teaching and learning she desired would not prepare her students for the state assessments. Multiple pressures caused her to teach in a manner that was incongruent with her mission, identity, and her beliefs about good teaching.

Conclusions from the Review of Literature

Rather than the retention of knowledge and the competent application of isolated skills, the process of becoming a teacher involves intense negotiation of meaning regarding educational practices. Prior experiences, the voice of significant others, paradigms of teacher education, and unique contextual elements of a practicum environment work together to shape deep-rooted and powerful beliefs and behaviors of preservice teachers. For preservice teachers, sorting out perceptions and determining actions requires the negotiation of meaning and issues power at the internal levels of mission, identity, and beliefs. This process is intensified and further shaped by the preservice teacher's need for acceptance within the new educational community. While practices such as collaborative action research are grounded in research and are intended to empower and professionalize the role of the teacher, there are multiple influences working together to determine if and how individuals enact the practice. How individuals negotiate meaning influences the way they enact their role as preservice teachers and plays a role in whether or not they continue practices as inservice teachers.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Introduction

The case studies explored how preservice teachers negotiated meaning around a nontraditional educational practice—collaborative action research. Research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research?
2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?
3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice?

The research process is the focus of this chapter—the methodology, data collection tools, and data analysis procedures. Therefore, alignment between the project and the questions is an important element of this chapter.

The chapter begins with an explanation of case study methodology that allowed the researcher to interpret how preservice teachers negotiated an educational practice using rich, descriptive data. Because it was important to situate the case study in context, the next section includes an explanation of the MAT program, the program's timeline, and the timeline for the research project. Although the formal data collection for the case studies did not begin until the last two months of the MAT program, participants' negotiation of meaning around the practice of collaborative action research occurred

throughout the program. Next, the methods for the selection of participants were outlined, followed by a discussion about the data sources and procedures for data collection.

Three forms of data were collected: interview, observation, and document analysis. Interview protocols are discussed first; this section includes rationale for obtaining data through interviews, an overview of the protocol for each interview, the alignment of each interview question with the research questions, the focus of analysis for each question, and a timeline for the interviews. Observations were explained next including the same categories of explanation: rationale, overview of the protocol, alignment with the research questions, the focus of analysis, and a timeline of the observations. After the observation procedures were described, the same written structure was used for document analysis. The explanation of the data analysis that followed includes the identification of coding themes and procedures for organizing and interpreting the data.

The final sections of chapter three included a brief discussion of the limitations of the research and a plan for trustworthiness. Included in this discussion are acknowledgement of the relationship of the researcher to the participants, researcher biases, the use of member checking, and triangulation of data. Also articulated was an explanation of the review of the research tools by professors with expertise in this model. The final section of chapter three addresses confidentiality and the rights of participants.

Case Study Methodology

The case studies examined the specific phenomena of how three preservice teachers within one Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program negotiated meaning regarding an educational practice—in this situation, collaborative action research. A qualitative case study design was utilized. This methodology was selected because qualitative case studies provided opportunity for the holistic exploration of multiple influences of potential importance when seeking to understand the chosen phenomenon of study (Merriam, 1988). This research can be classified as instrumental case studies because the specific case is secondary while the issue itself is of primary importance (Stake, 2005); the specific cases were selected due to their similarity to other contexts. In the study, the desire for insight into the process preservice teachers used to negotiate meaning when introduced to a new educational practice led the researcher to the specific context in which this activity would occur. While the participants and unique context shaped the study, they were not determining factors in choosing the cases. Further, the study can be defined as interpretative (Merriam, 1988); descriptive qualitative data were used to analyze and interpret the negotiation processes rather than to simply describe the process.

Context: The MAT Program and Timeline of the Project

A three-semester MAT program at a small private university in the Pacific Northwest was the setting for the case studies. Specifically, I followed three of the 52 preservice teachers in the program through the final months of their collaborative action research project. All three preservice teachers sought licensure at two levels—either

middle and elementary or middle and high school. The commonality is that their first authorization was at the middle school level. Although completion of an action research project has been a requirement in the MAT program, this was the first year for the collaborative component.

All participants took a series of action research classes that focused on the critical question: Who am I becoming as a teacher? The introductory course in the summer provided an overview of the action research process. In that course, action research was positioned as a process to facilitate continual learning about students, teaching, and self—thus a process for professional identity development. During the fall semester, the participants identified potential action research topics, determined collaborative teams of three to five preservice teachers, and explored relevant literature. Teams were organized according to topics of interest rather than the authorization or endorsement area of the preservice teachers; therefore, some teams included preservice teachers of mixed authorizations and/or endorsements while others shared a common authorization level and/or endorsement area. Once the participants transitioned into new placements for their full-time student teaching in January, the final semester of the program, the collaborative research teams developed their ideas into a proposal based upon their subject and their school placements. Although the preservice teachers were placed in different schools, the research teams developed a common plan and common assessment tools (although some tools were modified to allow for developmentally diverse levels of PK-12 students; when modifications occurred, the concepts remained the same while the language was revised to meet the developmental levels of students). Throughout February and March, collected

data were compiled by each individual and brought to the research team for collaborative analysis and interpretation. This analysis and interpretation process took place during weekly class sessions at the university as well as through email conversations and additional meetings as determined by individual groups. Formatted in a workshop environment conducive to collaborative action research, the desired outcome was the development of professional learning communities among the preservice teachers. Formal documentation of their journey was in the form of a research paper and the findings shared at a university symposium.

Since professional identity development was a theme for the MAT program, participants had numerous opportunities to reflect on what it meant to become an educator. Because a philosophical conviction of those teaching in the MAT program was that the personal cannot be separated from the professional, those reflections often had to do with the intertwined growth of personal and professional self. Before participants began the MAT program, they were asked to write an essay on their philosophy of life and the implications of that philosophy for education. Additionally, they provided three professional references as part of the admissions process; those references addressed core strengths and statements of character regarding the participants. Throughout all semesters of the program, the participants were asked to reflect on the process of their professional identity development through methods such as journal entries, essays, and discussions. While not developed for the purposes of the case studies, the application documents and course assignments provided information. Interviews and observations provided additional insight into how preservice teachers' negotiated meaning around collaborative

action research specifically. The intentional collection of data began after the collaborative action research proposals were approved and the preservice teachers entered the data collection stage of their collaborative projects. An overview of the MAT program timeline and related data sources for the case studies are displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1.

Overview of MAT Program Timeline and Data Sources

Timeframe	Preservice teacher schedule	Sources of data
Variety of dates – May 2009	Pre-entrance to program—application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Application to MAT program ○ Application essay – <i>Philosophy of life and the implications of that philosophy on education</i> ○ Letters of recommendation ○ Group Assessment data
Summer 2009	EDUG 520: Action Research I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Journal entries ○ Class assignments ○ Email communication ○ Personal communication
Winter 2009	EDUG 521: Action Research II EDUG 558: Teaching in the Middle (for those seeking middle and high school authorization only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Journal entries ○ Class assignments ○ Email communication ○ Personal communication
Spring 2010	EDUG 522: Action Research III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Journal entries ○ Email communication ○ Personal communication ○ Interviews ○ Observations ○ Class assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaborative action research proposal ○ Analytic memos ○ Rough drafts of papers ○ The final collaborative action research project ○ A final reflection on the collaborative action research process.

Context: The Participants

When referring to individuals who are the focus of a qualitative study, Lichtman (2010) noted a variety of accepted terms—informant, participant, co-researcher, interviewee, discussant, partner, and conversational partner. More than synonymous terms, each connotes meaning regarding relational power and position. For this study, the term participant was used to describe the three preservice teachers in the case studies. My hope was to invite individuals into the process of exploring how they negotiated meaning around an educational practice—that they would participate in self-exploration as well as participating in the study.

In qualitative research, participants are selected via purposeful sampling by the researcher in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon central to the study rather than to be able to generalize the results (Cresswell, 2005). Due to the intentionality involved, Maxwell (2005) suggested using the term *purposeful selection* rather than purposeful sampling—based on the goals of the study and availability of participants, the researcher carefully selects participants to invite into the process. Maximal variation was the type of purposeful selection employed to determine participants for the case studies. The goal of maximal variation sampling, according to Cresswell, is to include individuals with diverse perspectives in order to better represent the complexity of our world. Maxwell stressed the importance in maximal variation sampling is to get the greatest range of participants possible. In many ways, the preservice teachers selected to participate in the case studies represented typical MAT

students in the program; however, criteria were set to ensure some diversity within a rather homogeneous group.

Although the MAT program involved in the study prepares preservice teachers to be licensed across all authorization levels, the specific interest of the researcher was preparing educators to work at the middle school level. Therefore, the first criteria for participant selection was that all individuals considered chose middle school as their first authorization and, therefore, completed their student teaching and action research project in a middle school. Of the 52 preservice teachers enrolled in the MAT program, nine fit the criteria of having middle level as their first authorization. The 52 students were divided into three cohort groups that took the research series together and have one cohort leader who teaches the research; the nine preservice teachers represent all three cohort groups. Because I was one of the cohort leaders, the three middle level preservice teachers from my cohort were not invited to participate in the study. The rationale behind this decision was to mitigate the power differential because I evaluate the collaborative action research projects of the three preservice teachers in my cohort.

All preservice teachers considered for this study identified middle level as their primary interest, yet they differed in their second authorization. Of the six middle level preservice teachers who were eligible for this study, four were authorized to teach at the elementary school level and two were authorized at the high school level. While the majority of the MAT experience is similar between preservice teachers preparing for middle/elementary authorizations and those preparing for middle/high authorizations, there are some differences. A broad foundation of knowledge is emphasized for those

preparing for elementary and middle authorizations; preservice teachers in that preparation strand received pedagogical instruction in each of the four core content areas—math, science, social studies, and language arts—with an emphasis on curriculum integration. Those preservice teachers also completed a part-time practicum during the fall where they taught multiple subjects in an elementary school environment. In contrast, the pedagogical focus for preservice teachers preparing for middle and high school authorizations was concentrated in their specified content area and their first practicum occurred in high school. Additionally, preservice teachers preparing for middle and high school authorizations took a course focused specifically on the middle school philosophy (i.e., EDUG 558: Teaching in the Middle); the preservice teachers preparing to teach at the middle and elementary levels did not take the course. The middle level course included a brief study of organizational and theoretical structures for middle level education. Because of the difference in pedagogical emphasis and different initial practicum experience, I chose one student receiving middle/high school authorizations and two at the elementary/middle levels.

Merriam (1988) stated “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 48). As one who desired to discover, understand, and gain insight, I believed I could learn the most from a participant who exhibited interest in the project and who volunteered readily. Therefore, I ascertained the interest level of each of the six eligible preservice teachers as they were invited into the process to include those most interested in exploring their process of negotiating meaning around

collaborative action research. Because I could learn the most from individuals who think critically and articulate their thoughts well, I also sought recommendations from the cohort leaders. Lastly, the participants had advanced through several stages of the collaborative action research project by the time they were selected and, therefore, had developed opinions about the process to that point. Participants with varying attitudes toward the practice were selected.

The six preservice teachers not in the researcher's cohort were invited to a short information meeting that took place immediately after a class session. At that time, they were presented an overview of the study that included the objective, the criteria for selection of participants, information about interviews and observations, a timeline, the plan for confidentiality, and information about publication of the study. The voluntary nature of study was emphasized and potential participants were assured that they could withdraw at any time if discomforts arose. Each preservice teacher at the meeting was given an information sheet that outlined the information shared at the meeting (see Appendix A) and a short response form (see Appendix B). The response form asked preservice teachers to respond in one of four ways: (1) I am interested in exploring how I negotiate meaning out of collaborative action research and agree to participate in the study; (2) I am not particularly interested in the study, but willing to participate; (3) I may be interested, but I need a couple of days to think about it—I will email you within the next two days and let you know my answer; and, (4) Thanks, but I am not interested in participating. If a preservice teacher agreed to participate, there was a place on the

response form for a brief explanation of what he/she thought and felt about the collaborative action research process at that point.

Once the response forms were collected, I used the information for selecting participants. Again, all preservice teachers at the meeting fit the first and second criteria because middle school was their first authorization and they were not assigned to my cohort. I selected two preservice teachers whose second authorization is elementary and one whose second authorization was high school. The next criterion was interest level in the process; I determined who was interested in the project, who was willing to participate but not really interested, and who was not interested. Their thoughts and feelings regarding collaborative action research were also be taken into consideration; I invited preservice teachers who found collaborative research to be a positive experience as well as one who found the process to be challenging. The last step was to have a conversation with the cohort leaders to get their recommendations. Once the three participants were selected, I asked them to sign the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix C) and provided them a copy for their records.

Data Sources

Data sources included interviews, observations, and documents. This triangulation of data provided multiple perspectives to clarify meaning, verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation, and provided insight to diverse perceptions of the same phenomenon (Stake, 2005). A broad perspective was necessary in order to begin to develop an understanding the diverse realities, experiences, and perceptions of individual preservice teachers. Triangulation of data is also linked with trustworthiness of a project

(Yin, 2003). The data sources designated for the study included two interviews with each participants, one observation of each participant during collaborative work sessions, archival documents (i.e., those created for purposes other than the research study), and notes made by me and/or the participants. The interwoven process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation occurred during the last two months of the collaborative research process and was divided into two data collection phases (see Table 3.2 for an overview of this process).

Table 3.2

Overview of the Data Sources in the Two Phases of the Case Studies

Timeline	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Phase 1: Late February - March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial interview with each participant. ○ Interviews will occur post collaborative action research proposal while the groups are working on interpreting the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One observation during EDUG 522: Action Research III while collaborative groups are working on the collaborative action research process. ○ As with the interviews, the observations will occur post proposal while the groups are working on interpreting the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ MAT admissions information ○ Journal entries and class assignments created in any of the courses in the research series. ○ Documents specific to the action research project: the proposal, data collection #1, analytic memos, etc. ○ Email and personal communication ○ Researcher notes
Phase 2: April – May 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concluding interview with each participant. ○ This interview will occur after the entire collaborative action research project has been completed and submitted to the professor. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Documents specific to the action research project: journal entries, data collection #2, analytic memos, the final project, etc. ○ Email and personal communication ○ Researcher notes

Interviews

Interview data were central to the study. Due to the concealed nature of beliefs, perceptions, memories, and interpretations, interviews became a critical means for accessing participant views (Merriam, 1988). Words are limited and reflect continually shifting ideas; however, they provided a snapshot of an individual's thinking at a given time. Therefore, interviews were used to develop a conceptual understanding of each participant's trajectory into teaching (mission, identity, and beliefs) and to facilitate understanding of how each participant negotiated the collaborative action research process. Two interviews with each participant occurred—one during the first data collection phase of the preservice teachers' collaborative action research process, and the other after the collaborative groups completed their projects. Both interviews were audio taped and transcribed for use in the study. Audiotapes, transcriptions, and other data sources were secured in a locked cabinet in my office.

The case studies used individual interviews with a semi-structured methodology (Merriam, 1988). A list of interview questions were developed to assist me in accessing information connected with the research questions (see Appendix D). These questions guided the interview process, but I possessed the freedom to explore and respond to ideas as they developed (Merriam). Based on a participant's response, the order of the questions may have changed, some questions were skipped if they were answered in an earlier response, and follow-up questions added. Cresswell (2005) advised researchers, "Expect your qualitative questions to change and to emerge during a study to reflect the participant's views of the central phenomenon and your growing (and deeper)

understanding of it” (p. 136). Therefore, these sessions were dynamic and interactive conversations aimed at understanding the participant’s perspective and experience with negotiating meaning around collaborative action research. To create such an environment, Yin (2003) stressed the importance of developing relationships, phrasing questions in a friendly and non-threatening manner, and reading non-verbal cues of the participant in addition to following the line of action articulated in the study.

The interviews took an hour each; the participant and the researcher mutually determined the time and location. A conference room at the university was used because it was a quiet place free of distractions (Maxwell, 2005); each session began with an overview of the goals and procedures of that particular interview. The participant was reminded that the session was audio-taped, informed that he or she could opt out at any time without repercussions, and provided an opportunity to ask questions about the process. Once those procedures were finished, I proceeded with the interview.

Interview Protocol: Explanation and Alignment with the Research Questions

While both interviews were focused on goals of the research study, the format varied between the two. The first used a traditional interview format and contained several open-ended questions. The second interview included a few questions to facilitate conversation; two activities intended to explore the participant’s process of negotiating meaning around collaborative action research; and a final question about a participant’s vision for implementing collaborative action research in the future. An explanation of both interview procedures and an articulation of the alignment between the interview questions and the Research Questions are presented next.

Table 3.3

Alignment of Interview and Research Questions

Alignment of Interview and Research Questions for Interview #1					
Research Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do preservice teachers' trajectories align with the practice of collaborative action research? 2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? 3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? 					
	Total number of questions in the section	Questions that align with RQ1: Trajectory as represented by the inner levels of the Onion Model	Questions that align with RQ1: Understanding of collaborative action research	Questions that align with RQ2	Questions that align with RQ3
Interview section 1: Background information of the participant	5	# 1 - 5			
Interview section 2: Understanding of collaborative action research	4	# 6	# 7 - 9		
Interview section 3: Perceptions of the collaborative action research process so far	4	# 10		# 10 - 13	
Interview section 4: vision for future use of collaborative action research	1				# 14
Total number of interview questions overall and by section	14	7	3	3	1

Interview #1: Description and Alignment with Research Questions

Interview #1 consisted of 14 questions divided into four sections. A list of the Research Questions, the number of questions in each section, and an overview of the alignment between interview questions and the research questions are presented in Table

3.3. The first two sections of the interview—questions 1-9—focused on Research

Question 1. Section 1 of the interview aligned with the first part of Research Question 1; the researcher sought to understand the participant's trajectory into teaching. To develop a foundational understanding of an individual's trajectory, interview questions also focused on the participant's perspective of his/her mission, identity, and beliefs about education.

In section 2, the interview questions focused on the second part of Research Question 1—the participant's understanding of the collaborative action research process. Although I sought to understand the alignment between the participant's trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research, the purpose of this interview was to establish how the participant internalized the purpose and process of the collaborative action research process. When seeking to analyze the alignment of a participant's trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research, I realized that the alignment must be analyzed according to the participant's construction of collaborative action research rather than a definition determined by the researcher. Therefore, the goal of the questions in section 2 of the interview was to develop a foundation regarding the participant's conceptual understanding of the practice of collaborative action research. When conducting Interview 2, I returned to content from sections 1 and 2 of Interview #1 to have a conversation with the participant about the alignment between his/her trajectory and collaborative action research.

The third section of the interview was focused on Research Question 2—understanding how participants negotiated meaning around the practice of collaborative

action research. While the questions in this section are few, they are the heart of the case studies. Interview question 11 asked participants to describe their experience with the collaborative action research process up to the time of the interview. While the participant is sharing his/her story of the collaborative action research process, I paid particular attention to the word choice, non-verbal communication, and cues that suggested areas of alignment or misalignment between the individual's trajectory (mission, identity, and beliefs) and the collaborative action research process. In addition, I sought to understand influences shaping the participant's experience, perceptions, and actions. Finally, I sought to identify statements that reflected the negotiation of meaning; for example, statements of conflicting beliefs or of conflicting advice from significant people offer cues of misalignment. Once misalignment was identified, I asked probing questions to understand how the participant shaped meaning and made decisions around the conflict.

The questions in section 4 aligned with Research Question 3 and explored how participants' envisioned the use of collaborative action research in the future. I looked for statements that communicated willingness, desire, and/or resistance to participate in collaborative action research in the future. Willing participants agree to participate in the practice if there is an external expectation or invitation into the process; the participant would be willing to participate in the practice if an administrator mandates the practice or if colleagues determine to use the practice. Participants who desire to implement the process will assume a more active stance; these participants state that they will actively seek employment where the practice is implemented or will advocate for the practice in

the future. Those who are resistant demonstrate reluctance while stating willingness to participate based on external pressures or simply state that they are not interested in the practice. Reasons behind willingness, desire, and/or resistance are of importance to the study as well.

In sum, the purpose of Interview 1 was to begin to understand the trajectory of each participant and to allow the participant an opportunity to talk about how he or she experienced and negotiated the process of collaborative action research to that point. Each section of the interview protocol focused on a specific research question and was developed to invite conversation around important elements of the study. The focus of analysis for each interview 1 question has also been delineated (see Appendix E). In a future section of this paper, the analysis process is articulated in detail.

Interview #2: Description and Alignment with Research Questions

The second interview was less structured than the first interview. Interview #2 included one section with traditional interview questions, two activities that explored the negotiation process, and a final section consisting of one interview question about the future use of collaborative action research (see Appendix F). The interview began with four open-ended questions. All four questions related to Research Question 1 or Research Question 2 depending on the direction the participant guided the conversation. Participant response to each question provided insight to his or her trajectory, understanding of collaborative action research, the alignment between the two, or how he or she negotiated meaning around the practice through the experience. I used the questions to begin

conversation, but then allowed the participant to guide the conversation. Follow-up questions were used to probe deeper into areas related to any of the research questions.

I then transitioned into the first activity in which I planned to use principles of Core Reflection (Korthagen, 2004) to guide the participant through a process of reflecting on the experience of collaborative action research. In the Core Reflection model, the facilitator guides the participant through a process of identifying and exploring areas of alignment and misalignment between and within levels of the Onion Model: mission, identity, beliefs, competencies, behaviors, and environment. The activity began with an overview of the Core Reflection process—this overview included an explanation of the purpose and theoretical foundation of Core Reflection, an explanation of the process and the role of the participant, and a statement about the purpose of using Core Reflection for this study (see Appendix F, activity #1 for a step-by-step explanation of this process). After the overview was presented, I had planned to invite the participant into the core reflection process. However, my assessment at the time was that the participants did not have enough knowledge about the process to complete this exercise in the time allotted and attend to the other questions. I also felt that it might be unwise to bring awareness to some misalignments that they had not realized knowing that they would be leaving the program within days. Korthagen (2004) cautioned against trying to hurry the process or to look for quick fixes to complex issues. Instead of leading the participant through core reflection, I asked questions that allowed the participants to reflect on and share their experience with the collaborative action research process. As they shared, I listened

carefully and asked questions that probed deeper on issues of alignment, misalignment, and negotiation without using those terms.

The second activity of Interview #2 aligned with Research Question 1. Before meeting the participant for Interview #2, I compiled an initial map of the participant's trajectory based on data from the first interview, observations, and documents. I also mapped out an initial overview of the participant's understanding of collaborative action research including the purpose, role of the teacher, and important premises of the practice (See Appendix H for member checking documents). I envision these elements of the practice to align with an individual's trajectory—mission, identity, and beliefs. I then sought to understand how the individual's trajectory and his/her conceptual understanding of collaborative action research align. The “maps” were shown to the participant one at a time as a member checking activity, and the participant assessed the accuracy of each map. At that point, the participant was asked to add, change, or delete information as desired. The process was repeated with the “map” of the participant's understanding of collaborative action research. Next, the participant was asked to analyze the alignment between the two and to discuss his/her thoughts and feelings regarding the alignment and the process. This intention of this activity was to provide an opportunity for the participant to explore the connection between his/her mission, identity, and beliefs and the purpose, role of teacher, and premises of collaborative action research. Additionally, I provided a list of purposes, premises, and characteristics of teachers who participate in collaborative action research taken from the textbook used for the action research course (See Appendix H). The participants were asked to highlight statements

they agreed with in one color and those with which they disagreed in another. When that was complete, I used that information to guide the conversation.

The last section of Interview #2 was comprised of the same final question as Interview #1: Based on what you know and have experienced with collaborative action research, how do you see collaborative action research fitting with your vision for teaching? This interview question aligned with Research Question 3 and sought information that provided insight into how participants framed collaborative action research in relation to their future practice. I listened for resistance, willingness, and/or desire to implement the practice as an inservice teacher.

The purpose of Interview #2 was to gain a deeper understanding of the multiple influences experienced by participants and how participants negotiated the meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research (Research Question 2). Additionally, I explored the alignment between each participant's trajectory and his/her understanding of the collaborative research process (Research Question 1). Finally, I sought to understand how participants frame collaborative action research as it relates to their future practice (Research Question 3). The focus of analysis for each section of Interview #2 has been delineated (see Appendix I). In a future section of this paper, the analysis process is articulated in further detail.

Observations

While internal perspectives accessed through interviews are central to this study, observations of how the participants enacted collaborative research was also of value. Therefore, the research design included two observations of each participant as they

enacted collaborative action research. One observation was supposed to occur during each phase of data collection. Because the researcher is a professor in the MAT program and teaches EDUG 522: Action Research III to her cohort at the same time that the observations occurred, another professor agreed to fulfill the role of *observer as participant* (Merriam, 1988). The professor knows the program, understands the process of collaborative action research, and has taught a class and/or a workshop to all potential participants. The preservice teachers involved in the study, and the other preservice teachers in their action research class, know the observer as a professor in the MAT program. I believe that the relationships established previously with this professor facilitated a positive comfort level for those being observed. While the preservice teachers knew the observer as a professor, they understood that, in this situation, her role as professor was secondary to her role as observer. Because the professor and student relationship was established previously, there was some interaction between the professor and the participants. However, this interaction was minimal. A second observation was scheduled for the second data set. However, because of shifting schedules and timelines, the action research projects were completed before the observer made it to the classroom.

I was responsible for coordinating the dates and times of the observations. Each observation took a minimum of 30 minutes. I also communicated with the participant prior to the day of the observation so that he or she was aware of the observation. Upon entering the classroom, the observer was asked to find a location that was removed from the participant, yet allowed access to conversations and had clear visibility of the students' facial expressions and body language.

After each observation, the observer and the researcher debriefed the experience. Clear communication was important: the observer was asked to talk through the notes to allow the researcher to develop a greater vision of the experience and to allow the observer to clarify details.

Observation: Description and Alignment with Research Questions

The observer used the same observation protocol for all observations (see Appendix J). As suggested by Cresswell (2005), the observer recorded contextual information at the beginning of the session. This included the name of the observer and the participant being observed, the date and time of the observation, the interview number (1 or 2), a description of the physical environment and the climate of the group, and a list of the activities in which the group engaged. After recording this contextual information, the observer used a note-taking/note-making form to document words, actions, and interactions noticed. Wenger (1998) stated that attitude and beliefs shape (a) how individuals locate self in a social landscape; (b) what individuals care about and what they neglect; and (c) what individuals attempt to know and understand and what they choose to ignore. Therefore, during the observations, the observer noticed and recorded how the participant located him or herself in the physical and social landscape, watched and listened to what the participant cared about and neglected, and paid attention to words that communicated what was of value to the participant. This observation data were analyzed in terms of information regarding both Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

Korthagen (2004) noted that when there is alignment between all levels of the onion model, a person experiences flow—or an energy that keeps him or her moving forward. For this reason, the observer looked for verbal and non-verbal signs of flow in the participants as they worked on collaborative action research. Engagement, drive, energy, tenacity, and wondering in the participant's posture, content of conversation, and verbalize thinking were noted. Likewise, behavior also communicated when flow was blocked; resistance, withdrawal, frustration, and conflicting statements are examples for the observer to note. This data were analyzed in terms of when alignment occurred for the participant, when obstacles were present, and how the participant responded to obstacles. These data align with Research Question 2. The analysis process is delineated in further detail in the Data Analysis section.

Documents

Documents provided another opportunity for insight into the trajectory and negotiation process of the participants. While interviews and observations are created for the research, Merriam (1988) noted that documents are often created for a reason other than the research study. In these case studies, documents created for admission to the MAT program, class assignments, email communication, and personal communication allowed me access to valuable information regarding issues of mission, identity, beliefs, and negotiation that occurred throughout the teacher preparation program. Merriam outlined two criteria for the selection of documents used in a qualitative case study: (1) the document must contain information that is relevant to, or can provide insight into the

research questions, and, (2) the researcher must be able to access the documents in a practical, yet systematic manner.

The case studies included documents created in the MAT admissions process (i.e., program application, admissions essay, and letters of recommendation) and course assignments created by the preservice teachers (e.g., journals entries and essays). These documents were archived in the MAT office and/or course websites. I had access to documents stored in the MAT files and the other MAT professors agreed to share archived student work from websites with the permission of the participant. Email communication about the collaborative research process between students and faculty members or between faculty members also provided insight for the study. Some of the participants provided email correspondence between members of their research team. As the MAT professors were teaching action research collaboratively for the first time, there was constant dialogue regarding the procedures, insightful moments, questions, challenges, and so on. Many of these exchanges occurred via email so were archived and were easily accessible. Finally, the researcher kept a journal recording thoughts, questions, aha-moments, and wonderings as I negotiated my own meaning around the experience. All of these hold potential for insight into the project. Merriam (1988) used the term *mining* when referring to finding relevant data in archived documents and encouraged researchers to be creative in finding value in ready-made and content rich documents.

Document Analysis: Description and Alignment with Research Questions

For each document reviewed, I completed the document analysis chart (see Appendix K). The chart was organized into the following categories: a description of the document being reviewed, the date and purpose for the creation of the document, the content of importance to the study, researcher notes/thoughts about connections to the study, and the research question to which the content aligned. Statements made by the participant, or by others about the participant, regarding mission, identity, and/or beliefs were noted. Details that communicated information relevant to the collaborative action research process were of importance (e.g., statements about the participant's stance toward collaboration, independence, teamwork, curiosity, and reflection). Data collected from documents were analyzed along with interview and observation data according to the same criteria.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a sense-making process where “data are consolidated, reduced, and, to some extent, interpreted” (Merriam, 1988, p. 130). Data collection and analysis are simultaneous and interactive in case study research with triangulated data (Cresswell, 2005). As I made sense of data, plans were refined for the collection of additional data; in this type of qualitative methodology, the process had potential to reshape the research question. Through analysis of triangulated data, themes were developed. Merriam suggested that this is mainly an intuitive process although it must also be systematic and informed by the study's purpose.

Table 3.4

Alignment of Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Questions:				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? 2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? 3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? 				
	Interview #1	Interview #2	Observations	Documents
Research Question #1	Questions 1-10	Questions 1 – 4 Activity #2	Observation 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Application information ○ Journal entries ○ Class assignments ○ Email & personal communication ○ Researcher journal
Research Question #2	Questions 10 - 13	Questions 1- 4 Activity #1	Observation 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Journal entries ○ Class assignments ○ Email & personal communication ○ Researcher journal
Research Question #3	Question 14	Final question/ Section 4	Observation 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Journal entries ○ Class assignments ○ Email & personal communication ○ Researcher journal

All data from interviews, observations, and documents were gathered with intentional focus on the three research questions guiding the study. The alignment between the research questions and the data collected from each data source are outlined in Table 3.4. After each data collection, the data were coded and organized according to overarching themes. Themes for Research Question 1 included: mission, identity, beliefs, and understanding of the collaborative action research process. Negotiation of meaning

around the collaborative action research process is the theme for Research Question 2.

The theme for Research Question 3 is collaborative action research process as future practice. Examples of types of statements that would correspond with each theme were identified and are listed in chart form (see Appendix L). For instance, a statement that communicates a reason that the participant wanted to be a teacher fit with the theme of mission.

Once divided into the themes, the data were compiled and compared across data sources. The intent of research question one was to develop a rich understanding of each participant's trajectory into teaching (i.e., mission, identity, and beliefs) as well as how each participant internalized the collaborative action research process. Identification of areas of alignment and misalignment between each individual's trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research was the emphasis; the desire was to learn the story of each individual's journey into the teaching profession and to see how the non-traditional practice of collaborative action research aligned with that journey.

Whereas data for Research Question 1 were used to identify areas of alignment and misalignment between an individual's trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research, the focus of Research Question 2 was a deeper analysis of how each preservice teacher negotiated meaning as he/she participated in collaborative action research. Internal and external influences stated by the participants were examined to determine how prior experiences, tacit beliefs, critical incidents and significant individuals worked together to shape thoughts and feelings regarding the practice of

collaborative action research. The researcher sought to understand a sense-making process that is personal, ambiguous, and continually shifting.

How preservice teachers framed collaborative action research in relation to their future practice was Research Question 3. Data from all sources were examined for evidence of participants' resistance, willingness, or desire to implement the practice as an inservice teacher. The heart of the question was how participants have internalized the practice and how that internalization might impact future enactment of the practice.

Once the journeys of all participants were analyzed through the lenses of the three research questions, they were compared for common themes. The researcher sought to understand common areas of alignment and misalignment, the types of influence on the participants and how they negotiated misalignments similarly and uniquely, and common themes about future use. In this way, all three themes from the research questions were revisited with a broad lens.

Limitations of the Study and Issues of Trustworthiness

Limitations and issues of trustworthiness were important to identify when developing and implementing the study. Kincheloe (2003) explained that the knower and the known are part of the same web of reality and therefore a researcher's place in the web influences his/her perspective on reality; this does not invalidate the research, but must be explicitly identified and examined as part of the research design. Trustworthiness is linked to a researcher's identification and articulation of "relationships connecting researcher, researched, data, contexts, and the discursive field on which all of this activity takes place" (p. 178). In the case studies, I was not only known by the participants, but

was also in a position of authority as a professor in and director of the MAT program.

Although this relationship provided many benefits, it also had the potential to limit open conversation especially if participants sensed that their views diverged from mine. As one who teaches the process of collaborative action research as well as conducts research on the topic, I paid particular attention to communication about the process to the participants. From the beginning, participants were informed that the focus of the study is on how they negotiate meaning while participating in the action research process rather than an evaluation of their abilities or their acceptance of the practice. All participants were assured of the right to discontinue participation in the study if they so choose with no repercussions. None of the participants were enrolled in any classes with me; this was to alleviate intentionally the power differential inherent in grading and evaluation.

My prior knowledge and beliefs regarding, teaching, education teacher education, the influence of a practicum setting and cooperating teachers, the learning process, and the practice of collaborative action research are all additional elements of *the web of reality*. When referring to the role of the researcher in case study methodology, Merriam (1988) stressed the importance of identifying biases and being especially conscious of them as the data analysis and interpretation process occurs. Ethical studies tell the story of the data rather than choosing from the available data those concepts that provide evidence in support of a researcher's opinion. If an effort to be aware of biases and the possible impact of those biases on the study, the researcher kept a journal identifying intersections of my own beliefs and elements of the study. The researcher also employed member checking (Cresswell, 2005) as a means to establish credibility. Findings relevant

to an individual were shared with that participant and he or she asked to verify the accuracy of statements, theme, and descriptions.

Another means of validating the findings was the use of triangulation of data. Statements about mission, identity, and beliefs of individuals as well as their conceptual understanding of collaborative action research and their processes of negotiating meaning occurred through multiple measures on different days, from different people, and in different contexts. Together, these data sets provided rich information that deepened understanding, clarified misconceptions, provided examples, and corroborated evidence.

The data collection tools used in the study were of importance as well. Because the interview and observation protocols are grounded in Korthagen's (2004) theory of Core Reflection using the Onion Model, it was important that they were reviewed and assessed for integrity to Korthagen's work. Therefore, the researcher sent the tools for review to several professors who have studied Core Reflection; two reviewed the tools and provided feedback. Minimal revisions were made based on their recommendations.

Believing that knowledge is socially constructed, contextually understood, constantly shifting, and limited (Britzman, 2003), the stories of the participants are partial and limited as well. The case studies provide a glimpse—a snapshot of information at a given time interpreted through my socially constructed lenses, the participants, and the readers. The irony is that the researcher negotiated meaning around elements of the study as participants shared their process of negotiation. While definitive answers regarding the research questions may not be realized, a broadened understanding of the negotiation process was the goal.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was important. Pseudonyms were used for participants, the university, and all other individuals in the study. All data were kept confidential with identifying marks removed from documents. Data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office or home.

Participants were assured that participation was voluntary and those involved had the right to check the accuracy of the researching findings. Participants knew they could withdraw at any time without consequence to their professional status with the university, the professor, or other professors in the program.

Summary

Case study methodology was used to study the phenomenon of how preservice teachers negotiated an educational practice—collaborative action research. The study focused on three preservice teachers who participated in collaborative action research as they proceeded through a MAT program. Triangulated data from interviews, observations, and documents were obtained and used to develop themes around the research questions of the study:

1. How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research?
2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?
3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice?

Data regarding the participant's trajectories—their mission, identity, and beliefs were gathered and compared with participant's conceptual understanding of the practice of collaborative action research. The researcher sought to find areas of alignment and misalignment between an individual's trajectory and the conceptions of the practice. Once identified, the researcher examined the data for illustrations of ways that participants negotiated meaning around the practice including the identification of the types of pressures and influences on an individual and how that individual determined meaning. Finally, the researcher sought to understand how participants framed the practice of collaborative action research as it related to their future practice as teachers. The anticipated outcome was to inform teacher educators about ways to facilitate the process of introducing new practices to preservice teachers—especially those practices that are non-traditional educational practices. It was also hoped that the participants would find value in the process and leave the experience with a greater understanding of self as well as a model for possible use in reflections of issues that arise in their future careers.

Chapter 4

Results

Using case study methodology, I examined the phenomena of how three participants, all preservice teachers in a Master of Arts in Teaching program, negotiated meaning around an educational practice—collaborative action research. The participants negotiated multiple, and often competing, internal and external discourses as they navigated their collaborative action research project.

Korthagen's (2004) model for facilitating understanding and reflection was used to explore the process of negotiating meaning. Known as the Onion Model, it includes six different levels: the environment, behavior, competencies, beliefs, identity, and mission. I defined a preservice teacher's trajectory as his or her mission, identity, and beliefs—the inner most levels of Korthagen's model. When preservice teachers enter the field of education, their trajectory shapes the way they negotiate experiences and those experiences continue to shape their trajectory. In this study, I identified areas of alignment and misalignment between participants' trajectories and the practice of collaborative action research and followed their process of negotiation as they made meaning of the practice of collaborative action research.

To explore how preservice teachers negotiated their identity regarding collaborative action research, the following research questions guided the study: (1) How do preservice teachers' trajectories align with the practice of collaborative action research? (2) How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? (3) How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action

research in relation to their future practice? Triangulated data from interviews, observations, and document analysis were collected, analyzed, and interpreted to provide insight into preservice teachers' process of negotiating meaning around a new and nontraditional educational practice.

Structure of the Chapter

Presenting each case study individually, I begin with an introduction of the participant, which included how she or he became part of my study. Then, I describe each participant's trajectory—mission, identity, and beliefs. Following the trajectory is brief background information about the participant's collaborative research group, topic, and study. Once foundational information is provided, I address each of the three research questions.

As I analyzed the data, two intertwined yet unique stories developed—(1) alignments, misalignments, and negotiations as the participant navigated the research process in the role of teacher, and (2) alignments, misalignments, and negotiations as the participant navigated the research process in the role of student. As each participant negotiated the collaborative action research project in the role of the teacher, his or her research topic was the focus of the story. Kyle's team focused on journaling in the classroom; Cindy's team examined the student and teacher relationship as related to student motivation; and Jack's team studied cooperative learning strategies in relation to student motivation. I followed the teams from the development of their topic through their conclusions about it. The focus of the second story for each participant is the process of collaborative action research in his or her journey as a student. These stories

include such elements as the timeline, the textbook, and collaboration with team members. I separated these stories to help the reader to understand the two different roles each participant fulfilled during this collaborative action research process.

While my intent had been to first identify alignments and misalignments between each participant's trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research and then to explore how they negotiated the practice, I found that difficult. Instead, I developed the stories of their negotiation process in the role of the teacher and in their role of the student first then from that, identified areas of alignment and misalignment. To facilitate understanding of each participant's journey, I chose an adjective and a phrase to describe each step of the journey that I identified and used those as subheadings for each paragraph. I developed these descriptors from words participants offered or a word that I felt best described the event or issue based on a tone they conveyed during an interview or information that expressed through written or verbal means. I used these descriptors as subheadings to assist the reader in following the participant through the collaborative action research process. Adjectives that convey emotions were selected because Korthagen (2004) associated emotions with alignment and misalignment within the onion model.

After I wrote the stories of a participant in the role of teacher and student, I analyzed the journey to identify areas of alignment and misalignment. Therefore, for each participant, I first respond to Research Question #2 by sharing a narrative of the negotiation process. Then, I address Research Question #1 by identifying areas of alignment and misalignment based on the data from the negotiation process. It is

important to note that I developed the categories for the alignment and misalignments based on my interpretation of the data; the participants did not use the language of alignments and misalignments. Finally, each case study concludes with an explanation of the participant's vision for future use of collaborative action research, thereby addressing Research Question #3.

Although the stories are organized in a consistent structure, each case is unique and intriguing. Each telling is also partial and represents a moment in time recognizing the ever-shifting nature of mission, identity, and beliefs (Britzman, 2003). Set within a context of multiple pressures teacher preparation is an intense time of professional development—many contextual elements influenced each person's experience. The cases are of varying length. Kyle, the first case study, experienced much misalignment with the practice of collaborative action research and shared his thoughts and feelings openly; his case is noticeably longer than the others. Cindy is the next case study presented; verbal and enthusiastic about the process of collaborative action research, Cindy shared freely as well. Jack's concise responses resulted in shorter text, but a rich case nonetheless.

Kyle

Several months before collecting data for this project, Kyle stopped by my office, smiled in the doorway, and initiated a casual conversation. After discussing recent books we had read, Kyle inquired about my dissertation. Hearing that it included an exploration of collaborative action research, Kyle offered to participate. He assumed I would need someone in my study who loves collaborative action research, someone who is fine with it, and someone who does not like it. He said that he fit the last category and would be

happy to share his thoughts with me. The same confidence and charisma characterized subsequent interactions.

Kyle entered the Masters of Arts in Teaching program immediately after earning his Bachelors of Arts degree in religion with a minor in psychology. Originally Kyle intended to work with high needs youth in an alternative setting; however, by the end of his junior year, he “was done with the religious aspect of it” which “took him away from doing that type of outreach.” By the time Kyle realized the need for a new career plan, he considered it too late to switch majors. Therefore, he finished his bachelor’s degree in religion and determined to pursue a Masters of Arts in Teaching degree to become a middle school teacher.

When asked, “Why teaching?” Kyle stated, “I wanted to be with the kids ... I realized that the best way to have the most contact was by being a classroom teacher. And, that was it” (Interview, March 15, 2010). Revealing more about his journey into teaching, Kyle mentioned that his grandmother retired from teaching and that his father continued to teach fourth grade. However, he dismissed the importance of the family history stating, “I wasn’t exposed to [teaching] very much with my dad which is different than most educators.” Giving further detail, he explained, “Oh, I was around [teaching]. I always graded papers. Not necessarily my story.” He differentiated his decision from the influence of his family.

Trajectory into Teaching: Kyle’s Mission, Identity, and Beliefs

In this section I provide an overview of Kyle’s trajectory as evidenced by the data. He provided rich detail that offered a glimpse into his mission, identity, and beliefs.

In Table 4.1, I have summarized the trajectory. This information is of foundational importance for understanding alignments and misalignments between Kyle's trajectory and collaborative action research and his process of negotiating meaning regarding those alignments.

Table 4.1

Summary: Kyle's Trajectory

Summary of Kyle's Trajectory		
Mission in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage/challenge the intellect through discussion of big life issues 	
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reckless Leader Task-oriented Driven Takes initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former "high needs kid" Writer Intelligent Independent Inquisitive
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life is problematic Young adolescent development provides opportunity for educator influence Family involvement, or lack thereof, has an influence on a child's education Parents as problematic: Absent parent, parent who allows poor choices, overly involved parent Purpose of collaboration: Division of an open-ended task Team members are given a responsibility that corresponds with their talent Collaboration is chaotic and exhausting Collaboration lifts the pressure as each member takes a piece of the stress 	

Mission

Kyle offered a concise response when asked to describe his mission in teaching—“engage the intellect” (Interview, March 15, 2010). Reflecting on a student teaching experience that occurred two hours prior to the interview, Kyle continued,

...that we engage in these discussions that answer or talk about some of the bigger questions or some of the bigger issues like genocide or like poverty or lack of drinking water for people in third world countries or how about the guy that died at the Olympics? Whose fault is that?

His passion grew as he spoke; his tone and body language communicated a heart-level response. Unsolicited, Kyle offered a childhood experience as a possible origin of this passionate desire to discuss big issues. He stated, “I think too much. This started when I was in Junior High. I think that’s when I first realized that there were issues and no one was talking about them.” That unrealized need from his own adolescent experience became in his mind the impetus for his pedagogical decision as a teacher.

Later in the interview Kyle returned to this idea of posing difficult questions to middle school students. Asked to relay a story from student teaching that affirmed his decision to become a teacher, Kyle described a social studies lesson in which he introduced a “big issue.” He showed a video that followed a woman from a slum in Kenya as she was given a sewing machine and learned a trade. Although Kyle had not been to the specific location in the video, he had traveled to Kenya. After viewing the video, Kyle asked the students to arrange their chairs into a circle and he led a discussion. The opportunity to talk about “real life issues” delighted him. He concluded, “Every

single kid in that class was completely engaged and I, honest to god, believe they left a different person thinking about that.” Connecting this scenario to his mission to engage the intellect, Kyle explained student reaction that affirmed his mission—“they kind of look like they want to cry and they kind of don’t and you just know the synapses are firing and the connections are being made.” Kyle received satisfaction from engaging the intellect of middle school students in a way that elicited a response.

Identity

Reckless. When asked how he would describe himself as a teacher, Kyle provided an immediate response,

This is really interesting. I’m reading Parker Palmer’s book, *The Courage to Teach* and he poses the same question in his book. ...you’re supposed to come up with this simile...I am like _____ when I teach. And I answered it. My answer was I am John Keating played by Robin Williams in *Dead Poet’s Society*. I’m still a little reckless.

Framed as a positive attribute, Kyle qualified the statement, “I think my passion is really the fuel behind it.” As he talked, I sensed energy in identification as the unconventional teacher who shakes things up by challenging the status quo. He explained, “I don’t worry that I’m being too rowdy or being too aggressive when it comes to discussions or questions or things like that. I know that I’m not your typical student teacher.” He perceived his reckless nature as a trait that sets him apart from his peers.

Leader. Leader is another word used to describe Kyle by his references to the MAT program and a term of self-description used by Kyle (Group Assessment reflection, spring 2009; journal entry, summer 2009). As part of the admissions process, candidates

in the MAT program attended a group assessment where six to eight candidates participated in a self-guided series of activities. During this process, two professors completed evaluations based on several traits. After the Group Assessment activities, the candidates reflected on the evening by responding in writing to three questions. In response to one of the prompts Kyle wrote,

The Group Assessment allowed my leadership trait to be observed by the professors and faculty...I was able to lead the group in to a systematic evaluation of the questions and the group project. This was only one of the ways that the Group Assessment procedure gave me the possibility to reflect who I really am and who I really will be as an educator.

At one point in the evening, however, Kyle experienced tension. He wrote,

As a group, it became somewhat of a competition to have our voices heard. Due to time constrictions and the overall nervousness of the procedure, I was forced to interrupt and make sure the group progressed through the questions. The attribute is against my tendency because I desire to listen carefully and allow for people to finish their thought prior to moving on. Although this surfaced, I understand it is a major part of being an organized teacher working in a team under deadlines and time restraints.

A professor interpreted Kyle's task orientation differently, writing, "[Kyle] jumped right into being the timekeeper and appeared anxious to stay on task over finding the best answers...Never quite seemed to settle down and actually enjoy the process, always appeared nervous and worried."

Driven and task-oriented. Kyle also described himself as a leader at the end of the summer term when asked to write a response to the question, “What do you believe you can contribute to a collaborative research process?” He stated, “I believe that I can contribute some of the leadership qualities. I assume that collaborative work can often be somewhat chaotic as the number of the group members increases, so I’d assume that some people would need to take the lead while others do better under some form of instruction” (Journal entry, June 2009). A few days later, Kyle provided insight to one way in which he defined his leadership skills in another journal entry. When asked to describe evidence of his unique gifts, strengths, characteristics, and limitations during the focus group project, Kyle explained, “I tend to be extremely driven and to the point. This was exemplified in the focus group project with [his colleagues]. I consider it one of my greatest strengths as a leader and a doer” (Journal entry, June 2009). In talking with Kyle, a task-oriented leadership stance became clear. References also used terms such as highly organized, capable, intelligent, and mentioned that he takes initiative. One reference explained, “There is purpose behind the decisions he makes and he does not wait for others to initiate.” A professor noted, “Students are often hesitant with new information but that’s not Kyle’s approach. He welcomes intellectual challenges and engages with problems.”

Inquisitive. Kyle was also inquisitive. One reference stated that he has an “inquiring mind.” Specifically, that reference applied this trait to the role of an educator stating, “He is open to new ideas and interested in learning new ways to help kids be successful.” The trait of teacher as learner was also mentioned by another reference that

said, “He has a hunger to learn, grow, and move himself forward in life.” References also attested to Kyle’s ability to use his inquisitive nature to “challenge students in their thinking.” Kyle provided insight regarding his interest using questions to challenge student thought,

I was challenged the most when I first went to college and the professor would end with a question and no one was supposed to answer it. And, we all walked away like—I don’t know if that red light is red...my god, it was unbelievable. I had never used my mind like that and I try to do the same thing with my students.
(Interview, April 29, 2010)

The professor’s style of challenging the thinking of student shaped Kyle’s teaching.

Independent. Kyle described himself as independent and explained, “That’s part of the thing that was very appealing to me in becoming an educator. You know, I can do it my own way, I can have my own room, and do some things” (Interview, March 15, 2010). Identifying independence as a reason for entering the profession, this trait can be considered an important part of Kyle’s trajectory into teaching. A reference also used the term “independent” to describe Kyle, but framed it as a weakness when noting, “weakness: an inclination to operate independently of others.”

Former high needs kid. Explaining his interest in working with at-risk youth, Kyle stated, “Well, I was a high needs kid.” In animated explanation he offered, “I was your typical punk. I mean, god, you really didn’t want me; you just didn’t...I was out of control. I became a social guy. And, I became *that* kid.” He shared the impetus for his career decisions, “I knew their language and I wanted to be able to speak it.” Kyle’s

experience provided insight into issues of at-risk youth and he wanted to provide a positive impact on their lives.

Beliefs about Education

Life is problematic. Kyle wrote an essay for admissions to the MAT program that outlined his philosophy of life as centered on love, compassion, and unity. Underlying themes, however, positioned the world as problematic and concluded that people have the responsibility to respond selflessly. Kyle opened his essay relaying a problematic incident that he credits with changing his philosophy of life. When bungee jumping, his friends played a trick on him, screaming and showing him the end of a frayed rope as he leaped. He determined from this a “duty to inform others about the frailty of life.” Further in the essay, he posited that people and their problems are equally important and deserve to be acknowledged and identified the world as “cumbersome on occasion.” Assuming a task-oriented, problem-solving stance, he explained that people must respond selflessly when needed. As an example of responding selflessly, he wrote of “stepping into other’s shoes and finding an explanation in order to offer a solution to life’s issues.” Kyle viewed the world as problematic and believed that people had a responsibility to get involved in finding solutions.

Young adolescent development provides opportunity for educator influence. Kyle also provided a brief glimpse into his beliefs regarding young adolescent development. When explaining his desire to challenge the intellect of students with questions about big life issues I asked, “Why middle school?” Kyle responded, “I don’t think they’re concrete yet. I think they’re still malleable in that...they’re still deciding...as a middle schooler—

you're picking groups. You're picking your identity. However, it's not there yet; you're still deciding." Kyle perceived the young adolescent stage of identity development as an opportunity for teachers to enrich or expand thinking and influence change. Certain comments from students bothered Kyle; he believed that at times the students reiterated parental thought that needed to be challenged. After showing the video about the Kenyan woman, a student made the statement, "Well, you know, I think third world countries need to stop being so dependent on the developed world. They're just kind of juicing the system a little." Refusing to believe that this could be the student's thinking, Kyle attributed this comment to parental influence and, while he instructed students to be respectful of all points of view, he struggled internally thinking, "No, you don't think that. You *really* don't believe that." Considering his role as the teacher within such discussions, he put forth a comparison—"I think the difference between a public school teacher and a college professor is that you can't really tell them what you think. But you can kind of pose the questions in a manner that you want them to start seeing." Kyle believed he had the ability to impact students and challenge the influence of parents by the manner in which he posed questions and guided the discussion.

Parents as problematic. When asked what has surprised him as a student teacher, Kyle stated a new belief—once again centered on the theme of the world as problematic. "I'm surprised by how much family involvement or lack thereof influences students' lives." He mentioned three problematic scenarios: the absent parent, the parent who allows or encourages poor choices, and the overly involved parent. Kyle spoke of waiting for parents to arrive at an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. He looked at the

student and thought, “oh man, there is such a problem here. We’re so far behind.”

Then, when the parent did not attend the meeting, he determined a connection, “Oh, I get it.” In a second scenario Kyle recounted a story of a student coming to school.

I watch a kid come in with like a 32 ounce Rock Star and he polishes it off right before he goes in. He throws it in the trashcan and I’m thinking, did your parent like take you to 7-Eleven to get that? I mean, do they know you’re drinking this? You’re going to make my class completely wild the minute that sugar and caffeine hits your blood stream.

In the third scenario, Kyle described an overly involved parent, “They’re too involved and their kid has test anxiety; their kid is a perfectionist; their kid is terrified of having a missing assignment. I have a kid who’s terrified of getting below a 100%--he wants extra-credit.” Each scenario portrayed parental action as problematic that impacted their child and, in turn, affected the classroom negatively.

Beliefs about Collaborative Action Research

Collaboration: Chaotic and exhausting. Kyle identified the accomplishment of an open-ended task as a goal for conducting collaborative action research. He explained, “Each group member is given a certain responsibility that coincides with their given talent; each member has utter respect and contains equality with each other.” Kyle described the collaborative process as chaotic and exhausting (Journal entry, June 2009), “The group agreed that collaborative work seems a bit time exhausting. An interesting idea brought up by one of the group members was that collaborative work seems like it is overly repetitive and I somewhat agreed.”

Kyle identified some benefits of collaborative action research as well.

Assessing summer collaborative work as productive, he said, “I learned that the group collaboration can be extremely useful as each member is allocated certain tasks working toward the final outcome. I also learned that the pressure is lifted as each group member takes a piece of the stress, and creates something together.” Kyle framed opportunities to pool knowledge as exhausting and repetitive while opportunities to divide the work were beneficial and stress reducing.

Collaborative Action Research Project: Kyle

Kyle collaborated with two colleagues on an action research project; one peer taught in a high school drama class and the other in a middle school language arts and social studies block. After brainstorming possible action research topics, they decided to focus on dialogue journals. In their final research paper, they explained,

We wanted a topic that would be meaningful to all of us. We finally landed on journaling as a topic that would suit each one of our settings and also as something we were all planning on incorporating into our classrooms as student-teachers currently and as teachers in our future careers. (p. 6)

They focused their study on the critical question: “How do we help students create ownership, and a heightened interest, in the content presented at the middle and high school levels through frequent – in class journal writings?”

Kyle provided new journals for his students; he clarified in the research paper that he did not want to require students to purchase the journals because it might be a hardship for some. Journal prompts based on the unit of study provided direction for student

writing and Kyle gave a set amount of time for the students to finish writing. Students wrote two or three times a week and Kyle responded after each journal entry. Once he had written, students had the choice to respond to his writing or to write about the next prompt.

Kyle's research team analyzed the journal entries according to student interest in the curriculum, positive and negative attributes in the entries, and number of words written in response to the entry of Kyle or his research team. In the final paper, the collaborative group explained that while they analyzed the data, they gave the students "a break from the journal writing" (p. 43). The group also solicited information regarding the practice of journaling from veteran teachers from all three schools and conducted observations within the classroom.

Negotiation: Kyle as Teacher

In this section, I responded to Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? I shared how Kyle negotiated meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research in his role as teacher. The narrative follows his journey through the development, implementation, and results of his experience with journal writing the middle school classroom. See Table 4.2 for an overview of Kyle's negotiation process.

Table 4.2

Kyle as Teacher: The Negotiation Process

<p style="text-align: center;">Kyle as Teacher: The Negotiation Process</p> <p>Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration: Students are indifferent and apathetic • Frustration: Larger class sizes means less time for relationship • Tension: Student ownership versus teacher control • Uncertainty: Will lessening control lead to classroom management issues • Hope: Dialogue journals offer connection and student ownership • Discouragement: Student disengagement continued • Indifference: Dutiful fulfillment of the project • Complacency: Reinforced assumptions • Hope: Moments of engagement • Distrust: Hesitancy to trust student voice • Disappointment: Disinterest of the cooperating teacher • Disillusionment: The testimony of veteran teachers • Frustration: Time and effort wasted on journals • Regret: What if Kyle had chosen a different topic • Fear: Journaling is too intimate

Negotiating Project Development

Frustration: Students are indifferent and apathetic. The topic of journal writing originated from a misalignment between common identity and beliefs held by the collaborative research team and their perception of student attitude. The researchers determined their love for writing as a unifying commonality; we “were all avid writers who understood the benefits of frequent journal[ing]” (p. 4). Further, they all pursued endorsements in English and valued writing. In contrast to themselves, they described students as “indifferent” and “apathetic” (p. 16). They wrote, “We agree that students

seem apathetic about content presented to them in class, they do what is required, but many do not search for deeper meaning or any personal satisfaction by delving into novels, plays, literature, and overall—learning” (p. 16). The researchers also lamented, “If only the students would approach the curriculum with the notion that any piece of literature has the potential to: transform identity, speak personally, and improve all students’ vocabulary, fluency, and confidence as a writer.” The research team’s topic originated from a misalignment between their values and student behavior. While this might be classified as an alignment because the team chose a topic of relevance to them, the emphasis on needing to fix problematic behavior rather than to understand learning, teaching, students, and self caused me to classify this as a misalignment.

Frustration: Larger class sizes means less time for relationship. The team began to examine contextual issues that influenced learning. In the introduction of their paper, the researchers explained, “What sparked an interest in this topic stemmed from the notion that one-on-one student-teacher contact is increasingly more difficult with class sizes inflating, and less time allotted for each student.” These environmental issues conflicted with Kyle’s belief in the importance of relationships. He wrote, “...teacher-student relations are integral for a teacher to maximize the level of success for students.” (p. 8). Kyle believed that increasing class sizes and less time for interaction between teachers and students would impact academic achievement unless teachers found a way to connect with students in innovative ways. Examining contextual issues is an important characteristic of teachers who conduct successful action research.

Tension: Student ownership versus teacher control. The research team explored issues that might be involved with student apathy and some concerns they had as new teachers. Student ownership in the learning process provided the rationale for journaling as a pedagogical solution. Determining that too often students see assignments as “forced” and “another obstacle to surpass,” they positioned journals as a place to allow students “to emit feelings, opinions, and their personal voice about current topics in a structured form, free of criticism” (p. 19). However, they also posited, “journal writing helped us as teachers to be purposeful in how students were able to connect to the curriculum through our direct questioning” (p. 18). Tension existed for the Kyle and the team between the need to retain control and the desire to allow students ownership. Kyle decided to retain control in his class by soliciting answers to content-specific questions. Some examples of his journal prompts were: “Does your new book seem like a classic, why or why not?” “Have you been able to identify with any characters on a personal level? If so, how?” and, “Do you think ‘the classics’ –in your opinion—should be read in school?” His highly structured prompts resembled worksheet questions in a journal format. By identifying possible reasons behind student apathy, voicing some concerns about teaching, and choosing a possible strategy, Kyle and his team were entering into the inquiry process, therefore being in alignment with the goals of collaborate action research.

Uncertainty: Will lessening control lead to classroom management issues? When considering the use of journals, the research team expressed concern about how to “keep a tight reign [sic] on students for the sake of creating a quiet, managed learning

atmosphere” if they diverted from lecture-based instruction. A section of the researchers’ literature review framed dialogue journals as “enforced classroom management” (p. 29). Journaling, they determined, offered a way to “covertly manage a classroom through frequent, written, on-on-one interactions with students which may be nil with the multitudes of students and over-enrolled classrooms” (Staton, 1987, as cited by research team p. 29-30). The research team was trying to understand the connection between a pedagogical strategy and classroom management.

Hope: Dialogue journals offer connection and student ownership. The research team decided to use the format of dialogue journals as a means to develop teacher-student relationships; “we will respond to our students by writing back to them, validating their feelings and interests” (p. 17). The researchers believed that the power of relationship and connection might influence student engagement. Reflecting on Kyle’s personal background, the researchers noted,

...Kyle never experienced any form of journaling between the teacher and the student on a consistent basis; however, as a student himself, any type of written feedback on assignments or papers served as a reminder that teachers were paying attention and actually genuinely cared about student progress and performance. In turn this lead to anticipation that the teacher would again write another note, or critique, that displayed a sense of relationship. (p. 7)

Kyle equated responding to students with a demonstration of care and believed that journaling would allow connections between himself and his students similar to that experienced with his teachers. The researchers also connected relationship with student

ownership; “our main focus in doing this research is the involvement of student-teacher relations when using a personalized journal because we assume the one-on-one correspondence will be the driving factor toward ownership over one’s education”

(p. 16). The research team was once again trying to make sense of the connection between student and teacher relationships and student motivation. Alignment continued between their sense-making process and the practice of collaborative action research.

Negotiating Project Conclusions

Discouragement: Student disengagement continued. Within the findings section of the research team’s final paper, Kyle’s name appeared several times in connection with a theme identified as, “Chattiness in varying forms within the classrooms during journal prompts” (p. 56). Quotes from Kyle’s researcher notebook integrated into their paper stated, “Talking really seems to be the more desired choice of activity” and “This time has turned into a controlled social hour instead of quiet writing time.” On a list of “negative attributes” about journaling, Kyle wrote, “students would much rather be socializing; journals are being rushed so they can talk afterwards; behavior problems” (p. 63). In alignment with the action research process, Kyle made observations about what was happening in his classroom during journaling time. By identifying and naming the issues, this had the potential to be a critical experience of learning. However, Kyle and his team did not deconstruct the situation and therefore did not gain an understanding of the problematic student behavior.

Indifference: Dutiful fulfillment of the project. In addition to the students’ disengagement during journal writing, the evaluation of the journal entries showed

limited engagement of the students. The researchers noted that 100% of Kyle's students wrote on topic and 25 of 28 showed interest in the curriculum. Regarding "positive attributes in journals," Kyle wrote, "[the students] show a deeper understanding related to specific topics and curriculum content and students are beginning to ask whether or not they can journal" (p. 63). The researchers also reported that Kyle "noticed increases in word count but small number of increases" (p. 64). While each of the above statements is positive, the researchers exhibited no energy or thick description about their results; they simply reported their findings. Although reporting that 100% of Kyle's students were on topic and 25 of 28 showed interest, the research team characterized the findings as limited engagement. As a reader, there seemed to be a discrepancy between the data and their conclusion.

Complacency: Reinforced assumptions. Within the text of the research paper, no deconstruction of possible reasons for student behavior occurred and the team did not gather further information from their students in order to check assumptions. Rather, the research team determined simplistic explanations about developmental characteristics of middle school students in attempt to understand student behavior. Regarding social conversations during journaling time, the researchers concluded, "This led us to believe what we suspected going into this topic; students are much stronger linguistically [verbally?] at these ages and prefer to share and respond orally than improve their writing" (p. 56). Regarding minimal content in their journal entries, they stated, "...we believe [the short entries are] due to teaching at the middle level compared to secondary" (p. 64). Both statements shift the responsibility for the lack of engagement to

developmental issues beyond the control of the researchers and confirm prior beliefs of the research team. By reinforcing rather than questioning assumptions, Kyle and the team were not in alignment with the collaborative action research process.

Hope: Moments of engagement. Despite the general disengagement of students and limited academic connections, Kyle experienced alignment between his belief that his entries would be important to his students and their positive response when reading his words. The research team stated,

All three contexts had students respond during journal writing to the teacher entries made in the journals previously. Kyle's students responded more in a physically noticeable way, 'students are eagerly opening and looking through their journals to find my entry. They are silent as they read through my response and often look up with a smile or are eagerly writing a word or two in response.'
(p. 57)

In addition to aligning with Kyle's belief that journals would provide a venue for the development of relationships, the students' response to his journal entries affirmed his identity as one who connects with his students. However, without further questioning, analysis, and investigation of meaning behind the students' actions, the connection remained an act of personal affirmation rather than a learning occasion.

Negotiating Project Voices

Distrust: Hesitancy to trust student voice. Kyle and his research partners struggled with the legitimacy of student voice—especially when talking with them face to face. During implementation of the project, Kyle emailed his research team indicating the need

to collect more data before class the following week. In that email, Kyle acknowledged an earlier idea from one of his team members. “[Colleague A], you mentioned doing some sort of student interview—gawd I cringe at the thought but I can think of a couple TAG kids that would be reliable” (email, February 15, 2010). The team agreed to conduct focus group interviews and reported the results in the final paper. “Our analysis exemplified that 100% of the students interviewed showed *interest in journaling, and thought journaling served a specific purpose in the classroom* [italics in original]” (p. 48). Further in the text, they wrote, ‘It was difficult to find any negative themes, however, one student replied: It [writing in the dialogue journals] sometimes feels like a little bit of a chore.’ The surveys exemplified more honest answers” (p. 49). The research team explained briefly their thinking,

...One of the most leading questions was how we got this [survey] data, and how it showed differing evidence than when the student interviews were conducted and the students that participated answered that they enjoyed writing 100%. We took [the survey] as a means to getting anonymous answers, therefore hypothesizing the answers would be more honest, just like the anonymous questionnaires. (p. 50)

When the results differed between their interview and survey data, the research team invalidated the opinions shared in the interviews and went with the data that reinforced their thinking. An important aspect of action research is the importance of listening carefully to students—to view them as co-creators of knowledge (Phillips & Carr, 2006).

When a discrepancy occurs, it is important to investigate further rather than to dismiss information—a step that Kyle and his research team did not accomplish.

Disappointment: Disinterest of the cooperating teacher. At the end of the summer semester Kyle wrote a projection regarding the action research process to come mentioning a hope connected with his cooperating teacher; “I look forward to posing a question that my mentor-teacher will look forward to finding the results equally with; I hope that happens” (Journal entry, June 2009). While Kyle’s cooperating teacher supported his research by allowing him to implement the project in her classroom, she lacked enthusiasm for the topic. Her response conflicted with Kyle’s hope. When Kyle shared his focus on journaling, his cooperating teacher responded with, “Oh, good luck with that; God have mercy on your soul” (Interview, March 15, 2010). Kyle concluded that since his cooperating teacher had implemented similar dialogue journals previously, she had “been there, done that.” His cooperating teacher’s lack of connection with the project left his hope for collaboration with her unfulfilled.

Disillusionment: The testimony of veteran teachers. In alignment with Kyle’s beliefs about the potential of journals, interview data showed that veteran teachers had all implemented journals in their classrooms and had experienced positive results such as connecting with their students, increased motivation of students, increased self-reflection by students, and they provided quieter students an opportunity to communicate. However, the veteran teachers also identified time constraints as the obstacle that resulted in the discontinuation of the pedagogical strategy. This created another misalignment for the research team; experienced teachers realized the potential of using of journals in the

classroom, but perceived that time limitations blocked the potential value thereby causing them to discontinue use of them in the classroom. In stronger language, Kyle shared what he learned about journals from his research project. He explained, "...dialogue journals don't work. I learned that they were hot in the 90s and they went away as teachers got busy...that was proven through our research—that we don't have time" (Interview April 29, 2010). He continued to explain, "They could be really powerful if you have time, but it's not there. That's what I took away from this: Don't use them." In an interview, Kyle explained that he could not emphasize enough that it was who you choose to work with and listen to matters; Kyle listened to veteran teachers. The testimony of experienced teachers caused Kyle to conclude the impracticality of dialogue journals in the real world of teaching. Kyle placed great value on expert voices allowing them to be the final authority on the subject.

Frustration: Time and effort wasted on journals. Beyond determining not to use journals in the future, the voice of veteran teachers shaped how Kyle viewed the work they had finished.

To be honest with you, I could have skipped so many steps after talking to six professionals who are veterans who said, oh yeah, we don't do dialogue journals because of x, y, and z and we did them in the past, but stopped doing them because of x, y, and z. I would have been like—got it! I mean, I don't need to waste my time if six different people, six different careers, I mean, that would have done it for me—I would have stopped right there.

The invalidation of journaling as a realistic pedagogical strategy by professionals whom Kyle held in high regard caused him to view his work as futile. Kyle did not appear to gain a deeper understanding of learning, teaching, students and self through his action research project. Allowing expert voices to be the final authority on the value of the practice of study without a deeper understanding is in misalignment with the purpose of collaborative action research.

Regret: What if Kyle had chosen a different topic? Kyle struggled with the lack of validation from one veteran teacher in particular—his cooperating teacher. His hopes that action research would provide a collaborative opportunity between them remain unrealized. By way of negotiating meaning, Kyle pondered possible results if he had chosen a different topic; “I think if [my topic] was say, motivation, there might be a little bit different—there might have been a very reciprocal relationship... You know, back and forth conversation. But, I think ours is different.” Kyle was searching for a topic that was undiscovered by this expert teacher believing that might have drawn her into the project. In retrospect, the common nature of journaling bothered Kyle as well. In the final paper he wrote,

It is my belief that the field of education already knew the information that we have just compiled about such teaching techniques. I do not feel that we have contributed to an undiscovered phenomenon, but we took the time and energy to put the data into writing alongside past scholars on this topic.

Kyle’s emphasis on undiscovered phenomenon is in misalignment with the purpose of collaborative action research.

Fear: Journaling is too intimate. Another powerful voice shaped Kyle's beliefs about the practice of journal writing in the classroom—his own. Noting that he lacked enthusiasm when discussing student response to journals, I asked Kyle to explain the difference between journal writing and classroom discussion as forums for engaging the intellect. His response revealed an additional challenge. Kyle explained,

This is going to sound like a total cop out. But the thing that scares me is that I'm a male and I'm asking these children to write about themselves and then I'm going to take them home and I'm going to write back." (Interview, April 29, 2010)

While Kyle believed in the importance of establishing relationships with his students, he experienced the forum of journaling as too intimate. Struggling with the appropriateness of professional distance, Kyle clarified,

The face that you see in the middle of a discussion is not the same face that's typing the responses. [Kyle's face when leading a discussion is] very professional; it's very bold...There are certain scenarios when you can let that front down and I don't think journals is a place to do it.

This comment spoke to misalignment between identity and beliefs; Kyle perceived the need to shift identity when journaling with students. Further complicating his discomfort with the closeness of responding to students in journals, Kyle voiced concern about the paper trail inherent in journaling. He did not want others such as students, parents, administrators, or other teachers misinterpreting his intentions. Kyle's internal struggle held critical importance; yet, without critical examination, his fear of misinterpreted

intentions seemed to reinforce his conclusion to not use journals rather than a starting place for self-reflexivity. Close examination of his concerns may have led to possible boundaries for his journal responses. A premise of collaborative action research is that we must pay attention to internal voices and that we must practice self-reflexivity to better understand underlying beliefs and fears.

Table 4.3

Kyle as Student: The Negotiation Process

<p style="text-align: center;">Kyle as Student: The Negotiation Process</p> <p>Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alarm: Almost assigned randomly to a group. • Control: Circumventing the process. • Annoyance: The project timeline. • Irritation: A theoretical text rather than a procedural manual. • Suspicion: Doubting the competency of the professor • Doubtfulness: Comparing research paradigms. • Dissatisfaction: Wanted undiscovered topic and guided instruction. • Frustration: Tell someone important. • Frustration: Seek help from a trusted source • Determination: Moving the process forward. • Comfort: Divide and conquer. • Irritation: The tedious nature of collaboration. • Caution: Negotiating conflict. • Uncertainty: Willingness to accept the idea of others...with conditions. • Relaxation: Class time as relational. • Hesitation: Kyle's name attached to work he did not write. • Burden-relieved: The benefit of dividing the work

Negotiation: Kyle as Student

In this section, I continue with Research Question #2 and share how Kyle negotiated meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research—this time in his role as student. The narrative follows his journey as collaborative groups are assigned through his conclusions regarding the practice at the end of his MAT program. See table 4.3 for an overview of the negotiation process.

Negotiating Project Development

Alarm: Almost assigned randomly to a group. The process of selecting topics and organizing the class into collaborative research groups upset Kyle. He told the story of the process in both interviews; each time, he spoke with similar animation—conveying a sense of alarm at the possibility of working with anyone except his two chosen colleagues. He reported, “...none of us knew what was going on” (Interview, April 29, 2010) and relayed the experience as follows,

...we were told to get some sticky notes and what would you like to discover? I wrote this question: I would like to know about the lighting situation and how the lighting situation affects the biological matter of students and their learning. You know, going off of the wonderful book by Eric Jensen. So, I posted it on there and then I found out that these were our action research questions in rough form. Hmm. Well, I probably won't be able to investigate the lighting situation. And then, it didn't matter. I looked around the room at 18 people and thought to myself, ok, if you were to do a project for maybe 3 or 4 months who would you want to work with? And I could only come up with a few people and went up to

them and went please god, and they said, I feel the same way. It doesn't matter what we do; let's just work together. (Interview, March 15, 2010)

In this situation, Kyle's independent identity and belief that who he worked with mattered caused him to experience misalignment with the environment.

Control: Circumventing the process. The professor intended to use student questions to organize groups because a premise of collaborative action research is that the topic of study must be meaningful now instead of in the distant, abstract, or imaginary future (Phillips & Carr, 2006). Being inquisitive, Kyle determined easily an educational question of interest to record on the sticky note. However, when Kyle realized the professor's organizational strategy, he experienced disequilibrium. Kyle's heightened emotional responses months after the incident illustrated the intensity he felt about this situation. Kyle regained control by circumventing the process and choosing his group members.

Annoyance: The project timeline. Kyle's frustration with the collaborative research process escalated steadily throughout the fall semester. Although structured purposely for preservice teachers to develop a foundational understanding of the action research process and their topic before developing a research proposal by the end of fall semester, Kyle felt restricted by the timeline. Annoyed by the length of time it took to get to implementation Kyle stated, "We kept hearing about it—get ready for action research, get ready for action research—And, I kept thinking, it's December and I'm ready and what are we doing" (Interview, March 15, 2010)? Kyle found the timeline excruciatingly slow; rather than immersion in a journey of understanding, he desired concrete action.

This illustrates a misalignment between Kyle's task-oriented and driven identity and the process-rich practice of collaborative action research.

Irritation: A theoretical text rather than a procedural manual. Further challenging his patience, the text provided a theoretical framework and general guidance for the development of an action research project rather than a step-by-step procedural manual. Kyle mimicked the professor, "There's this book—we call it BTAR" then added, "Well, is it a book or is it a manual? What is this? I've never heard of action research before" (Interview, March 15, 2010). In the past, Kyle had experienced success by meeting the requirements set by the teacher. With a task-oriented, end-product identity, Kyle resisted a practice that invited him to focus on the journey and required him to assume the role of empowered learner. According to Phillips and Carr (2006), the dual role of student and teacher/researcher might complicate the journey of action research for preservice teachers. This premise was true for Kyle.

Suspicion: Doubting the competency of the professor. In addition to the theoretical text, Kyle had difficulty making sense of an ambiguous process and understanding the instructions of his professor. New to collaborative action research, Kyle explained,

When I first heard about it, I didn't know what the hell it was and as we continued, I kind of got the sense that the person telling me really didn't know either to a certain degree. I felt like it was very shaky. (Interview, March 15, 2010)

In the middle of the collaborative action research at the time of the interview, Kyle continued his story with irritation in his voice. He declared,

“...we have been trying to figure out what it is that we’re doing. We can do it, just tell us what you want us to do. But, when we get this go-around, the majority of our time, we’re trying to figure out what it is that’s wanted. So, that’s an added stress to the collaborative process. (Interview, March 15, 2010)

Action research differed from the research structure with which Kyle was familiar. Additionally, Kyle experienced difficulty in understanding the collaborative action research process—the strategies that had helped him to find success as a student in the past were not applicable to this process. Seeking realignment again, Kyle doubted about competency of his professor.

Doubtfulness: Comparing research paradigms. During our interviews, Kyle shared two prior experiences with research that influenced his thinking. Reflecting on his undergraduate preparation in psychology, he noted, “I looked at a lot of studies and they looked very familiar. They follow a pattern. They have these numbers and...you can see positive correlations, you can see negative correlations” (March 15, 2010). Comparing his prior research experience with action research Kyle said, “I feel like action research is an attempt to do that, it’s kind of fluffy. It’s kind of prettier. And you need less training to do action research....I don’t know how much clout this really has.” In comparing the two forms of research, he doubted the credibility and clout of action research.

Dissatisfaction: Wanted undiscovered topic and guided instruction. In addition to the research studies he had read, Kyle’s experience conducting research with the head of

the religion department during his undergraduate program influenced his understanding of research. Kyle explained,

I guess you can kind of say that it was....I wouldn't necessarily classify it as a collaborative research. However, it was someone that I was accountable to.

Someone that was pointing me in directions and we would sit down and look at things. The reason that I do classify it as a collaborative research is because I think he took that and went on and did something with it or is going to. Not my problem. You know, he was very specific about things he wanted me to

investigate with this and it was very undiscovered. (Interview, March 15, 2010)

In that experience, Kyle worked individually with a professor who offered specific guidance about process. Invested in the outcome, Kyle's previous professor assumed an active and interested role in a topic that Kyle identified as undiscovered. Both of his prior experiences shaped his thinking regarding the process and purpose of research.

Frustration: Tell someone important. When I asked Kyle to talk about his feelings regarding the process of collaborative action research, he spoke of his frustration about the experience and the professor. Kyle clarified, "This is where the honest self came out and this is why I approached you when I found out that this is what you were doing" (Interview, March 15, 2010). Dissatisfaction with the collaborative action research process and distrust in the professor propelled Kyle to inform someone in authority about his experience. As the program director and one researching the process of collaborative action research, Kyle chose to confide in me. Before sharing his concerns, he identified his role as ambassador for the group and hinted about the reckless nature that set him

apart from his colleagues by saying, “I honestly think that I can speak for the group and maybe would be the only one who would voice [our concerns] out loud.” Kyle felt that somebody in authority needed to be enlightened about the circumstances of their class and that he was the only student bold enough to voice concerns about a professor.

Frustration: Seek help from a trusted source. Suspicious of both the process and the ability of his professor to guide him, Kyle struggled through the beginning of the spring semester. Finally, Kyle contacted me for help in understanding the process. I provided a handout, explained that the handout would not be much help without the context of our classroom discussion, assured him that my students struggled with process as well, and encouraged him to make an appointment with his professor. In an email (February 25, 2010) to his colleagues Kyle wrote, “Things are making a little bit more sense now that I have read over the materials and contacted Jan so that she could teach me. Her documents were very helpful and it clarified some things.” Unsatisfied with the guidance of his professor, Kyle sought clarity from another professional in the program.

Determination: Moving the process forward. To move the process forward despite confusion and frustration, Kyle assumed a leadership role by outlining and delegating the work. An email (undated) to his two colleagues included lists of numbered and detailed assignments; the tone is authoritative. For example, the first few items on the list for the first team member are:

- 1) Make sure you take off the students’ names off the chart.

2) Because the green sheet says, ‘Answer questions 1-2 (1-6 if possible)...’ I

think it would be wise to answer questions 1-3. This should not be more than 2 ½ pages long.

3) For the sake of cohesiveness, keep all documents in Times New Roman font.

Kyle used his leadership skills to mold the experience into a task-oriented process similar to that of his previous experience.

Comfort: Divide and conquer. Kyle wove his responsibilities into each list; he would compile and synthesize the group’s work. Many of the decisions regarding process originated with Kyle as well. They would “give all their interviews to one person, all their observations to another and so on.” Finally, Kyle offered to archive all materials for the project. He stated,

I just think that when deadline time comes, we can’t be waiting around to locate this stuff that is either ‘close’ or whatever. I will start saving files on my computer so that when time comes, we can throw it together and print the hell out of it.

(Undated email)

Kyle had the project organized and under control; once given all the parts, he would put them together and ensure quality that met his expectations. Reflecting on the experience, Kyle described their organizational structure,

We never worked together. I mean once or twice. So, although it was collaborative, it was almost as if we each took a third. And that’s how I wanted it to be and that’s how they wanted it to be. So, we never really did things together.

...It was all individual and then we would just chunk it and throw it in.

(Interview, April 29, 2010)

It appeared that Kyle sought equilibrium by dividing the project into thirds, a new method for teamwork that aligned with his independent identity.

Irritation: The tedious nature of collaboration. The few times that the group did work together, they focused on clarifying procedures, coordinating responsibilities, and organizing documents. As an independent individual who values efficiency, Kyle found troublesome the inefficient, collaborative aspects of the project. When asked if the process would be different if not collaborative Kyle answered, “I think it would have been easier to make up your mind.” With irritation in his voice, he offered the writing of the literature review as an example:

I think it’s pretty straightforward...so we all sit down and we all talk about it.

And, we go, ok, so this is how I interpret it. And the other person goes, oh this is how I interpret it. So, immediately we have to find an in-between spot whereas if it was an individual project you’d just sit down and say I think this is how I understand it and you just do it. You make up your mind and you get some confidence and you just do it. Whereas the collaborative process...you don’t want to say, ok you’re wrong. This is what it is. A little PR is needed. (Interview, March 15, 2010)

Interpreting instructions complicated and delayed the process of completing a task.

Caution: Negotiating conflict. In addition to communicating irritation about the tedious process, Kyle hinted at his beliefs about conflict when sharing his group

experience of interpreting the literature review. Rather than various ways to write a literature review, his comments implied that there was one correct procedure. Kyle believed that conflicting interpretations between group members would necessitate debate to determine who was right and who wrong. Because his team members were friends, Kyle believed he would need to use “PR” when convincing them that he was correct so as to maintain the friendship despite the conflict. Kyle’s underlying beliefs about conflict are in misalignment with the principles of collaborative dialogue that encourage participants to examine multiple perspectives, take risk, challenge one another, and examine their own biases.

Uncertainty: Willingness to accept the ideas of others...with conditions. Kyle demonstrated limited willingness to accept the ideas of his colleagues; however, he set boundaries and communicated clearly his feelings each time. Kyle acknowledged, “[he had] a lot of say about the project up until this point” and clarified that if they would like things done differently, “...now is the time and the place” (Email, February 25, 2010). In the same email, Kyle communicated willingness to meet on the weekend, but asked that [his colleagues] tell him what they would like him to do before the time of the meeting. He ended the email with the conclusion that there is “no way to systematically divide this assignment.” Therefore, he asked that they talk about it before jumping in so that they do not “shoot themselves in the feet.” Kyle made it clear that his colleagues could set the direction as long as they determined and clarified their expectations and clarified them before meeting; it seemed that he did not want to spend time unnecessarily on process.

Relaxation: Class time as relational. With responsibilities divided, the success of the project did not depend on collaborative work sessions. The group enjoyed a friendship—Kyle mentioned in our first interview that he loved the people he was working with and that they were probably the only two from the class that he would keep in contact with beyond the program. From the observation notes, it appears that class time became weekly opportunities to socialize with his friends. An observer noted, “relaxed and playful” characterized the tone of their time together and they appeared to “have good rapport as they were often joking and laughing” (Observation, March 16, 2010). The observer wrote that Kyle, “Openly acknowledges that they don’t work in these sessions” then stated that he helped himself to snacks. Two thirds of Kyle’s comments or actions were unrelated to their research project; they included a reference to a decision made by the professor that “completely brings us to a relaxing point,” a declaration that he could not hear them because he was eating chips, an announcement that he “found the best recipe for a Guinness chocolate cake,” a reference to a time he wore girls jeans by accident, his involvement scoring state writing tests, an acknowledgement that a colleague was trying to refocus the group, another trip to the snack table, a question about an upcoming trip to Mexico, an invitation to someone in the hall to join them for snacks, and finally grabbing a book and beginning to read. When the collaborative group did focus on the project, most comments were procedural statements such as, “I will send you my data, please send me yours.” At one point, Kyle focused on an interview tool and suggested that they pause and break up the questions. After that, he made one suggestion about a revision on a question. This led to a discussion regarding individual

interpretations of how to use the data and which data were the most valuable. The segment of research-focused discussion did not last long; Kyle ended the conversation when he became distracted with fixing the clock in the room. The data from this observation supports Kyle's statement about not using class time to work on the action research project. Kyle communicated a similar statement in our second interview saying, "We never worked together...we each just took a third." By dividing the work among the team, class time could be used for other purposes.

Negotiating Project Conclusions

Hesitation: Kyle's name attached to work he did not write. In our second interview, Kyle and I discussed consensus as related to collaborative action research. Kyle connected consensus with their decision to divide responsibilities saying,

In my experience, we disagreed. And so, the dangerous part about doing our own thing and dividing it into thirds is there's things in there with my name on it where I kind of go I don't agree with that. So, there isn't consensus. There wasn't.

Dividing the work allowed Kyle to reach his final goal of meeting a programmatic requirement, thereby fulfilling his role as student. However, by subverting the collaborative process, Kyle acknowledged that the final product lacked authenticity. His statement also indicates a belief that collaboration leads to consensus which is in misalignment with the premises of collaborative action research.

Burden-relieved: The benefit of dividing the work. Reflecting on the collaborative action research process, Kyle explained the greatest benefit as the ability to break a large task into manageable pieces. With emphasis, Kyle exclaimed, "I couldn't imagine doing

this by myself. There's...a lot of stuff that goes into this form of action research. I think this is kind of a nice way of divvying it up" (Interview, March 15, 2010). When asked for advice for how to structure the project for the following school year, Kyle said, "I take caution to advise individual research because of timing and what is required and what is expected. However, you know, maybe developing some type of an option" (Interview, April 29, 2010). Perceiving action research as a requirement to fulfill, he equated more people in a group as less work for each member. Relaying a scenario from another group in their class, Kyle expressed concern regarding issues of fairness when one of the colleagues "dropped out" of a group. He explained, "It doesn't seem like they should have to suddenly pull another person's weight. I kept wondering are there going to be...are the assignments going to be lessened or what?" The incident he witnessed caused him to advise a structured system of expectations based on the number of group members; Kyle believed that fewer requirements should exist for a person working alone than for groups of varying sizes. Although he stated that he did not want group work to be a "cop out," Kyle explained, "It's all about work load. It's all about time. It's all about graduating and doing this research." Kyle's beliefs reflect misalignment with the purpose and premises of collaborative action research. Kyle, as independent, task-oriented student, fulfilled his goal by meeting programmatic requirements; however, he did not meet the goals of collaborative action research by becoming an empowered learner through this process.

Alignment and Misalignment: Kyle as Teacher and Student

The following section is in response to Research Question #1: How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? As I analyzed how Kyle negotiated the practice of collaborative action research, I identified misalignments and alignments between his trajectory as a teacher and how he carried out the collaborative action research project. These are themes that I developed based on the above information regarding Kyle's negotiation process in the role of teacher and the role of student.

Alignment: Identifying Beliefs and Struggling to Make Meaning

As new teachers, the Kyle and his research team, were in the process of developing understanding of foundational issues of education. The writing in their paper demonstrated the identification and explanations of their prior knowledge of concepts and their assessment of their classroom contexts. In chapter one and two of their final paper, the team sought to understand issues of the teacher-student relationship, classroom management, student ownership, and motivation. They followed the initial stage of the process by identifying and naming issues; however, they did not return to many of these ideas when gathering data or when writing about their findings. When obstacles such as students socializing instead of writing occurred, Kyle and his team did not investigate reasons for the chattiness, connections between student behavior and issues of ownership and motivation, or analyze the task itself. So, while the team's behavior was in alignment with the process in the beginning stages, they did not gain a deeper understanding of the issues they identified in early chapters of their work.

Misalignment: Task-Oriented Student and Process-Rich Learning Experience

Kyle appeared to approach the action research from the stance of a task-oriented student—a role in which he had navigated successfully in the past. He desired to follow the directives of the professor to complete the task assigned. Speaking for the research team, Kyle explained his stance, “...the three of us had the same mission. The mission was to do the project, to work together, to not fight, and to be on top ...of deadlines and things, and then be done” (Interview, April 29, 2010). As a requirement for completion of his master’s degree, Kyle’s goal was to be able to check this project off his list. Kyle valued structure, clarity, efficiency, and forward movement—and found the collaborative action research process to be tedious and ambiguous. The timeline, the theoretical text, the ambiguity of instructions, and repetitive nature of the research bothered Kyle. To gain control, Kyle employed his leadership skills to break down and delegate tasks.

The research team’s final report demonstrated that they completed each step of the process. However, as noted in the section above about Kyle as teacher, the content reflected a reporting tone that lacked analysis and deconstruction. The learning experience of collaborative action research transpires during the process of analysis, deconstruction, and synthesis—of making meaning from the details of the data. To be an experience of learning, researchers must practice self-reflectivity, be open to multiple perspectives, and to hold the tension of ambiguity. Kyle’s drive and task orientation may have presented an obstacle to the process and may have been the source of much challenge during this experience. Circumventing the process allowed the team to meet

their final goal of task completing, but prohibited the collaborative action research from being a deep experience of learning about teaching, learning, students, and self.

Misalignment: Independent and Collaborative

Kyle acknowledged his strong, independent identity and preference to work alone. He demonstrated willingness to participate in a collaborative group, albeit with resistance. When speaking of the collaborative project, Kyle emphasized, “It didn’t really matter the content specifically; it mattered who I can mesh with” (Interview, April 29, 2010). Willing to work with only a few colleagues in his class, Kyle made sure to influence the decision regarding his team membership. Even with choosing his team members, Kyle communicated tension between the benefits and challenges of working with a team. While viewing the ability to divide the work of a large project as beneficial, the tedious nature and various interpretations complicated and stalled, rather than enriched the process for Kyle.

Misalignment: Belief that Whom you Listen to Matters and Willingness to Listen Carefully

Kyle was very clear in his belief that who he listened to mattered (Interview, April 29, 2010). Significant individuals from his past experience in college continued to influence his thinking and his expectation for what should be. When he experienced frustration, he questioned the competency of his professor—his guide through the collaborative action research process. As concerns escalated, he turned to another professor to find help. Student voice was rarely heard or trusted; Kyle’s belief seemed to be that students would not be honest when talking with a teacher and that his job as

teacher was to influence rather than listen to them (Interview, March 15, 2010). He positioned students as in the process of developing identity and sorting out the influence of others—such as their parents—and often reiterating what others said rather than stating their own opinion. On the other hand, the voice and experience teachers seemed to hold great value to Kyle. He was willing to take their opinion as reason enough to use or not use a teaching strategy. These ideas conflict with the premises of collaborative action research to listen to the perspectives of others and to be willing to check assumptions.

Future Practice: Kyle as Professional

In this section I answer Research Question #3: How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? Although Kyle sees the applicability to the professional environment, he continued to be conflicted regarding the practice.

Kyle offered mixed responses regarding the use of collaborative action research in the future. The tension between his independent identity and the shift toward collaboration in education continued to weigh on Kyle throughout the year. Kyle's inquisitive nature caused him to appreciate the questioning stance of research and his love for writing provided vision for publication in the future. Being asked to join someone in collaboration would be an honor if the person met Kyle's criteria of acceptance—otherwise, Kyle would decline the offer. Finally, action research lacked credibility when compared to past forms of research to which Kyle had been exposed.

At the beginning of the program, Kyle indicated ambivalence toward participating in collaborative action research, but enthusiasm toward conducting action research individually. He wrote, “I am very individualistic in that I like to work alone over working with a large group...I feel that I’m able to think more critically alone and make personal connections” (Journal entry, summer 2009). Preferring to work alone, Kyle acknowledged the shift in education toward greater collaboration. He stated, “...as much as we might think that teaching is very independent and isolated, I think we’re pushing towards coming out of that model and I think the PLC model is starting to..[be prevalent]...so I do see [collaborative action research] as fitting” (Interview, March 15, 2010). Kyle acknowledged both his own preference for independent work and the shift toward a more collaborative model in education.

Kyle recognized a need for teachers to be involved in research. Kyle explained, “[This action research process] has taught me that you just can’t sit still. You can’t get into a pattern and run with it for 35 years...My hope for everyone who has been exposed to action research ...is that we... keep asking questions” (Interview, March 15, 2010). In addition to asking questions about one’s own practice, Kyle posited that teachers “need to question what we’re being told to do.” He clarified,

My hope is that if an administrator or staff approached a new teacher and said this is what you need to do, my hope is that they’d go—well, do I? And then they’d go and start investigating. And then they might realize, no—I don’t think so.

Kyle perceived research as a method to improve practice and to question authority.

In their final paper, Kyle wrote, “I would like to strive towards conducting, and having similar research published in a major educational journal” (p. 67). After reading about his interest in continued research and publication, I asked him to expand on the idea. Kyle explained that he might entertain the idea of obtaining a doctoral degree at some point. He explained, “I get bored. I’m easily bored. When I do that, I want to start writing” (Interview, April 29, 2010). Offering another scenario, Kyle mentioned that if someone asked him to collaborate in research, he “would be honored.” However, he qualified his willingness to participate based on who asked. Kyle said, “I kind of have a problem in that I say no a lot.” If a person for whom Kyle held respect asked him to collaborate in research, Kyle would be honored, but if a person for whom Kyle did not respect asked, the answer would be an unwavering no.

Kyle articulated value in the practice of collaborative action research as preparation for entering the teaching field. Organized into Professional Learning Communities (PLC), the middle school in which Kyle student taught had a late start every Wednesday and teams of teachers used that time for the PLC meetings. Kyle made the connection stating,

I see [collaborative action research as] very applicable to working in teams under a department. The PLCs that are becoming very favorable and popular among

principals in school districts. So, I can see how this might be something that is good training to get us ready.

In the research team's final paper, Kyle wrote, "...Action research compliments PLCs in a rather suitable fashion. This action research experience made me feel more prepared to work in such lifelong learning situations in Oregon's public schools" (p. 68). Although Kyle recognized the value of collaborative action research in preparing MAT students for work in the current school system, he witnessed resistance to the PLC model at his student teaching placement. He said, "I'm sitting in a PLC right now that gags every single Wednesday when they get together" (Interview, March 15, 2010). He further explained,

It could just be this crew of people. I think the PLC that I'm in feels forced and feels like they are having to do extra things. And they've got...too much. You know, add another thing or whatever. And, some people don't work well together. I mean that's what it all comes down to. They've been forced to sit in a room together.

The PLC Kyle observed appeared to negotiate their top-down mandate to work in teams in a way similar to that which Kyle and his group negotiated collaborative action research; they met expectations, but did not embrace the process. His experience in the MAT program may indeed have prepared him for negotiating mandates in a manner that allows him to maintain control.

In conversation about PLCs, I stated that teachers often do not have a choice about with whom they work and asked how he might feel if assigned to a group without

the ability to provide input. Kyle replied that his elementary school placement allowed teachers to choose their PLC based on interest areas such as “reading, math, or speech.” He then explained that even at the middle school, teams had “a little bit of leeway in that...do you want to look at writing strategies, or reading strategies?” He did not perceive the idea of teaming as problematic for his future.

This concludes the case study of Kyle. Whereas Kyle struggled openly with the practice of collaborate action research throughout the year, Cindy embraced it as an important element in the real work of teachers. Next, I present her case.

Cindy

Cindy entered her undergraduate program in pursuit of a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. However, while working at a camp the summer after her junior year she realized that she had “a heart for middle school students” (interview, March 17, 2010); this realization altered her plans. Cindy switched her major to business and marketing with the intention of later earning a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. After receiving her bachelor’s degree, she explained, “...the allure of being in the business world got to me a little bit” and she took a job. Earning a significant salary, she enjoyed the lifestyle her job afforded. Despite the salary, she soon experienced a lack of fulfillment, questioned her decision, analyzed options for quality of life, and reevaluated her future. While on a trip to Europe, Cindy asked herself what job would bring satisfaction and passion? Her instant reply was “teaching.” Returning from that trip, she researched teacher education programs and entered the Master of Arts in Teaching program two years after completion of her bachelor’s degree.

Table 4. 4

Summary: Cindy's Trajectory

Summary of Cindy's Trajectory		
Mission in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sacrifice and overcome fear to find fulfillment and purpose—a big investment ○ Passion from within—strengths molded and shaped to be a teacher ○ To connect with students on personal level and to affirm their worth. 	
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Empathetic ○ Godly woman of loving character ○ Caring mentor/guide/shepherd ○ Does not want to be neglectful ○ Half counselor ○ Emerging disciplinarian ○ Tenacious learner and high achiever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Executive decision-maker ○ Detail oriented ○ Listener ○ Heart for middle school students ○ Provider of wisdom, grace, compassion ○ High level of personal responsibility ○ Lives by Christian principles/high morals
Beliefs about education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Middle school is half academic and half life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Middle school is a unique and challenging stage of life. ○ Classroom is a place for the development of the whole child. ○ There will be students who experience extreme circumstances beyond the typical middle school experience. ○ Teacher has an influential role. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher holds the influence to shape and mold students. ○ Teacher must unconditionally believe in each and every student. ○ Teacher must provide opportunity for a rich and meaningful educational experience. ○ Failure to take responsibility has significant consequences ○ Students are the main beneficiaries of Collaborative action research ○ Teacher's must be committed to what they research ○ Collaboration as synergistic or tedious 	

Cindy focused on middle level education in her master's program. Although she thoroughly enjoyed her first practicum experience in a fifth grade classroom, Cindy confidently affirmed her desire to teach at the middle level. Therefore, I identified her as a potential participant in this study. Shortly after receiving an email invitation to attend a meeting regarding my research overview, Cindy sent this response, "I would love to! Thanks for selecting me" (email correspondence, 3/8/10). Similar enthusiasm and eagerness have continued to characterize our interactions.

Trajectory into Teaching: Cindy's Mission, Identity, and Beliefs

In this section, I provide an overview of Cindy's trajectory. See Table 4.4 for a summary of her trajectory. This information is of foundational importance for understanding alignments and misalignments between Cindy's trajectory and collaborative action research and her process of negotiating meaning regarding those alignments.

Mission

Making sacrifices and overcoming fear to find fulfillment. Korthagen (2004) spoke of mission as "giving meaning to one's own existence" (p. 85). As illustrated in Cindy's story into education, a sense of mission, or purpose, inspired her journey to becoming a teacher. Discontentment in her job caused Cindy to question deeply the quality of life. She asked herself, "Why was I not doing something I was passionate about?" and came to the conclusion that, "life is too short for that" (Interview, March 17, 2010). Although Cindy exhibited a sense of urgency about finding purpose and meaning in work as a teacher, she spoke of "weighing the sacrifices." She stated, "It's a big life

investment. I'd have to quit my job. I live by myself, so can I afford this? ...I never have known what it's like to be without a job." Ultimately, Cindy felt that "...everything kept coming together and confirming more and more that this is what I wanted to do." The sense of confirmation allowed her to overcome fears to follow a sense of mission into the field of education.

Passion from within. As part of the MAT admissions process, Cindy observed a middle school teacher and wrote in a reflection about that experience, "I recognize that teaching at the middle school will provide its own set of challenges, but it's also something I've known I've wanted to do for a very long time." In the same reflection, Cindy said that this day at the middle school "confirmed my desire even more to pursue this [teaching middle school] path." A written response after the group assessment for admissions added another dimension. Cindy explained,

Being a teacher is something I've known for many years is what I was meant to do. It's the path that I have prepared for, and the field in which my strengths have been shaped and molded. The passion I have for people and students in particular is something that I could never have created within myself.

Cindy's statement communicates a mission that goes beyond choice to include a sense of calling—a sense of destiny or mission that comes from something beyond than her.

Origin of mission in own experience. When asked the origin of her desire to teach, Cindy referred to an early school experience.

I loved the kids...I went to a private school growing up and they would draw on the older students in the school...we were like the educational assistants of the

younger grades...I always loved being around the kids. I loved working with the younger kids. It's really just the humanity aspect—the people side of teaching. The fulfillment of helping younger students ignited a desire that continued to shape her thoughts regarding purposeful work as an adult.

Connecting with students on a personal level and affirming worth. As Cindy stated, it is “the people side of teaching” that best describes her mission. Asked what she hopes to accomplish in her role as a teacher, Cindy explained, “I hope...that I can connect with my students on a personal level.” Focused on seeing, hearing, and understanding the students in her class, Cindy desired to “affirm their worth as individuals—every single one of them whatever that looks like.” Similarly, Cindy explained, “I want to teach subjects, but I really want my classroom to be the place that the student feels valued.” Recognizing that students enter the classroom carrying complex and often internalized burdens, Cindy said,

I want to get to the deeper level with my students ‘cause a lot of what’s come up is past hurts—even by teacher relationships. By things teachers have said to them about their academics or about who they are as individuals.

Cindy perceived the affirmation of students an integral element of her role as teacher.

Living her dream. When asked to describe a time in student teaching experience that affirmed her decision to become a teacher, Cindy told the story of a practice that exemplifies her mission to connect with students on a personal level. Cindy opened her classroom for “Friday Lunch Bunch” every week. Although students could go to her classroom for help any day at lunchtime, Cindy distinguished Friday lunches as

opportunities for groups of students to dialogue with her about life. The students determined the topics for discussion including such issues as having a boyfriend, not having a boyfriend, growing up, dealing with friends that talk behind your back, and similar concerns of sixth grade students. She characterized these conversations as creating a “community of trust.” Another purpose of these gatherings is for students to get to know Cindy as a person. She explained, “they like to know [details about who I am as a person] because it brings me back to more of a human level.” Allowing them to see her as a person facilitated deeper sharing and stronger connections. As relationships deepened, Cindy offered advice with “love and grace and truth.” She reiterated, “It’s not because I just love language arts so much that I want to be a teacher, but it’s like these serious personal issues because I want to be *that* teacher.” Cindy wanted students to remember her as *the* teacher who made a difference in their lives based on her care for them as individuals.

Identity

Empathetic and Godly woman. Asked to describe herself as a teacher, Cindy replied, “I love my students and I’m very empathetic. I care about them a lot—the biggest thing is just how much I really deeply care about my students” (Interview, March 17, 2010). In addition to being a consistent theme throughout the interview, Cindy’s references also described her as caring, compassionate, and relational. One reference wrote, “She puts people first, which will be a good asset to her as a teacher.” The same reference spoke of Cindy’s ability to work well with colleagues and students, attributing her successful relationships with “her ability to listen to others and still speak up when

necessary.” All three references connected her care for others with her faith or underlying morals. One reference said Cindy is a “Godly woman of good, loving character as a teacher.” Another stated, “Morals are the driving force of the person she is and wishes to be.” They recognized Cindy’s care for others is a manifestation of beliefs held deeply.

Caring mentor, guide, and shepherd. Cindy felt a responsibility to listen and guide her students by offering advice. A reference noticed Cindy’s desire to mentor students saying, “With young people [she] provides beneficial wisdom, grace, and compassion.” Addressing the journey through middle school, Cindy pointed out, “...they need to be shepherded during this time,” then stated that she wants “to buffer a lot of what goes on” and emphasized the need to let the students know that she “...has their back.” She illustrated these concepts with a brief example,

If someone is saying something about them in the hall...I’ve had to remind them that sometimes you have to say—I’m not that person...if they’re talking about me and that’s not true, *I’m not that person*. I know who I am and it’s just unfortunate that someone has to say that about me.

Adamant about guiding students as they navigate middle school, Cindy clarified, “I don’t want to be a neglectful teacher.” Cindy positioned connecting with students and offering advice a responsibility that she must live up to as a teacher.

Half-counselor. When talking about hurting students, Cindy’s care for students became especially evident. She explained,

I feel like I'm half counselor at times. I've had a lot of unique opportunities to get to know my students on a personal level just because I'm getting to know their challenges...what's going on at home...what they're struggling with...what they're facing.

Fulfilling the counselor role in her student teaching placement, the intensity of situations her students faced surprised and upset Cindy. With a sense of heaviness and awe, she expressed,

I've...been exposed to some tough situations regarding really bad home life situations—kind of to the depth of the extreme that I was not expecting to come into...to be dealing with at this school. I knew some of these things existed, but until they were in my face—I've never had experience dealing with very, very serious personal issues.

Cindy spoke of her role as counselor with a sense of urgency and personal investment. Although startling, hearing her students' stories confirmed her decision to become a teacher; her students' life situations reinforced her sense of need for teachers to assume counseling as part their role.

Emerging disciplinarian. Cindy voiced tension between her need to care for her students and the need to create clear boundaries as a disciplinarian. During an interview, Cindy compared her experiences at the elementary and middle schools: "...with the elementary students...they're pretty quick to obey for the most part. And, they challenge a lot [at the middle school] because I'm younger—they really want that kind of friendship/relationship thing." She continued, connecting the tension of care and

discipline, "...I care about them, but I feel like as a teacher I've really...had to solidify my classroom management boundaries and my relationship boundaries." Although struggling with issues of her identity, she framed it as an issue with the students; she stated, "they're...trying to push the boundaries like....is she really a teacher? Is she kind of cool? Is she like my friend?" Her conclusion at the end of this discussion, "I'll have to kind of narrow who I become in terms of those discipline boundaries because I've noticed they like to push a lot." Cindy determined to change her identity to manage middle school students rather than to hold the paradox of being both caring and a disciplinarian.

Tenacious learner and high achiever. Beyond caring for and connecting with students, Cindy's references described her as a learner, tenacious, with high expectations on herself and an outstanding work ethic. One reference connected learning and teaching, "She is a learner—which is why she will be an excellent teacher." The same reference explained, "above all else she is a self-starter, industrious, creative...she constantly seeks to better herself." Another reference described her as "Intelligent, inquisitive, progressive....whose work is always top of the class." The third reference described Cindy as "a hard worker who never settles for anything but the very best she has to offer." These attributes appeared in Cindy's role as a student in the MAT program as well as in the role of a teacher.

Detail oriented. In a journal entry during the summer term, Cindy projected what she might add to a group when conducting collaborative action research,

I can contribute ideas, process suggestions and logistical assistance. I tend to be a detail person, so instead of the big idea I am drawn more to the individual details of how something is going to work or play out...I am usually the person assisting with the assignment of roles, checking in to see how progress is going, and compiling all of the pieces that fit together.

Emails from Cindy to her colleagues regarding their action research process confirmed that she often, but not exclusively, fulfilled the detail-oriented role. In her correspondence, she looked over upcoming assignments and delineated what had already been accomplished and what still needed attention (email 1/20/10), asked her colleagues to add to an initial analysis document then return it to her so that she could write the analytic memo (email 2/25/10), and added transitions between various contributions in the introduction (3/29/10). Email correspondence was used to organize details and decisions, determine when the group met, and to maintain communication regarding the project between classes confirmed Cindy's strong work ethic and attention to detail.

Executive decision-maker. The emphasis on detail provides insight as to Cindy's focus on classroom organization when asked what surprised her about teaching. She realized that seemingly simple tasks require multiple decisions and offered this example,

What are they going to do with this piece of paper they're writing on right now? Are they going to take it home? Are they going to turn it in? Are they going to recycle it? Is it due tomorrow? Is it going to be graded? All those decisions in one paper!

This new ability to see the multitude of decisions behind teaching activities caused her to identify herself as one who makes “executive decisions” regarding classroom details. Tension occurred as Cindy spoke about the impact of her decisions on her students. Determined to establish the purpose behind every assignment, she expressed concern that the students might feel “tricked” if she made an “executive decision” not to grade an assignment that they had completed. Cindy experienced a sense of responsibility to answer all student questions that surfaced in a manner that valued students’ time and honored their investment.

Beliefs about Education

Half middle school and half life. “What I love about middle school is that it’s half academic and half life.” Often speaking in binary terms, Cindy viewed her philosophy as holistic and is central to Cindy’s belief system. Cindy communicated three concepts that fit with the “half life” aspect of her philosophy. First, middle school students are at a unique stage of development and their developmental issues impact the classroom. Cindy stated, “Middle school students are going through many more things in their lives biologically and socially than they were at the elementary level and need an even greater support system and commitment from their teachers to push them and ensure that they have a successful academic experience.” Second, Cindy described the classroom as a place for the development of the whole child; in her admissions essay Cindy explained,

The classroom is a place that provides more to students than just knowledge of [the academic content]; it’s an environment that supports academic knowledge partnered with the discovery of strengths, weaknesses, challenge, and

achievements; life and education are deeply connected within the classroom, and a student's experience there can have a lasting impact on their future and who they are as an individual.

Students enter school unequally. Third, some students experienced extreme circumstances beyond the typical developmental issues of middle school. Cindy explained, "Not all students will enter the classroom equally." She clarified that students have differing levels of parental involvement, various scholastic aptitudes, and acknowledged that some will arrive at school over-burdened and unmotivated. In an interview (March 17, 2010), Cindy spoke of the need to allow students to bring their concerns to her and to allow the sharing of these life issues as a point of connection. A year before the interview, however, Cindy wrote,

My classroom will be a place where the burdens of life will be left at the door, and for eight hours a day, students will be able to focus on what they can learn and accomplish for themselves. Every student will have the same opportunities to achieve, and every student, no matter how great their need can discover ways to obtain their goals...I want my classroom to be a place where great things are experienced and greatness is recognized and promoted in every student.

Cindy desired her classroom to be a safe place where students experienced personal and academic growth although she struggled to understand how to integrate academic learning and life issues.

The influential role of the teacher. Another element of Cindy's educational belief system is the influential role of the teacher. In an admissions essay she wrote, "It's

important to recognize the responsibility teachers have toward their classroom, because centered at the heart of a student's experience with the classroom is the teacher." She continued to explain that it is the teacher "who holds the influence to shape and mold students as their lives develop." Further illustrating the centralized role of the teacher, Cindy explained, "Life can greatly affect a person's education. But a teacher can greatly affect life and education." One final quote connected teachers with success in life. Cindy said,

With a great teacher, comes a great classroom. With a great classroom, comes a great education. And with a great education, comes the opportunity for all students emerging from it to move forward, succeed and accomplish great things in life.

In addition to stating the importance of the role of the teacher, Cindy clarified expectations for how the teacher is to carry out her role. "The teacher must unconditionally believe in each and every student...provide the opportunity for a rich and meaningful education...recognize the unique life situations of each student and how those circumstances will affect the way they learn and grow a individuals." To summarize, Cindy positioned the teacher as the one who can allow the classroom to be the "great equalizer" for students. These statements highlighted Cindy's beliefs regarding the power of a teacher's influence, but they also placed much pressure on the person and actions of the teacher.

Significant consequences when teachers fail to take responsibility. Considering the need for teachers to understand the lives of their students, Cindy posed the question,

“What if teachers don’t take their responsibility” (Interview, March 17, 2010)? While she did not answer the question, this possibility weighed heavily upon her. She said,

Most of the time for me it’s sad, but it’s also sobering...just realizing the responsibilities that teachers have and it’s sad for me to think that if a teacher doesn’t take the time to get to know their students on a personal level... Like who feels neglected? Who feels alone? What if a teacher never took the time to ask these questions?

Cindy believed that teachers have a responsibility to understand and impact the lives of students well beyond academic achievement and if the teacher fails to fulfill this role, the consequences for the students will be significant.

Beliefs about Collaborative Action Research

For the benefit of students. Cindy stressed that improvement of practice for the benefit of students is the purpose of collaborative action research. She noted that action research is “a process in which an observer observes an issue, problem, situation, etc. that they want to see improved. The overall goal is to enhance a student’s learning experience, though the outcome could be other things as well” (Journal entry, June 2009). Cindy maintained a similar definition although she added that action research should “...tie to improving the students’ performance or engaging them or helping them.”

Committed teachers. During an interview, Cindy identified a main characteristic of teachers who participate in collaborative action research; they are “committed to whatever it is they’re researching and feel strongly about it.” This statement prompted her to reflect on her student teaching experience at the elementary school and to use those

teachers as exemplars. The fifth grade team met as a PLC for a half day on the first Friday of every month. This year they noticed that the reading scores of their incoming students were really low so their goal became “to get everybody at fifth grade reading level by the end of the year.” Cindy emphasized, “[raising test scores] was an issue that [the teachers] were dedicated to because it was relevant to them and it mattered to them.” Cindy mentioned that if “you were assigned a topic and you were required to do it, you would be...less engaged—it wouldn’t be as meaningful to you.” Teachers involved in collaborative action research find meaning in their chosen issue and are engaged in finding solutions to their unique contextual challenges.

Shifting practices. A premise of collaborative action research, according to Cindy, is that best practice changes. She explained,

...best practice is a word that ...sometimes gets you in trouble because yes, [practices] are relevant because they have been tested, but until when? Until what point? ...I think [the] teacher lecture model was best practice for a long time. Worksheets were a best practice but then sometime somebody...stopped and [said] hey, is this really working? I’m going to research something else and see whether or not we can make an improvement in this area.

Shifting definitions of best practice provided rationale for teachers to participate in on-going research of their practice.

Beliefs about Collaboration

Students the highest objective of collaboration. Asked if most of her prior experiences with collaboration were positive or negative, Cindy stated, “...for my

personality, it depends on what the objective is really.” Although she did not name objectives explicitly, she supported collaboration when accomplished by teachers and if the results would benefit students. Cindy turned again to her experience with teaming at the elementary school as an explanation.

When I worked at [the elementary school]...everything was team based...they’re all on grade level teams. They teach the same curriculum. They design it together...everyone was completely in sync with the lessons that are being taught...no matter who from fourth grade comes into your fifth grade, you’ve all been taught the same thing.

Cindy continued, “...for teaching, when it comes to students and things like that, [collaboration is] like the highest objective.” Although Cindy emphasized benefits to students as the main goal of collaboration, she expressed underlying fear regarding the enormity of a teacher’s role in meeting the needs of students. She stated, “Teamwork can be—like you’ve got a bigger support system and you’re just responsible for so much more when you’re in charge of students.” Collaboration removed some of the burden; “[collaboration] took a lot of the work load off because you’re able to depend on other people for support.” The heavy responsibility of teaching provided a need for a supportive team.

Role of student, collaboration is tedious. Cindy viewed collaboration in the role of a student as beneficial at times, but dependent on the task and the people with whom she collaborated. “Sometimes when it comes to group work like in school,” Cindy explained, “I would rather just do it myself because sometimes it can just be tedious depending on

who you're working with or who your partner is." During the summer term, Cindy discussed her prior experiences with cooperative work writing, "...professors would assign a project to a group and within that group we would have to work together to complete the task... We would have to cooperate together to fulfill the requirements of the teacher for that project." However, for Cindy meeting the requirements of a teacher failed to carry the same responsibility or burden that meeting the needs of students did.

Collaborative Action Research Project: Cindy

Cindy collaborated with two colleagues on the action research project. While Cindy collected data in her middle school language arts and social studies classroom, her colleagues implemented the study at the high school level. During our first interview (March 17, 2010), Cindy introduced her action research topic by explaining,

[We are] researching the effect of ...the perception of the teacher-student relationships—like the students' perceived view of how their teacher sees them—like kind of a self-efficacy type of thing and how that impacts their motivation to be engaged in learning.

In the interview, Cindy spoke animatedly about the significant impact of a teacher and the teacher/student relationship on learning. Shortly after the interview, I read a draft of their team's writing; surprisingly, no mention of the teacher-student relationship existed. Rather, the project focused on motivation with the critical question being: *How can we motivate students to be engaged in learning?* Although motivation remained the topic of study, Cindy eventually focused on the teacher student relationship as related to motivation. Unlike the other two study participants, they did not implement a new

pedagogical strategy; their sole focus was trying to understand the dynamics of motivation.

In chapter one of her team's final research paper, each researcher wrote an individual section explaining her interest in studying motivation. Cindy began with a series of questions regarding what motivated middle school students to be academically successful when "there isn't an obvious 'end goal' as there is in high school and college" (p. 6). Subsequently, Cindy explained her own motivation as a young student. In our first interview (March 17, 2010), Cindy described her educational experience.

The private school that I went to, it's very non-traditional in terms of the school.

We sat in offices—well they're cubicles; they're called offices, but they're cubicles. So, we had 20 people in our class and for all my schooling grades 4 – 12. I was homeschooled before that—you work in a book, you do the answers yourself, you fill in worksheets, you go up and self-correct, there is answer key in the middle of the room. You self-correct and go back and teach yourself.

In the research paper, Cindy explained the school's behaviorist paradigm. A large chart displayed the number of 100% scores each student received on tests. When a student reached ten 100% scores, the student became a member of the "thousands club." Students received further recognition for each additional ten 100% scores received (2 thousands club, 3 thousands club, etc.). Cindy wrote,

Membership in this 'club' was highly-sought: sometimes we would get a prize, sometimes we would get a special lunch, and sometimes we would get a members-only field trip, etc. We strove to do our best because we wanted these

special rewards. Membership in the ‘thousands club’ would be written on our report cards, and families would initial on a large certificate. With inclusion in the thousands-club at stake, it was almost devastating to get anything less than 100%-especially if it were 98% or 99%. We sought for perfection in our academic scores. (p. 7)

Although explained as an extrinsic reward, Cindy also referred to membership in this “club” as an intrinsically rewarding. She stated, “...I liked the feeling of knowing that I had earned 100% on tests and projects because it meant I worked hard. I saw fruit from my efforts, and I enjoyed the recognition I would get from family at home” (p. 7). This experience with rewards for school work was important in forming Cindy’s view of student motivation.

Table 4.5

Cindy as Teacher: The Negotiation Process

<p style="text-align: center;">Cindy as Teacher: The Negotiation Process</p> <p>Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzled. How do you motivate students without extrinsic rewards? • Hope: Perhaps teachers have a role in motivating students • Discouragement: Getting vanilla answers • Intrigue: We thought the tie-up was with the parents • Fascination: The huge role of teachers • Excitement: Results confirmed beliefs with limited evidence

Negotiation: Cindy as Teacher

Research Question #2 asked: how do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? In this section, I share how Cindy negotiated meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research in her role as teacher. The narrative follows her journey through the development, implementation, and results of her project on the motivation of middle school students. See Table 4.5 for an overview of Cindy's negotiation process.

Negotiating Project Development

Puzzled. How do you motivate students without extrinsic rewards? Cindy found the issue of motivating students intriguing. In an interview, Cindy made a connection between her experience at school and that of her students.

For me, there was always a goal or reward involved with being successful academically...However, these factors aren't always present in our current students, especially at the middle school level. While there still are grades and honor rolls, not all students have the internal drive to accomplish goals or get good grades in school—especially with the elimination of tangible rewards.” (p. 8)

Although she wanted her students to know “they have a purpose and a reason to be in school, to strive for success, to know that what they do matters, and to have high perceptions of their academic abilities by knowing they can accomplish their goals” (p. 8), Cindy seemed puzzled by how this would happen if no extrinsic reward existed. In alignment with collaborative action research, Cindy chose a topic of interest desiring to

understand it more deeply. She also began the process of exploring her previous experience with the topic.

Hope: Perhaps teachers have a role in motivating students. The literature review written by Cindy and her research team contained information about self-efficacy, positive reinforcements and rewards, and teacher as motivator. Although combining varying learning theories and epistemological perspectives, limited recognition and/or deconstruction of conflicting concepts occurred. Addressing behaviorism the research team determined—“This theory leads us to believe that if students are rewarded externally, students will be better learners when rewards are given” (p. 17). Next, they framed teacher actions (i.e., such as organization, enthusiasm, the creation of a trust and a caring environment) as “external ways of incorporating positive reinforcement into the classroom without students being aware of it” (p. 17). Contrasting the emphasis on the teacher, they ended the second section with a short explanation of literature that positioned behaviorist methodology as bribery and manipulation. The collaborative group explained the meaning they made of the contrasting views,

While intrinsic motivation is essential for student success, it can be difficult for a teacher to influence because it comes from within and is often the result of home life and a student’s perception of his or herself and their abilities. In contrast to Kohn, it appears that a teacher’s most effective influence on intrinsic motivation comes from providing extrinsic motivators, which can then lead to intrinsic motivation. (p. 18)

Struggling to understand dynamics of motivation, they reached a conclusion—“The literature compels us to move forward in examining the role a teacher plays in motivating students to engage in learning” (p. 22). In presenting conflicting ideas and confusion regarding learning theory, the research team struggled to make sense of the concepts. This is in alignment with the premises of collaborative action research. The hope was that as preservice teachers identified their struggles, opportunity for analysis and deconstruction existed.

Discouragement: Getting vanilla answers. An attitude survey, a questionnaire, observations during both “kinesthetic and mundane” lessons, the comparison of in-class work with homework, and a focus group interview comprised the methodological elements of Cindy’s study. With discouragement in her voice, Cindy commented, “...in our first data set we got some pretty good like vanilla answers from our students. We kind of set out hoping that we would get some big aha moment from our data...” (Interview, April 26, 2010). The discouragement of analyzing the first data set seemed to cause the group to shift direction and allow each individual researcher to follow her own interest within the larger category of motivation; at that point, Cindy identified the study of the teacher and student relationship as her focus. Continuing the process, the research team’s analysis of data set one became a turning point. With the disappointment of the results, the team found it difficult to hold the tension of ambiguity.

Intrigue: We thought the tie-up was with the parents. Although most of the group’s findings from the first data set were characterized as “vanilla,” one area captured Cindy’s attention. On a questionnaire, the research team asked a variety of questions

about motivation and relationships. A few questions addressed relationships with parents and with teachers; student responses to these stood out. Cindy explained, “I pictured the lower students to have just like something going on at home, there’s not a lot of accountability. And, every single one, across contexts had—yes, I’m accountable for my grades; yes, there’s consequences” (Interview April 26, 2010). Cindy continued, “...we thought the tie-up was related to parents—parents as motivators.” Student responses on the same questionnaire also indicated the importance of teachers. Not explicitly linked with motivation, questions about teachers included two open-ended questions about student perception of “good teachers” and how they know teachers care about them. Two true or false questions asked if students enjoy options or choice in projects and if they feel good when they know teachers are proud of them. After reading their responses, Cindy said,

It’s been so fascinating to me to see how huge the role is of a teacher on a student’s self worth and value...even more so than their parents. That has come out in the research—that students value how their teacher feels about them as an individual sometimes more than how they feel about their parents. (Interview, March 17, 2010)

Student responses and a new direction rejuvenated Cindy; after that first data set, she explained, “we really dug deep as far as student motivation and asked pressing questions and probing questions and deeper questions.” While the findings energized Cindy and she spoke of digging deeper, her conclusions demonstrated generalizations and reinforced misperceptions. These misperceptions also reaffirmed her mission, identity, and beliefs

about the intense responsibility of teacher's care in the development of middle school students.

Negotiating Project Conclusions

Fascination: The huge role of teachers. The collaborative group determined two themes in answer to their question of how to motivate students to learn: "Theme one: Engaging and meaningful lessons in the classroom" and "Theme two: Positive reinforcement and the teacher and student relationship." Cindy's portion of the study focused on the second theme—the teacher and student relationship. Although Cindy spoke of digging deep and asking probing questions, the results section of the paper reflected limited support from the data. The research team stated, "...an overwhelming majority of students noted that they felt, 'proud, confident, more likely to ask for help, like I was able to learn more, good about my work...' when they felt like their teacher cares about their academic success" (p. 36). However, they did not elaborate the idea or provide additional data as evidence. In the other paragraph on this topic, they indicated that students identified characteristics of good teachers as "knowledgeable, happy, active, interesting, reliable, encouraging, patient and calm...provide examples, explain things well, balance kindness with strictness...and are always themselves" (p. 37). From this list of descriptors, the research team determined that the teacher and student relationship was instrumental in student motivation; however, they did not provide data analysis to illustrate how they arrived at that conclusion. The data collected had the great potential for further learning. By not checking assumptions and showing how they connected their

statements to the data, a misalignment existed between their actions and collaborative action research.

Excitement: Results confirmed beliefs with limited evidence. Although the research team could not “tie” the lack of motivation in students to their parents, Cindy continued to attribute the need for a strong teacher and student relationship to issues in students’ homes.

We discovered that home lives are tough. I mean, like, it blows my mind what happened 10 years ago versus what home lives are like now. And so, a lot of students aren’t getting that at home and crave that affirmation in other areas.

Cindy came back to the idea that the teacher played a significant role in motivating students due to challenging home lives and arrived at the second theme from their paper; “Students are motivated to be successful in school when they have a very deep rooted relationship with their teacher, when they feel valued, when they feel challenged, when they feel affirmed” (Interview, April 26, 2010). Cindy communicated again her belief in the heavy responsibility of the teacher saying, “If we just let them slip by—like period one...ok, see you later, period two...ok, see you later—they’re going to go unnoticed for a long time. They’re not going to be motivated.” From her perspective, the teacher and student relationship was the essential element of student motivation, and therefore, it was the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that students are noticed and affirmed. Her findings reinforced previously held beliefs, but she did not offer evidence of data or critical analysis in reaching her conclusions. Misalignment existed between her actions and the questioning, analytical premises of collaborative action research.

Negotiation: Cindy as Student

In this section, I shared how Cindy negotiated meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research in her role as student. This is a continuation of the response to Research Question #2: how do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? See Table 4.6 for an overview of Cindy's negotiation process.

Table 4.6

Cindy as Student: The Negotiation Process

<p>Cindy as Student: The Negotiation Process</p> <p>Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conviction: Advocating for collaborative action research • Confidence: It is all about our careers. • Fear: What if we do not get our question answered? • Relief: Failed research does not equal failed class • Excitement: Moving forward. • Irritation: It is not a messy process. • Certainty: Results proven across contexts • Relief: Collaboration as sharing the load. • Conflict: Grateful or guilty for help on graduate project • Conflict: Synergetic or tedious

Negotiating Project Development

Conviction: Advocating for collaborative action research. Cindy consistently framed her collaborative research experience positively. Based on information from

friends that completed action research individually during a prior year in the MAT program, Cindy assumed that she would complete action research independently as well; however, she advocated for conducting the research collaboratively. She repeated talked about collaborative action research as the real work of teachers. “It didn’t really hit me until December it was going to be collaborative...and then, I was one of the only proponents” (Interview, March 17, 2010). She continued to explain an incident that occurred when the class learned that their action research project would be completed collaboratively,

I remember this heated, heated discussion that the class got into. ... it was very heated because people were like, *no*, I have this question and I’ve been planning it all semester...most people thought that they were going to be researching by themselves so people had been starting to formulate their own research questions throughout their placements...what if someone else doesn’t want to research this and it is what I want to research? ...and, this is my degree and I’m paying \$25,000 for this and I’m investing my time so I want my question.

Despite the anger of her colleagues, Cindy remained adamant about collaboration and voiced her opinion. She reported, “[The professor] even emailed me and it was like, thanks so much for sticking up for this.” Cindy’s view that collaborative action research is the real work of teachers is an important premise of the practice.

Confidence: It is all about our careers. In our second interview (April 26, 2010), I asked Cindy to revisit the conflict about collaboration, specifically explaining how she felt and why she was able to stand against her angry peers to advocate for collaborative

research. First, she established the nature of their relationship, “We’re all here for a specific reason and we’re professional colleagues. We became friends, but we are professional colleagues. I didn’t necessarily have a stake in what other people thought of me.” Next, Cindy clarified her perception of their collective purpose, “...we’re in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program and we want to improve our practices, we want to become better teachers, we’ve invested time, money, and energy into this...It isn’t high school English class; it’s about our careers.” Finally, Cindy provided the origin of her conviction and possible rationale for the behavior of her peers,

...ultimately, I’m going to be the one to improve because I’ve seen it work...in schools...I believed in [collaborative research] passionately and that if we’re doing it, [our practice] is going to improve. Maybe they just don’t have that experience to shape them.

Not only did her prior experience provide rationale for collaboration in research, it also shaped her vision for the future. Cindy explained,

...that’s what it’s going to be like in the school atmosphere. We’re going to be friends with our colleagues, but ultimately, we’re going to have our own classroom...It’s not a situation where it’s like social like they’re my friend and I don’t want them to be mad at me. It’s for a way bigger objective than that.

Cindy believed in the transformational potential of collaborative action research. She also believed that students would ultimately benefit from transformed practice. Therefore, Cindy became a strong advocate for the practice.

Fear: What if we do not get our question answered? Although positive about collaborative action research, Cindy reflected upon a difficult period for the group,

We started our action research trying to answer a question instead of to just learn from something... We were overwhelmed with...what if we don't get our question answered? Or, what if it's opposite of what we were going for? Was that going to affect our grade? Were we going to fail symposium?

Concern about earning a good grade and correct implementation of the project led to uneasiness for the group members. Cindy also shared concerns they experienced regarding their students' reactions to the project. With an original focus on student goal setting, Cindy explained that their group struggled with questions like, "what if they don't accomplish their goals? What if they aren't interested? What if they don't really care? What if they drop out?" These questions and insecurities weighed heavily on the group as they began to narrow their topic. When asked how they negotiated these fears, Cindy explained that they "took a step back" and refocused on their objective.

The root of Cindy's concern may have come from fear of failure. Not only did she assume a high level of personal responsibility regarding achievement as a student, failing action research might address issues of competency as a teacher and threaten her mission. Her image of good student complicated this process—this is in alignment with a premise that preservice teachers often experience complications in their dual role as teacher and student due to their perception of good student.

Relief: Failed research does not mean failed class. I asked Cindy again how she and her research team were able to alleviate their concerns. Immediately, she responded

with the name of her professor. The group met with the professor and shared their concerns and, Cindy explained, the professor assured us that “you’re not going to fail because your research failed.” According to Cindy, the professor explained that “even a failed research question you can learn from and it can inform your practice because you know what not to do or what to do from that.” Reframing the project as a learning experience regardless of the outcome seemed to allow Cindy to release her fear of failure.

Excitement: Moving forward. Although fears subsided, discouragement remained. After receiving “vanilla answers” from their students, Cindy stated, “...we were kind of disappointed I think with our first data set results.” While analyzing the first data set, Cindy began to focus on the teacher and student relationship. She explained, “It wasn’t until we started to develop the second data set that we got excited about the process because—oh, we can answer this and I’m so excited to learn what the results are from this question.” Cindy discovered an element that captured her attention and sparked her curiosity. Additionally, Cindy attributed increased enthusiasm to a shift in methodology,

We did interviews. We actually talked face to face with our students and so we learned a lot more and...it’s really coming together now. And, these themes are emerging. Now we can keep targeting them and keep probing them and we felt more confident because we were actually going somewhere versus like, oh, what do we do? We just weren’t getting anything back. So, [our emotions] were like low before February and then [they] start getting higher.

The research team’s shift in methodology allowed Cindy to fulfill her mission of connecting with students as she conducted interviews. She also experienced enthusiasm

as she became further invested in the process, felt more competent with the process, and found results that she found encouraging.

Irritation: It is not a messy process. Cindy's role as a student complicated the inherently "messy" collaborative action research process. In the textbook used in the course, Phillips and Carr (2005) asserted, "This is a messy process; leave yourself open to this kind of open-ended process of discovery" (p. 35). The authors also cautioned, "Your beliefs about what it is to be a good student may complicate and potentially enrich your action research project" (p. 32). In our second interview, I provided Cindy a list of premises of action research found in the book and asked her to highlight in one color those with which she strongly agreed and to use another color to highlight premises with which she disagreed. The two quotes listed above were the only two with which Cindy disagreed. She stated that her role as a student did not complicate the process, but then told the story of weighty questions and fear of failure. Cindy also exclaimed, "I feel like it's emphasized so much that it's a messy process, but I don't really feel like that." She continued, "I felt like with messy, it was like you just throw it out there and see what comes back and sort through it all. But, I felt like it was much more organized." Shortly after that statement, Cindy described emotional fluctuations and frustrations with ambiguity. Cindy did not acknowledge the process as complicated or messy.

Negotiating Project Conclusions

Certainty: Results proven across contexts. Implementation of the action research project occurred in three different school districts and with students with five grade

levels; Cindy equated this with validity because she felt like they realized consistent results across all contexts.

I was really relieved that I was going to be part of a group because I had been working in [my first placement school]... and had seen the benefits of group work.... you can test your questions and that's what I wanted. I want to be presenting research that I worked hard on that's a testable question that has proven itself across multiple grade levels that themes have emerged not just in my sixth grade classroom but across multiple grades and I don't have the time or the energy to test it at other grade levels. (Interview, March 17, 2010)

In our final interview (April 26, 2010), Cindy returned to the idea of testing the project across contexts,

The foundational aspect is that we had three different contexts to test the research question at which was [the] biggest thing to my peers in saying we're professionals—this is not a high school research project. This is serious; this is real solid research that we have to get approved by the research board here and this is something we could get published sometime and we've worked really hard to have a question that's been tested across multiple contexts with multiple grade levels.

Whenever Cindy talked about her research across contexts, she mentioned her experience in her first student teaching placement and identified research as the real work of professionals. In March, Cindy stated,

I was glad personally when I heard that we were doing it collaboratively just because I saw the fruit of it in [first placement school] but on a practical level—on a professional level they’re just doing it as part of their job.

Believing that collaborative action research is the real work of teachers continued to provide strong conviction for the practice. However, she also continued to return to the idea of testing and finding the same results across multiple contexts and grade levels. Cindy’s conceptions of testing and associating finding results across multiple contexts are in misalignment with purpose and premises of collaborative action research.

Relief: Collaboration as sharing the load. The opportunity to divide the work was another benefit Cindy identified for collaboration on the research project,

I could share the load with two other people because I honestly can’t imagine having...to do the literature review by myself. I really can’t fathom what it would be like to be the like sole driver of an action research process right now just because of what’s going on with fulltime teaching and work sample and all of that. (Interview, March 17, 2010)

Cindy returned to this idea of “sharing the load” in our second interview (April 26, 2010). She referred to the project as a “big burden” and explained that with all the responsibilities in the program, she would not have been able to “invest herself fully in one of those areas; something would have taken a hit.”

Collaboration afforded the team with opportunity to meet successfully the requirements of a student teacher. She explained,

I feel like I was able to give everything ...and [my colleagues] were able to give everything they could and together we created such a bigger product and such a more worthwhile piece of material and information because we weren't just doing every single thing ourselves.

Although framing the division of the work as a benefit, Cindy communicated a negative connotation characterizing the opportunity to divide the work and to gain support of colleagues as "selfish." She seemed to struggle between relief at having colleagues with whom to share the burden and feeling selfish to desire that relief when in a MAT program. Ultimately, she viewed the opportunity to share the load as helpful to fulfilling the requirements of the MAT program. Once again, her view of good student complicated her ideas regarding collaboration.

Conflict: Grateful or guilty for help on graduate project? Immediately after stating that sharing the burden was selfish, however, Cindy suggested another positive reason for the dividing responsibilities,

Everyone in my group has different gifts and abilities. One's good at editing...one's really involved with the content—really focused on making meaning ...out of the research...I'm good at kind of tying it all together and connecting it. Between the three of us...it just works so well. (March 27, 2010)

Cindy reframed the division of the labor as an opportunity to allow each group member to use her unique gifts and abilities. This strength seemed to counteract the small sense of selfishness that Cindy experienced. She continued to determine how she viewed collaboration as related to her role as student.

Conflict: Synergetic or tedious? In a journal prompt at the end of the summer term, Cindy was asked to identify one word to describe her experience with collaborative work in the program; she chose “synergy.” With enthusiasm Cindy reflected on the summer term and looked forward to the journey ahead. She welcomed the prospect of learning from and with her colleagues. In our final interview (April 26, 2010), I asked Cindy once again to provide a word to describe her experience with collaborative action research; her first response, “I want to say tedious, but then that’s not really right.” She then clarified, “...we had three parts that had to come together very cohesively and that took awhile to get there.” After a short pause, Cindy continued—this time identifying “synergy” once again. “...we were sort of creating this bigger thing by what each one of us was contributing that I feel like we couldn’t have got to where we did if it hadn’t been for all three of us...yeah, synergy would be a good word.” In the conclusion of the final research paper, Cindy characterized the experience of collaborating with her colleagues as rewarding. Expecting collaboration with teachers to be synergistic, she seemed to experience tension when she found the process to be tedious.

Alignment and Misalignment: Cindy as Teacher and Student

The following section is in response to Research Question #1: How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? Analyzing how Cindy negotiated the practice of collaborative action research in both the role of a teacher and a student, I identify misalignments and alignments between Cindy’s

trajectory as a teacher and the practice of collaborative action research. These are themes that I developed from analysis rather than themes developed by Cindy.

Alignment: Mission, Identity, and Beliefs Aligned with Purpose and Premise

Cindy's mission to impact the lives of her students seems to have strongly influenced her thoughts and actions throughout her study. From the very beginning of her journey with the collaborative action research project, Cindy identified confusing ideas regarding student motivation. Cindy's own educational experience appears to have strongly shaped her thinking; she wondered how students could possibly be motivated with the elimination of extrinsic rewards. Approaching puzzling ideas with sincerity, Cindy seemed compelled to discover answers. Based largely on her experience at the elementary school, Cindy held a strong conviction that collaborative action research is the real work of teachers and that the process will result in transformed practice for teachers. Cindy believed that students would be the beneficiaries of her findings, and, perceiving herself as a caring teacher, Cindy wanted to find answers. Cindy's desire to understand ideas of educational importance aligned with the purpose of collaborative action research and her willingness to explore conflicting ideas was in alignment with the premises of collaborative action research.

Misalignment: Mission and Identity with Premise

As Cindy continued in the project, it appeared that her mission and her high level of responsibility shaped the direction of her project. To become a more competent teacher, Cindy needed to find answers regarding her role in student motivation. She viewed collaborative action research as a vehicle to learn more about teaching and to

meet her “highest objective” of meeting the needs of students. However, after receiving “vanilla” data, Cindy’s stance shifted from questioning to arriving at simplified answers and to reaffirm previously held beliefs about the “huge role of the teacher” without further deconstruction; this was contrary to the questioning, analytical, and self-reflexive premises of collaborative action research.

Misalignment: Mission, Identity, and Beliefs with Premises

The strong sense of mission and identity that allowed Cindy to advocate for the practice seems to have led to her irritation at the premise that collaborative action research is an ambiguous process. Despite her early challenge with conflicting ideas regarding student motivation and other struggles she experienced, Cindy did not consider collaborative action research a messy process. She had heard her professor talk about ambiguity, the text characterized the process as messy, and then I brought it up in an interview. The statement felt like an accusation and Cindy defended the practice by refuting the premise.

Alignment: Identity with Premise

Cindy’s definition of, and drive to be, a successful student also seems to have complicated her process. In addition to needing to find answers to become a better teacher, she also needed a good grade. She experienced a fear of failure that subsided with reassurance from her professor who helped her to reframe the process as a learning experience. Cindy left the conversation with her professor convinced that she could still be a successful student even if she had a failed research project—one could learn through failure. Additionally, she struggled with believing that collaboration was acceptable for a

master's level project; she felt great relief at being able to share the load with her colleagues, but experienced what appeared to be some guilt over not accomplishing the project on her own. One more tension occurred regarding her role as student and researcher—she experienced tension between viewing collaboration as synergistic or tedious. She classified collaborative student assignments as tedious when done to meet the expectations of a professor. When teachers collaborated for the highest objective of meeting student needs, she believed that it should be synergetic. While often characterizing the work of her research team as synergistic, she seemed to associate guilt with admitting that it also was a bit tedious. All of these struggles are in alignment with the premise that a preservice teacher's beliefs about *good student* might complicate the process.

Misalignment: Belief with Purpose

Although Cindy and her team began with a posture of exploration, they finished with a sense of finding conclusive results. She associated the validity of their findings with testing their question across different grades levels in different contexts. The notion of proving something using collaborative action research is in misalignment with both the purpose and premises of the practice.

Future Practice: Cindy as Professional

Cindy began the semester enthusiastic about and advocating for collaborative action research and left the program with affirmed thoughts and feelings regarding the practice. When asked if she envisioned using collaborative action research in her future practice, she stated that it depends on where she gets a job. Cindy explained, "...if I get a

placement in [her first practicum district], I'll do it every year." The superintendent of that district spoke at an MAT event where Cindy spoke with him about their professional learning teams. She asked him, "What's your goal? Is this staff development year long process going to be just this year or every year? And he said it's super long term. So...formal research might be a part of my everyday life" (Interview, April 26, 2010).

Continuing on the theme of future use of collaborative action research, Cindy acknowledged her desire to participate on a team that valued the collaborative research process. However, she determined that the process would be part of her practice even if she has to do it alone. "I'm always going to be seeking to discover my students and going through the process." Providing more insight she pointed to a copy of Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model on the table and said, "I want to find the disconnects...I want us all to be moving in the same direction. So, I see a disconnect in middle school with student motivation and engagement, I want to discover that." Addressing this topic in her conclusion of the final research paper as well, she wrote,

It's confirmed that in whatever way, shape or form, I want action research to be a primary component of my professional practice during my teaching career. I am truly someone who is deeply passionate about the growth of my students and about shepherding their development both personally and academically, then I will always seek better ways to improve my practices and their overall achievement within the classroom.

In that same conclusion, she communicated transformation of thought regarding the process of collaborative action research. Cindy noted,

Before this, I saw action research as simply a process: Identifying an issue, and then researching ways to ‘fix’ it. But what we’ve engaged in is so much more than a cause/effect relationship—it’s a process of inquiry and discover, that richly bears so much more than just cut and dry solutions at the end.”

Cindy took her role as teacher seriously and perceived collaborative action research important work of a professional educator. In her first student teaching placement, she “saw the fruit of [collaborative research] ...but on a practical level....on a professional level they’re just doing it as part of their job.” Assuming a similar professional stance, Cindy invested herself in her collaborative action research project believing fully the opportunity to impact students and to transform her practice in the process.

In addition to the practice of collaborative action research, Cindy characterized their project as transformational and envisioned application of the results in her future practice. Asked how she might develop the teacher-student relationship in her own classroom, Cindy offered two examples. First, she plans to devote the first two weeks of a new year to community building. As rationale, Cindy referred to a practice of her first cooperating teacher who implemented team-building activities, called her class *the team*, and sent students to check on their teammates. Cindy communicated that she had tried to carry this concept with her into her second middle school placement, but experienced resistance from students. Attributing the resistance to coming into another teacher’s

classroom in the middle of the year, she determined to wait until she had her own classroom to return to the idea.

Journaling is the second example Cindy offered for building the teacher/student relationships. Implementing journaling in her student teaching placement, she found that they provided a wonderful method for building relationships. Cindy explained,

I discovered so much about my students through their journal writing. I did journaling three times a week and I wrote back to them and they wrote to me and I didn't correct their conventions and spelling—it was simply a communication tool. It was incredible. I did not know how much was going to come from that. They would just open up to me on paper, share things going on at home.

(Interview, April 26, 2010)

Cindy interpreted one student's journal entry as a cry for help. She reflected,

I had an opportunity to do a big time gang intervention with this student and his family had no idea and the counselors had no idea and the principal came in for the meeting all because he started opening up to me about these temptations to join a gang in his neighborhood because of being bullied by another ethnicity like the two groups were constantly battling each other and his mom works two jobs and his parents are divorced and he has no one to talk to and he didn't want to talk in person because it doesn't really go with his culture that way. So, it would all be in writing and I was like, ok, tell me more, tell me more.

Departing from that student teaching placement, Cindy received a note of appreciation from the student that affirmed her actions. Cindy explained,

He wrote no teacher in my whole life has cared about me as much as you have. Yeah, it was hard to leave. And, [Cindy], I promise I'm going to stay out of gangs. I promise I'm not going to get involved with these things because it really is important what you said.

Cindy's experience reinforced her conviction to establish journal writing as an integral aspect of her future practice. More than a writing strategy, Cindy perceived journaling as an avenue for fulfilling her mission to shepherd her students.

Next, I transition from the case of Cindy and introduce you to my third participant—Jack. Similar to Cindy, Jack enjoyed the collaborative research process.

Jack

In high school, Jack began to explore career options and decided to focus on engineering. With his love of math, “engineering seemed like a fun thing to do.” However, one of Jack's mentors offered another suggestion: “You know, Jack, you should be doing something where you're in relationship with people—investing in people's lives” (Interview, April 8, 2010). After receiving this advice, Jack reevaluated his decision and began exploring options for people-related careers. In college, Jack took a class called *Teaching as a Profession* and loved the practicum experience that accompanied that class. After graduating with a math degree in 2008, Jack worked as an educational assistant in a middle school for one year before entering the MAT program. Jack's first authorization is at the middle school level. However, unlike the other two participants, Jack's second authorization is at the high school level.

Jack attended the informational meeting about my research study. At the end of the meeting, Jack indicated on the participant response form that he might be interested, but needed a couple of days to think about it. I interpreted this option to mean that he was not interested, but did not want to decline participation at that meeting. Several days later, I sent an email to inquire about his willingness to participate after having some time for consideration. He surprised me by responding the same day writing, “I would love to be a part of your study. Your research topic is very interesting, and I'm excited to help you in it” (email correspondence, 3/14/10). Jack continued to surprise me throughout my research study.

Trajectory into Teaching: Jack’s Mission, Identity, and Beliefs

In this section, I provide an overview of Jack’s trajectory (See Table 4.7). This information is of fundamental importance for understanding alignments and misalignments between Jack’s trajectory and collaborative action research and his process of negotiating meaning regarding those alignments.

Mission

Teaching as spiritual calling. Jack positioned his decision to teach as a calling (Group Assessment Reflection, March 2009). This calling has spiritual roots; in an essay, Jack wrote, “I invest into the lives of others, showing them the love of the Lord, helping them develop to their fullest potential, and continually praising God” (Admissions essay, January 2009). He wrote, “In everything I do, I want to be able to reflect the love of God.” When asked in an interview what he wants to accomplish as a teacher, Jack used the language of relationship. “I want to be able to make an impact on those kids’ lives

and be that positive role model...be that positive influence in a kid's life." Jack's mission to influence students positively through relationship is rooted in spiritual conviction.

Table 4.7

Summary: Jack's Trajectory

Summary of Jack's Trajectory		
Mission in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching as a spiritual calling • Make an impact on students' lives • Be a positive role model • Help students grow and develop through relationship 	
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wacky – humorous • Relational • Listener • Leader focused on others • On-going learner • Reflective • Loved school and math growing up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves the energy of middle school students • Works well with young people • Self-directed and motivated to reach goals • Honest, trust-worthy, responsible • Willing and eager to get involved • Identifies problem students in class and is proactive in those situations
Beliefs about education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in the lives of students by caring for them is a vital role of an educator. • Teachers have a responsibility to develop a safe and respectful classroom environment. • Lesson planning is a complex process that involves content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and a strong understanding of the students in your classroom. • Collaborative action research helps instill the healthy practice of examining own teaching. • Collaborative action research preparation for teaching career. • Teacher-researcher care, are willing to examine self, able to work with others, and know self 	

Impacting students. Jack offered two examples of situations with students that affirmed his decision to teach—one at the high school and one at the middle school. Both examples illustrated his mission. His high school account involved a quiet, withdrawn young man who failed to participate in class. At a conference with the student's mom and step-dad, Jack discovered that this student's demeanor changed after his parent's divorce. Hearing this, Jack determined to develop a relationship with this young man. Jack explained,

I found that he started talking about racquetball. So, I started bringing up racquetball to him. And, when I did, he actually got excited about it. So, he completely turned around in class and started raising his hand, started talking with me during class, and sometimes would even stay after to talk. So, by the end of [Jack's practicum experience] he had turned in all his assignments whereas before he had a lot of missing work. He had scored an "A" on his test. So, I think like being able to see where kids' needs are and to be that role model and help turn him around is my number one goal as a teacher.

The middle school story Jack shared is a variation on the theme. He said,

There's a student at the middle school that I can think of that he is one of those students that teachers in the staff room unfortunately will complain about...teachers talk about how difficult he is to deal with. But, one of the teachers across the hall has actually singled out [the student]...to try to help him get his act together. So, I've kind of worked with him in helping that student out and I have that student the last period of the day so it's nice because I'll be able to work with

him a lot...because I've built that relationship with him, he'll stay after school and want to get some more work done. So, that whole relationship piece is definitely one of the reasons [I teach].

In both situations, Jack identified a student experiencing some type of challenge and developed a relationship with that student. Jack credited that relationship as impacting the student's behavior, work ethic, and grade thereby fulfilling Jack's mission.

Identity

Wacky. The least verbal of the three participants, Jack contemplated briefly each question during the interview and then responded quietly, seriously, and succinctly. Although a slight grin often accompanied his responses, Jack's self-description caught me by surprise. "I'd say that I'm pretty wacky as a teacher" (Interview, April 8, 2010). He added that he likes to joke around and have fun with the students. Providing rationale Jack stated, "Math can be really dry for students so...it's important to liven it up, make jokes, keep kids involved, relate it to their lives." He also mentioned the use of humor to connect with students. Quickly, however, Jack clarified, "I'm a little bit wacky, but I try to stay on-task even through the jokes and everything." Although this sense of humor is not overtly present when interacting one on one, he perceived humor as an important way for him to connect with students.

Relational. Jack has an extremely relational focus. One reference said, "His work with young people is truly outstanding. A+." "Jack has an amazing ability to connect with young adults," stated another reference. According to his third reference, "Jack has genuine compassion for working with children. He builds relationships with students in

the classroom based on trust and respect.” In a reflection, Jack mentioned that he has a “heart for kids” and explained that he places value on relationships. Finally, in a journal entry (June 2009), Jack stated, “I work well with others... I’m very easy to get along with.” In addition to self-description as relational, Jack lived out his value of relationship in a way that caused others to characterize this quality in him as amazing, unique, and genuine.

Listening to others is a part of being relational that Jack values and, he explained, is part of his identity as a person (Interview, April 28, 2010). However, he differentiated between his personal and professional identity. He explained that while the ability to listen to others is a part of his personal identity, he found it challenging to listen to students as a professional in a classroom environment. Jack clarified that he has been exploring what it might look like to be able to listen well while teaching and while “it’s not quite where it should be,” he is determined to improve.

Supporting others as leader. Jack’s references, who had observed him working as an educational assistant in the classroom or as a Young Life leader, also described him as a “natural leader” and explained, “leadership skills and abilities in the classroom are very impressive for his age and level of experience.” To further characterize Jack’s leadership traits, references portrayed him as self-directed, motivated, and someone with strong communication skills. Additionally, one reference credited Jack’s leadership skills with the ability to keep students focused, on-task, and involved. Jack described himself as one who “can take on multiple roles within a group, whether it is the leader or the supporter.”

During a summer term project, Jack shared an experience that illustrated his leadership skills. He recalled,

It seemed like many of the people in my group are very independent workers and like to get their task and go. I'm not that way at all when it comes to group work. I think that I was able to bring the group together to share our ideas and progress at times. (Journal entry, June 2009)

In a reflection, Jack wrote about leadership saying, "I believe that a leader supports others in what they do and sets them up for success" (Group assessment, spring 2009). His leadership style is people and process oriented.

Reflective, on-going learner. In his job as an educational assistant, Jack worked closely with a classroom teacher who characterized Jack as "an ongoing learner" explaining that they "had many discussions after class about academic problems as well as the best method for dealing with behavioral problems that students exhibit." In addition to constructing knowledge through dialogue with others, Jack wrote about his "tendency to pour into information" (Journal entry, June 2009). Jack explained that to gain a real understanding, he dwells on things and paces himself. Jack also wrote about being reflective and intentional regarding his own growth. In a journal entry Jack explained,

What I'm trying to work on is encouraging the input of others and tying all of our ideas together. I have seen myself begin to improve on this. The more I have been able to understand my own thought processes, the more I have been able to connect it with others.

Beliefs about Education

Important to invest in lives of students. According to Jack, “One of the most vital roles of an educator is investing into the lives of the students” (MAT admissions essay, January, 2009) which is accomplished by caring for students. To communicate care for students, Jack suggested asking questions that elicit information about student interest and/or future plans as one possible method. Jack also recommended attending extra-curricular events, which he referred to as “the power of presence.” Investing care in the lives of students, Jack explained, is a way of demonstrating God’s love. Ultimately, Jack connected caring teachers with the ability to motivate and inspire students to learn.

Responsibility to create safe learning environment. While Jack used terms like “vital” and “necessity” to communicate the urgency of showing care for students, he applied the term “responsibility” to the teachers’ role in the development of the classroom environment. Jack explained, “Educators have responsibility to provide a safe and respectful learning environment” (admissions essay, January 2009). He further described the optimal learning environment as one that “is emotionally, psychologically, and academically enriched” and “a place that is affirming to all cultures, backgrounds, and academic levels.” Once again, care for students was the origin of beliefs regarding teacher responsibilities. The teacher must create an optimal learning environment because “...every child has the right to learn.”

Lesson planning is complex. Although an advocate for meeting the needs of every student in the classroom, Jack realized recently the difficulty of doing so. When asked what surprised Jack as he student taught, his responded, “I was surprised by how different

all of the students' abilities can be within the classroom." Prior to his student teaching experience, he believed that lesson planning required content knowledge alone. Through experience in the classroom he realized that contextual needs of his students influenced pedagogical decisions. When he began to plan lessons, Jack explained, he would think, "well, this is the material I'm going to teach, but how am I going to teach it? ...For this student it's going to look a lot different than it is for this student." Jack continued to explain the expansion of his beliefs regarding lesson planning, "...you come into teaching thinking I'm going to have my lesson—here it is. But, really there is so much more that goes into teaching." He now believes that lesson planning is a complex process that involves content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and a strong understanding of the unique needs of the students in the class.

Beliefs about Collaborative Action Research

Action research—healthy practice of examining own teaching. When talking about the purpose of collaborative action research, Jack focused on reflective practice to gain deep and practical understanding of teaching, learning, self, and students. In a journal entry (June 2009), Jack defined action research as "systematic inquiry of teachers to better determine how their schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn by planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. It is a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice." In an interview (April 8, 2009), Jack again focused on reflective practice. Regarding the reflective nature of action research, Jack stated,

One of the biggest purposes for us is that we're student teachers. We're learning.

And, I think one of the biggest things about action research is that it helps to

instill that healthy practice in us of being able to look at our teaching and examine—how can I improve as a teacher?

He believed that reflection facilitates improved practice and should be a critical aspect of teachers' work.

Collaborative action research as preparation for teaching career. Jack also perceived his preservice experience with collaborative action research as preparation for working with other teachers in the future. He explained the importance of learning to work on teams; “Once we’re in schools we’re going to be working with teachers all the time on all kinds of things like data teams and team meetings” (April 8, 2010). At his placement site, Jack observed his cooperating teacher participating on a newly created common formation team. This team met every other week with the goal of developing common assessments that would be used to evaluate student progress and their teaching. Jack perceived the collaborative aspect of action research in the MAT program as preparation for working in teams such as the common formation team at his practicum site.

Teacher-researchers care. Care is the first of three descriptors Jack provided for teachers who participate in collaborative action research. He explained, “You have to be a teacher who really cares—you care about students, you care about what is best for them, you care about improving yourself as an educator” (Interview, April 8, 2010). Care served as motivation for participating in a practice that requires effort and that he characterized as an experience of learning.

Teacher-researchers willing to examine self. Second, Jack identified a willingness to examine self as a characteristic of teachers who participate in collaborative action research. “You have to be a teacher who is open to challenge, open to look at yourself and, you know, you might find something that is going to challenge something in your practice” (Interview, April 8, 2010). Jack’s response acknowledged the risk involved in learning. Looking to his collaborative action research process, Jack used cooperative learning in the math classroom as an example. He said, “...in math so often...it’s just lecture-based and direct teaching...if we’re able to see [that] cooperative learning really can be a more effective tool at times than direct teaching...that could challenge a lot of those direct teaching methods that math so often leans towards.” Jack recognized that transformed practice offered benefits for all involved, but involved risk as well.

Teacher-researchers need to work well with others and know self. During a member-checking exercise, Jack added a third characteristic of teachers who participate in collaborative action research: “Needs to work well with others, know your strengths and weaknesses, and how to use those in working with others” (Interview, April 28, 2010). While care and self-reflexivity are necessary for teachers who participate in action research, Jack’s addition of working with others and understanding the dynamics of one’s identity within a group spoke to the collaborative element.

Premises of Collaborative Action Research

Collaboration, opportunity to hear multiple perspectives. Jack cited working with others as a major benefit of collaborative action research. He offered three reasons for

classifying working with others as beneficial. His first reason addressed the expansion of knowledge and understanding. Jack stated, “I will have the opportunity to see things from other people’s perspectives. I will be able to take other people’s input and build off of it” (Journal entry, June 2009). Although written months earlier, Jack provided an example of collaboration during his group assessment (spring 2009). He said, “In the [tower] building exercise, I could not initially come up with a strategy to get the tower built. I was able to listen to another person’s idea, support her in her strategy, and expand on it.” Jack envisioned synergistic possibilities when working in collaboration.

Collaborative Action Research Project: Jack

For his action research project, Jack collaborated with two colleagues who taught at the high school level—one in a math classroom and the other in a business classroom. When asked about the topic of their study, Jack replied, “We’re doing on-task behavior with cooperative learning –how cooperative learning affects that” (Interview, April 8, 2010). Throughout our conversations, Jack stressed the practice of cooperative learning as a tool to engage his middle school math students in the learning process. However, the final research paper, written by the collaborative group, emphasized “fixing” off-task behavior of students; the group’s objective reads: “...to determine if cooperative learning decreases students’ off-task behavior while in class” (p. 14).

To verify the need for their study, the research team first surveyed teachers in all three buildings to gain information regarding how many have used cooperative learning, attitudes toward the practice, and teacher perception of both off-task behaviors and the value of cooperative learning as a solution for the off-task behavior. Next, the research

team developed a comparative study; one week they would teach using traditional, lecture-based pedagogy followed by one week of structuring lessons around cooperative learning. Each week, the researchers asked students to track their off-task behavior by making a tally mark every time they talked while the teacher gave instructions, talked socially during work time, asked another student for help, day dreamed, or left the room. At the end of each week, the researchers asked students to complete a survey summarizing their perceptions of their off-task behavior using a Likert scale. The researchers conducted observations both weeks as well. At the end of the second week, the research team completed a comparative analysis of the data from both weeks, with the intent to prove that cooperative learning decreased off-task behavior.

Jack divided the class into groups for the week he implemented cooperative learning. In the research paper, Jack contributed this anecdote,

Although some of the students complained about not being able to choose their own groups, assigning the groups was necessary for this student population, as they have not yet shown an ability to work together productively and stay on task if given that opportunity.” (p. 19)

Jack positioned working with peers of choice as a reward based on meeting previous behavioral expectations and withholding that privilege as a way in which to control student behavior. Once in groups, Jack explained,

I kind of eased them into [cooperative learning] and just did some think, pair, share stuff and a lot of discussion in pairs during the lecture part of my lesson and

then I had them just work in pairs for that day on the assignment. (Interview, April 28, 2010)

The cooperative learning activities for the rest of the week included a series of mini-worksheets. Each group worked cooperatively to solve the math problems. Then, “A member of the group had the task of explaining the group’s method of solving the problems to the teacher. If the explanation was sufficient, the group could begin the next worksheet” (p. 20). However, if the chosen student did not successfully explain the process to Jack, the student went back to the group to have them teach him/her the procedure before attempting to explain it to Jack once again.

Negotiation: Jack as Teacher

Table 4. 8

Jack as Teacher: The Negotiation Process

<p>Jack as Teacher: The Negotiation Process</p> <p>Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion: What is the responsibility of the teacher regarding off task behavior? • Hopeful: Cooperative learning as a solution strategy • Nervous: Researcher as risk-taker • Disappointment: Inconclusive results • Relief: Help with reframing the project • Curious: Pondering the outcome • Hesitation: What was missed? • Discernment: Digging deeper.

In this section, I responded to Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? I shared how

Jack negotiated meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research in his role as teacher. The narrative follows his journey through the development, implementation, and results as he implemented cooperative learning in the middle school classroom. See Table 4.8 for an overview of his negotiation process.

Negotiating Project Development

Confusion: What is the responsibility of the teacher regarding off-task behavior?

Reading the research team's final paper, it became clear that they struggled with the concept of off-task behavior and experienced confusion regarding the responsibility of the teacher and students in both the learning process and the problematic behavior.

Revealing a positivist view of knowledge, the research team explained, "Teachers are tasked with the important job of relaying information to students in ways that help them to understand material for themselves" (p. 3). Jack and his peers further clarified that the teacher must determine methodology that results in attentive and motivated students.

"Unfortunately," they stated, "students inevitably begin to become distracted or social during lengthy or dry lessons" (p. 3). They continued, when students become distracted, the teacher has "the difficult challenge of deterring off task behaviors and refocusing a student after he or she has exhibited such behaviors and attitudes" (p. 3). Clearly, the topic of student engagement was relevant to the research team. By identifying their thoughts about the topic, the team was beginning to interact with the collaborative action process. While confused thinking existed, the potential for transformation begins with awareness of thinking. Their actions were in alignment with sense-making premises of collaborative action research.

Hopeful: Cooperative learning as a solution strategy. Jack's research team provided a brief literature review about off-task behavior. They determined lack of motivation as the reason students did not remain on task, but did not further analyze the problem. Noting that many teachers implement extrinsic forms of motivation to keep students on task, the research team communicated their desire to expose students to authentic learning instead. While reviewing literature, the research team read a study that used cooperative learning as a means to decrease off-task behavior and another that asked students to monitor their behavior in timed increments to increase accountability. These studies provided the framework for their action research project; the researchers chose cooperative learning as a "solution strategy" because it "offered students a structured, yet interactive environment" (p. 12). The research team's focus on using a pedagogical strategy to solve a problem was misaligned with the collaborative action research process and the cooperative learning model. The research team implied that if students were motivated, they would be on-task; if students are on-task, problematic behavior will be eliminated and learning will happen.

Nervous: Researcher as risk-taker. When determining the class in which to implement the research project, Jack demonstrated willingness to take a risk. Choosing to implement his research project in his "toughest class by far" (interview, April 28, 2010) Jack explained, "There are a lot of behavior issues in there. So, it was going to be interesting because it's such a social class. Like there are so many behavior issues, but they're so social about it." Choosing to conduct research in this class caused Jack some anxiety; he said, "I was a little nervous—I'm not going to lie." The nervousness resulted

from the risk of trying something new, questioning self-competence in the teaching role, and worrying about classroom management. However, despite his fears he chose the class believing that cooperative learning might be a good fit for his social students. Jack began to identify the nature of his students' off task behavior and to analyze elements of cooperative learning as a pedagogical practice. Then, he began making connections between the needs of his students and cooperative learning as a strategy.

Negotiating Project Conclusions

Encouragement: The results supported their hypothesis. The first data collected and analyzed by the research team—the teacher surveys—offered hope that the team would find conclusive results. Given the options of Never, Rarely, Sometimes, and Always, participants responded to such statements as “There is a high percentage of off-task behavior in my classroom,” “Students talk at inappropriate times,” and “Students leave their designated groups during work time. For each statement, most respondents chose Sometimes. The research team provided the following summary:

The results of the surveys clearly indicate that student off-task behavior is an issue within most classrooms, talking at inappropriate times being the most common form. The teachers were also concerned with how off-task behavior interferes with students' ability to meet learning objectives. These results also indicate that many teachers use cooperative learning as a tool to manage off task behavior, and have observed less off task behavior when students work in small groups.

In response to their findings, the research team noted, “These are encouraging results that support our hypothesis that cooperative learning is an effective method of reducing off task behavior” (p. 24). Jack’s research team appeared so excited about finding results that supported their hypothesis that they did not accept the affirmation without further analysis and deconstruction. This was a misalignment with the premises of collaborative action research.

Disappointment: Inconclusive results. Unlike the teacher survey, the research team determined that the rest of the study did not provide conclusive results. Based on observations and student self-assessments, the research team explained, “While the students talked at inappropriate times and zone out during both teaching strategies, there was no consistency in which instructional method the students respond negatively to the most between the three schools” (p. 25). In Jack’s middle school classroom, the research team found that “while the students talked at inappropriate times during both teaching strategies, they did it twice as much during cooperative learning” (p. 26). Rather than viewing this information as a starting point for questioning, analyzing, and wondering, the team framed the information as inconclusive results. Still in a solution-based mode, they seemed to desire a decisive answer to their question. In an interview (April 8, 2010), Jack stated, “Our project, it was kind of discouraging because...we didn’t really come up with any conclusive results.” Their solution focus was misaligned with the purpose and premises of collaborative action research.

Relief: Help with reframing the project. To understand how Jack negotiated his discouragement regarding the lack of conclusive results for their

project, I asked him to tell me more about that situation. He explained, “We felt disappointment. Ok – well, we did this and we didn’t come up with anything to prove our question or any results to prove it either way” (Interview, April 28, 2010). I asked how he moved passed that discouragement.

We discussed it and we talked about it and we talked with [the professor] about it and she was really helpful in helping us realize it’s not just about getting that conclusive result where this is what I’m doing. It’s about the journey as well as the process of being able to collect data

Being able to see that research and still be able to draw conclusions.

Jack attributed this conversation with his professor as assisting him in shifting his understanding of action research. While disappointment existed, Jack did not have a strong negative reaction. Once the professor provided reassurance that the journey is as important as the destination, he seemed to experience alignment again.

Curious: Pondering the outcome. While no further information, questions, wondering, analysis, or deconstruction is offered in the research paper, Jack continued to ponder the results several weeks after they had finished the project. A reflective thinker, Jack sought to understand why they did not find conclusive results. At one point Jack settled on issues of competency and guest status as preservice teachers. He explained,

I think part of the reason maybe that we didn’t come up with any conclusive results is that we were still pretty new at being able to set up and use cooperative learning effectively. And, especially because we were coming into another

person's classroom part way through the year where they already had their own system. (Interview, April 8, 2010)

Along with the need for time for students to “get used to” using cooperative learning, Jack said, “it's really important how you go about implementing that strategy and it's really important making sure the kids feel comfortable with it and have experience with it and that you've modeled it for them” (Interview, April 28, 2010). In alignment with the premises of collaborative action research, Jack began to entertain possibilities for student action.

Hesitation: What was missed? Jack politely conveyed hesitation regarding their study. He hinted about the narrowness of the study—that they were only looking at off-task behaviors rather than the learning experience that occurred. After Jack explained his interactions with students as he checked their cooperative work, I asked how he felt about the cooperative learning experience and if he felt that students were able to teach each other the concepts. He responded, “I feel like they got more accomplished. Like, I feel they were more engaged in the lesson while still being a little more off-task, if that makes sense” (Interview, April 28, 2010). Later, when discussing premises of collaborative action research, Jack returned to the focus of off-task behavior. Jack paused as he considered that one's perception of good student might complicate the process of action (Phillips & Carr, 2006). He interpreted the quote in terms of teacher beliefs about good students from a teacher's perspective and commented,

Just looking at that off-task behavior, which is what our study was kind of focused on, it would seem that maybe cooperative learning might not be the best

tool in my classroom when I used it. But, I think also with...not just focusing on off-task behavior, with this is a good student or not, but really being able to take in the full definition of what it is would have helped the project a lot.”

(Interview, April 28, 2010)

Jack began to look beyond the classification of student as good or bad, based upon on- or off-task behaviors, and desired to understand more deeply the dynamics of student actions and interactions, as well as the learning process. Jack followed the agreed upon methodology and concluded from their data that cooperative learning did not impact off task behavior. However, Jack communicated that there was much more information that remained unrevealed. In alignment with the premises of collaborative action research, Jack continued to reflect on, and make meaning from, the experience.

Discernment: Digging deeper. As Jack observed his students participating in cooperative activities, he began to distinguish the reaction of one particular group of students. He explained, “Some students that were more advanced after awhile started to get maybe a little frustrated at having to wait for the students who weren’t as advanced” (interview, April 28, 2010). Jack felt that students with high math abilities were used to working on their own and resented being held back by their peers. Jack noted that students with higher math abilities more often participated in off-task behavior and moved away from their assigned group. This is another example of the type of observations that had the potential to lead to deeper learning for Jack. Not only did Jack enjoy the journey during the process, he continued to enjoy and process information

during our interviews. Jack's willingness to continue the analysis process aligned with premises of collaborative action research.

Negotiation: Jack as Student

In this section I continue with Research Question #2; this time the focus is on how Jack negotiated meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research in his role as student. The narrative follows his journey as collaborative groups are assigned through his conclusions regarding the practice at the end of his MAT program. For an overview of Jack's negotiation process in the role of a student, see Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Jack as Student: The Negotiation Process

Jack as Student: The Negotiation Process	
Research Question #2: How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excitement: Rethinking the status quo. • Cheer: Enjoying weekly meetings • Flexibility: Establishing group norms. • Contentedness: Living in the moment during the journey • Happiness: Loving the gradual immersion into collaborative action research. • Stress: The Journey intensified. • Intrigue: Discussing multiple perspectives 	

Negotiating Project Development

Excitement: Rethinking the status quo. When asked to reflect back to his first thoughts when hearing that he would participate in collaborative action research, Jack

replied, “You know, I think I was actually pretty excited about it” (Interview, April 8, 2010). Explaining his enthusiasm, Jack said,

I’d already taken...the Rethinking High School class, and it kind of seemed to me like that class. That we’re trying to re-think the way we’re trying to do things and being able to be open to the change. So, when I first heard that, I thought back to that class and thought...am I really examining my own practices? Am I open to re-thinking how I teach? So, it was exciting that I got to focus with a group and come together and we’re going to be able to choose whatever we want and take a look at it.

The reflective, analytical, and collaborative nature of collaborative action research appealed to Jack as a reflective and relational learner.

Cheer: Enjoying weekly meetings. Reflecting on the process itself, Jack spoke animatedly about how much he enjoyed his group and about how well they worked together. He explained, “We met every weekend and ...where a lot of groups would just kind of split up the tasks and come together during class, we would actually come together during the weekend and discuss and work on this together” (Interview, April 28, 2010). Being relational, process and people oriented, and reflective, Jack enjoyed the necessity of meeting regularly and the opportunity to dialogue with colleagues about the research process and findings. Enjoying the people with whom you work, said Jack, “makes a huge difference.” Jack’s identity aligned with the collaborative aspects of the process.

Flexibility: Establishing group norms. A premise of collaborative action

research is that groups must establish norms and develop an interdependent relationship. For some teams the development of such group structures can be part of the *messiness* of collaborative action research; with multiple perspectives, past experience, and varying strengths, it can take time and energy to develop norms. Jack's team however, developed a "system" for working together fairly easily. Although Jack mentioned that "there was that kind of feeling out process in the beginning of how are we going to go about this and set it up to work together" (Interview April 8, 2010), he explained that the development of their system happened quickly. Jack believed that teachers must understand their own strengths and weaknesses as well as to get to know each other in order to determine how best to work together; Jack provided an example of how their team used information about each other to develop their system. In their collaborative team, one individual valued precise editing—a skill with which Jack had limited experience because, Jack explained, he was a math major in college. Therefore, the team determined that Jack or his second colleague would write the drafts and send them to her for editing. Jack said,

[Colleague #1] would always go last because she kind of likes to have things done in her certain way and [Colleague #2] and I are a little more flexible. So, we were like, we'll just let you go last and you can check it out.

Attentive to the need of his colleague, and recognizing his own limitation, Jack helped to determine a solution to what could have been a larger conflict. Jack's flexible nature, and ability to get along well with others, facilitated the process of developing group norms—an important element of collaborative work.

Contentedness: Living in the moment during the journey. Jack cited the journey itself as a benefit. Jack explained, “A big part of the journey isn’t where you end up; it’s taking the journey” (Interview, April 8, 2010). He continued with the theme of the journey during our second interview. Discussing a list of premises of collaborative action research, Jack said,

I like this one, ‘Individuals state their opinion, provide rationale for their perspective,’ but then I disagreed with ‘and move the conversation and the task forward.’ I think, yeah, it is important to be moving the task forward, but a lot of the time...you might need to take a step back before you can move forward. Or...it’s ok to be where you’re at and analyzing that. I think sometimes people can get so caught up in having to push forward and having to progress that they almost lose value in where they’re at.

The journey held value for Jack; people and process oriented, Jack was happy to live in the moment. Jack’s belief was in strong alignment with collaborative action research as a practice that is process and people intensive, discovery-based, and as much about the journey as the end product.

Happiness: Loving the gradual immersion into collaborative action research. Time structures are environmental elements that can potentially enhance and/or constrain the collaborative research process; student teachers must develop ways to navigate contextual elements. Jack valued the timeframe established by the MAT program for the development of the research project. The research team began reading, thinking, and discussing the research process during the summer

semester of the program. During the fall, the collaborative groups formed, chose a topic, began to read literature related to their topic, and developed the research proposal. Regarding this process, Jack reminisced, “I loved how it’s set up where we’re able to kind of think about our topic for awhile.” Jack’s identity and beliefs were in alignment with the process-rich practice of collaborative action research.

Stress: The journey intensified. A disconnect occurred, however, during implementation of the project in the spring semester.

Then, it almost seems like we needed a little more time to implement it because you kind of had to get your data like right away to start writing and analyzing it.

But, if we had more time to do that, I think it would have been a little more effective for us.

The limited time for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing caused Jack some stress, especially with additional responsibilities within the MAT program such as assuming fulltime teacher duties at the middle school and completing class assignments. This illustrates a misalignment for Jack; however, the misalignment is due to an environmental issue rather than between Jack and the collaborative action research process.

Intrigue: Discussing multiple perspectives. Discussing collaboration, Jack stressed the importance of multiple perspectives. He offered an example of how multiple perspectives shaped their project,

We were in completely different environments. I was in a middle school math classroom and [colleague 2] was in a high school business classroom and [colleague 1] was in a high school classroom for math, too. And we were able to kind of bring those in and discuss like well, how does being in a middle school classroom, coming from where students are developmentally there, effect what we're doing as compared to at the high school? And, are they more equipped at the high school for being able to work in groups and to do cooperative learning?

Jack's belief regarding the importance of viewing issues from multiple perspectives is in alignment with the premises of collaborative action research. Jack's group began to participate in this process through the discussion of developmental and contextual differences. However, I did not find evidence in the data to illustrate that the research team went beyond generalizations to challenge deep levels of understanding, examine biases, and consider various life experiences. The relational and easy-going Jack enjoyed dialogue about the experiences of his colleagues and talking about his own.

Alignment and Misalignment: Jack as Teacher and as Student

The following section is in response to Research Question #1: How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? After analyzing Jack's negotiation process, I identify misalignments and alignments between Jack's trajectory as a teacher and the practice of collaborative action research.

Alignment: Beliefs with Premises

Jack and his research team began the research process by identifying and explaining their beliefs about students, teaching, and motivation. Although they exhibited

confusion and at times included conflicting ideas, they were participating in the process. Becoming aware of thinking is a great first step. Identifying areas of confusion and conflicting ideas provided Jack and his research team a place to begin and highlighted areas for potential growth.

Misalignment: Unchecked Generalizations with Premise.

The results of the research team's study, as presented in their final paper, do not show that Jack and his team checked assumptions. Several generalizations are made without showing analysis or self-reflexivity. Especially true when reporting the results of their survey, it appeared that the team eagerly accepted the results as affirmation of their hypothesis. Written collaboratively, it is difficult to distinguish whose thinking is reflected in the writing; the reasoning does not sound like Jack's voice. While a misalignment existed between the team's lack of analysis and premises of collaborative action research, it was also evident that a misalignment between Jack's thinking and the results of the collaborative team existed.

Misalignment: Belief with Purpose

Language throughout the research team's final paper communicated beliefs that teachers needed to "fix" student off-task behavior and that cooperative learning might prove a "solution strategy" to engage students in the learning process. The research team's objective was in misalignment with the purpose of collaborative action research, namely to improve pedagogy and student learning by providing the teacher a deeper understanding of self, students, teaching, and learning (Mertler, 2009; Phillips & Carr; 2006). The "solution strategy" perspective also conflicted with the premise that

collaborative action research does not seek to prove something. Rather than seeking to understand the unique dynamics of their classrooms or the learning process, the research team sought a strategy that might provide an uncontextualized recipe for off-task behavior.

Alignment: Identity with Premise

Jack's status as a new professional placed him in a vulnerable position as he sought acceptance into the educational community. Aware of being a guest in his cooperating teacher's classroom, Jack communicated that he was taking a risk by introducing a student-centered pedagogical strategy in a teacher-directed classroom. Additionally, Jack purposefully chose his "toughest class" in which to implement the practice of cooperative learning. Although nervous, Jack perceived risk-taking as a positive characteristic; risk-taking is in alignment with a characteristic of teacher researchers.

Alignment: Identity with Premise

Jack demonstrated the ability to think critically regarding his experience during conversations. Jack's actions were in alignment with his analytical nature and belief that reflection is part of the healthy practice of a teacher as well as with premises of collaborative action research. Although his thoughts were in the beginning stage, he showed the ability to consider various causes for classroom behaviors and was beginning to discern unique behaviors of groups of students rather than viewing all students through the binary of good or bad student. In addition reflecting on and analyzing results, Jack began to question what, for their research group, had been a taken-for granted idea—the

categorization of off-task students as bad students. The ability to look closely at paradigms behind concepts, to name what is happening, and to explore thinking are in alignment with the learning, unlearning, and relearning processes valued within the practice of collaborative action research.

Alignment: Identity with Premises

The process intensive practice of collaborative action research aligned strongly with Jack's process and people-oriented identity. Easy-going, relational, and thoughtful, Jack enjoyed opportunities to connect with his research team and converse about their project. Seemingly able to hold the tension of ambiguity, he enjoyed the journey and lived in the moment. Although voice and questioning appear absent in the collective paper, our conversations demonstrated his continued sense-making process.

Misalignment: Identity with Environment

Other than slight disappointment at not reaching conclusive results for their study, the only time I found any tension was when Jack talked about the time constraints once they began the data collection process. While he stated that he loved the gradual immersion into the process of collaborative action research and the topic of cooperating learning, he described the data collect phase as stressful. Even then, Jack used tentative language such as "it almost seemed like we needed more time" and noted that if they had more time "I think it would have been a little more effective." This misalignment was minimal.

Future Practice: Jack as Professional

In this section I answer Research Question #3: How did Jack frame collaborative action research in relation to his future practice? Not surprisingly, Jack continued to be intrigued by the practice and enthusiastic about participating in collaborative action research once he has a teaching position. Once again, he offered fewer words than the other participants; however, power existed in those few words.

Jack articulated three reasons why participation in collaborative action research appealed to him once in a teaching career: (1) he would enjoy working with colleagues; (2) active learning fuels passion; and, (3) working in collaboration would be helpful as a new teacher. Jack stated,

I think the collaborative piece would be amazing if I could find people within the building who want to take a look at the same thing I'm looking at. I think sometimes from what I've heard from teachers, teaching can be a little bit isolating if...you're stuck in your classroom. Even though you have students around, and that's amazing, but you don't have that interaction with teachers as much." (Interview, April 8, 2010)

Jack is a social person who enjoys interaction with colleagues; he would welcome the opportunity to work on a project with others.

Reflecting on his collaborative experience after the summer term, Jack said, "I have gained so much out of this short research. I can only imagine how much progress and improvement could happen if teachers were continually doing this" (Journal entry, June 2009). Beyond the enjoyment of collaborating with colleagues, Jack recognized and

valued the growth from collective research. Several months later, Jack explained, “If you’re active and finding things about your own teaching and finding things for teaching in general, I think you’re going to be more passionate in what you’re doing because you’re investing more into it” (Interview, April 8, 2010). Jack connected authentic learning with the ignition of passion.

Finally, Jack recognized the steep learning curve of a new teacher. When asked if he would like to participate in collaborative action research once in a teaching position, Jack responded with an enthusiastic, “Most definitely.” He continued, “Being new into the field of teaching, I still have so much to learn that action research is a great way to be able to find things out for myself and to be able to experience it for myself” (Interview, April 8, 2010). Jack determined the collegial and reflective practice beneficial to his continued growth as an educator.

In this chapter, I presented three case studies of preservice teachers as they negotiated meaning with an educational practice. Each story offered a unique view of the personal journey of becoming a teacher. The next chapter includes interpretations of the research, conclusions, significance of the study, limitations, future research, implications for practice, and final thoughts.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In the three case studies, I examined the phenomena of how participants, all preservice teachers in a Master of Arts in Teaching program, negotiated meaning around an educational practice—collaborative action research. The participants negotiated multiple, and often competing, internal and external discourses as they navigated their collaborative action research project.

Three research questions guided this study: (1) How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? (2) How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? (3) How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? The intention of these case studies was to better understand how preservice teachers internalize practice so that teacher educators can better assist them as they negotiate new practices. This chapter is divided into seven sections; interpretations of the research, conclusions, significance of the study, limitations, implication for practice, and final thoughts.

Interpretations of the Research

Each participant traveled a unique and emotional journey through the process of collaborative action research and their personal trajectory influenced the way they negotiated the practice of collaborative action research. In response to Research Question #1, I found that each participant had a dominant trait that influenced areas of alignment and misalignment between his or her trajectory and the practice of collaborative action

research. Considering Research Question #2, I identified three concepts: (1) some participants exhibited visible misalignments while the misalignments of others were hidden; (2) participants relied on personal strengths to reestablish the perception of alignment as they negotiated meaning through the practice of collaborative action research; and (3) the way misalignments were negotiated limited the transformational potential of the learning experience of collaborative action research. Finally, in response to Research Question #3 I found that participant expectations for their future use of the practice of collaborative action research aligned with their dominant traits.

Alignment of Trajectory with Collaborative Action Research

The influence of dominant traits. As I examined the experiences of the participants, it appeared that each had a dominant trait that influenced the alignments, misalignments and the negotiation process of my participants. As Wenger (1998) advanced, attitude and beliefs shape (a) how individuals locate self in a social landscape; (b) what individuals care about and what they neglect; and (c) what individuals attempt to know and understand and what they choose to ignore. The dominant traits of these three participants illustrated Wenger's principle; the dominant traits influenced how they positioned themselves in the social landscape, where they invested their energy, and what they attempted to know or accomplish in their collaborative action research project. Their dominant trait appeared to shape the alignment or misalignment with the practice and how they engaged with it and with others involved.

Kyle's dominant trait was identity and he experienced areas of misalignment throughout the collaborative action research project. His independent, task-oriented,

efficient, and driven nature seemed to conflict strongly with the process-rich, journey-focused premises of collaborative action research. Strong boundaries regarding with whom he would work and listen to also became clear in conversation with Kyle. More than a personal preference, association with some individuals and separation from others was an essential element of his identity and affected his behavior. Kyle's language often communicated messages about identity: he verbalized his belief that he was not like other student teachers, he emphasized that who he listens to matters; and he characterized himself as someone who takes action. He aligned himself with and sought affirmation from authority and set clear boundaries between himself and students. Kyle's identity also played a dominant role in his negotiation process; confident and charismatic, he relied on his leadership skills nature to exert control to reestablish equilibrium. He navigated the collaborative action research process on terms that worked with his identity. With the achievement of a master's degree as his stated end goal, Kyle focused on getting the task accomplished and invested his energy in meeting the requirements of the project.

Mission was the dominant trait of Cindy as she navigated collaborative action research; yet her mission was integrated closely with identity and framed by beliefs. The journey to becoming a teacher signified progress toward fulfillment of her dream and toward the ability to assume the role for which she believed God had shaped her. Additionally, Cindy had sacrificed a high-paying job to follow her dream. With a mission focused on positively affecting the lives of students, she invested herself fully in the collaborative action research process. She firmly believed research to be the real work of

teachers and students to be the ultimate beneficiaries of her work. In conversation, her language often conveyed strong discourse about the huge responsibility of teachers and working for student improvement as the highest objective. Unlike Kyle, Cindy worked to distance her identity from the process and to frame her investment as totally for the benefit of students. In a conversation about the concept of *teacher as expert*, Cindy reacted strongly and emphasized that this process is not about her becoming an expert, it is about the students. Embracing collaborative action research, Cindy was intent on doing the process for the benefit of students. Cindy's mission played a central role in the alignment between her trajectory and the practice of collaborative action research.

Jack possessed a strong belief in the benefit of the journey over the end product. Living in the moment, reflecting on concepts and experiences, and learning while doing were components of his belief. Whether talking about teacher preparation as a whole or working through a practice such as collaborative action research, he valued the journey. Jack's belief in the value of the journey was his dominant trait with his reflective and relational identity closely connected. Jack appreciated the gradual process of building a foundational understanding of research process and his topic. Meeting weekly with colleagues to talk about the project was an important element of this project. The end product and meeting the expectations of others held little value. Jack did not have strong identity boundaries like Kyle and was not driven by mission like Cindy. His language communicated a relaxed and enjoyable journey. Jack experienced strong alignment between his belief in the journey and the collaborative research process.

Negotiating Meaning Regarding Collaborative Action Research

The visible or hidden nature of misalignments. Emotions are closely connected to alignment and misalignment within the Onion Model (Korthagen, 2004). When an individual exhibits a strong emotional reaction, it is often easy to identify the existence of a misalignment. However, when emotional reactions are internalized, misalignments can be more difficult to detect. Yet, internalized emotions are present and can powerfully shape a person's behavior (Korthagen, 2004). In my case studies, Kyle's misalignments were visible while the misalignments of Cindy and Jack had a concealed nature.

Kyle's constant and intense frustrations provided observable evidence of misalignment; annoyance, alarm, dissatisfaction, and irritation plagued his journey. Although respectful despite his frustrations, he resisted the collaborative action research process. While signs of misalignment were clear, core issues were not. Kyle did not explore the intersection of his identity and prior knowledge with the purpose and premises of collaborative action research; rather, Kyle shifted the dilemma to external sources—the professor, the text, the research paradigm.

Unlike Kyle, Cindy appeared to experience strong alignment between her trajectory and collaborative action research throughout the process. Cindy's enthusiasm and strong discourse of doing the work of teachers provided the appearance of alignment. Only subtle indicators and closer inspection allowed insight into her internal struggles. She often repeated phrases like "it's for the students, which is the highest objective." Although Cindy spoke with conviction, she did not explain her understanding of the concepts more deeply. Her refrains seemed to serve as reminders and rationale for her

work. Cindy seemed to have strong boundaries regarding what was allowed and what was not allowed when working for the good of students. For example, she found collaboration tedious when done in the role of a student, but characterized collaboration as synergistic when doing it for the highest objective—meeting students' needs. At one point when asked about the collaborative research project, Cindy's first response was, "well, I want to say tedious." Then, she quickly explained that her response sounded negative and rephrased it as synergistic. Her strong discourse both indicated and disguised her misalignments. Cindy's enthusiasm for the process and excitement about their findings also masked misalignments.

In talking with Jack, not only did he characterize his experience with collaborative action research positively, he also demonstrated discernment, curiosity, and the ability to question assumptions when we talked about his work. Strong alignment appeared to exist between his trajectory and the research process. Not until reading the final paper of Jack's research team did I noticed signs of misalignment between Jack and his team members. Limited inclusion of Jack's reflective voice, a deficit view of students that conflicted with Jack's strong belief in students, and a research design contrary to Jack's nature provided clues to misalignment. It appeared that Jack compromised his own voice for the sake of group consensus. However, with Jack's easy-going and relational nature, misalignments were hidden.

Participants' strengths shaped the negotiation process. In addition to alignments and misalignments occurring within their dominant traits, participants also relied on that trait as they negotiated the collaborative research process. Kyle's strong identity was

evident in his negotiation process while Cindy's was tied closely to her image of teacher as it fits with her mission. Jack, easy-going and loving the journey, did not seem to perceive misalignments as problematic.

Noordewier, Korthagen, and Zwart (2009) explained that when individuals experience misalignment between or within levels of the Onion Model, there is a tendency for a fight or flight reaction. The intensity of Kyle's responses indicated internal conflict. Seeking equilibrium, Kyle seemed to rely upon strengths within his identity to fight the misalignments and assumed a leadership position in his research team. By implementing a divide and conquer strategy, Kyle ensured successful completion of a program requirement while circumventing the collaborative, messy process. However, believing that people have a responsibility to take action, Kyle continued the *fight* by employing his bold nature to attend to what he believed to be problematic elements of the MAT program. While he noted that his colleagues experienced frustration as well, he positioned himself as one to take action and to be bold enough to talk with me. Perhaps in alignment with his belief that public relations is necessary to maintain relationship while addressing conflict, our interactions were always respectful, and enjoyable—we connected on a cognitive level. Confident and charismatic in conversation, Kyle took action to address an issue he felt needed attention. Kyle seemed to rely upon his strong identity to shape the task into an experience that he could live with and took action in a respectful manner.

Cindy entered the research process enthusiastically and her mission-oriented beliefs about the importance of student motivation and teacher and student relationships

brought her to the subject. Authentically seeking to understand an important educational issue, Cindy invested herself fully in the process. Enthusiasm and tenacity characterized her journey. Cindy's deep care for students and desire to be a positive influence on their lives kept her returning to her work.

Valuing the journey, Jack embraced the collaborative action research process. With his relational nature, he looked forward to the opportunity to converse with his research team and perceived those meetings as important elements of the process. When establishing group norms, Jack recognized the importance of identifying his own strengths and weaknesses and the need for flexibility when working with others. Willing to take risks, Jack chose to implement his action research project in his toughest class; in doing so, he acknowledged being nervous but counted it as part of the process rather than problematic.

Transformational potential limited by the negotiation process. Each collaborative group began the process of action research. They identified a topic of personal relevance, described their perspective on and past experience with the issue, and completed a literature review. Their writing reflected potential areas for professional growth. However, for each participant misalignment served as an obstacle to redirect the project away from the questioning, analyzing, and deconstructing processes. Wink (2005) differentiated between learning, relearning, and unlearning. While learning involves processing new information, relearning requires a shift in thought or behavior, and unlearning requires that we “part with previous knowledge, schema, and theory that are known and comfortable” (p. 20). Relearning and unlearning are difficult endeavors, but it

is within activities such as questioning of assumptions, listening to multiple perspectives, and deconstruction of findings that transformational learning, relearning and unlearning can occur. While all journeys held value, with the way participants negotiated the process they all fell short of the potential for transformational learning, relearning, and unlearning to occur.

Kyle's study had the potential to lead to learning about topics such as the impact of his mission to engage the intellect of middle school students through the examination of journal entries, a deeper understanding of student choice and empowerment, the strength and limitations of various research methods, and issues of professional relationship with colleagues and students. By circumventing process and focusing on the end product, Kyle did not appear to fully explore the issues before him. Kyle finished the project, but he did not experience a sense of integrity and presence that comes from the integration of self and task; instead, Kyle experienced a separation. Meijer and colleagues (2009) described such a stance as technically adequate, but one in which the individual is divided rather than fully present. Rather than transformational understanding of self, students, and practice, Kyle's learning experience left him questioning the credibility of action research, the MAT program, and his professor. With core issues unaddressed and temporary solutions to misalignments, Kyle graduated from the program a frustrated and dissatisfied student.

For Cindy, the interconnection of mission and practice was useful and dangerous. While mission provided motivation and energy for the project, the interconnected nature her mission intensified the need for success. A fearful concept, the inability to benefit

students through research might call into question her identity as a teacher and the ability to fulfill her mission. Holt-Reynolds (1992) explained that preservice teachers come to the field with personal history-based lay theories regarding what constitutes good practices and defines good teachers. Often unexamined, lay theories can serve as helpful schemata on which to build or as “powerful, potentially misleading, and unproductive resources for learning” (p. 327). Tenacious and highly resistant to instruction, lay theories provide a lens for constructing knowledge about new educational ideas. Cindy had strong lay theories about teaching, students, and her role as teacher that guided how she processed new information. These lay theories manifested themselves in strong discourse about the real work and highest objectives of teachers repeated often by Cindy. She also organized educators in two categories—those who invested fully in the lives of students and neglectful teachers. Referring to the fully invested teacher, Cindy emphasized that she wants to be *that* kind of teacher. Another time Cindy stressed that she does *not* want to be a neglectful teacher. The drive to be one type of teacher and fear of being the other seemed to create a tension that weighed upon Cindy.

Certain that action research would be a powerful learning experience providing new insight about how she could better meet the needs of students, Cindy experienced misalignment when she received what she described as vanilla answers in the first data set. A critical incident, the disappointing data seemed to evoke fear of failure as a teacher. Complicating the disequilibrium, Cindy struggled with fear of failure as a student. She described her formative experience as instilling a belief that nothing less than 100% was acceptable. Vanilla answers seemed to equate to falling short of 100%. By reframing the

project as one that she could not fail, Cindy's professor provided reassurance that temporarily allowed her to restore alignment although it did not address tacit issues regarding the intense need to succeed. The reassurance also did not address her fear that a failed project meant not being able to meet the needs of students—which was her highest objective and the essence of her mission. To reestablish equilibrium regarding her teacher-self, it appears that Cindy went back to the data, shifted the focus to comfortable information, remained safe in her inquiry process, and made generalizations without checking them. Perhaps Cindy found reassurance in affirmation of her prior beliefs.

Cindy came to the program knowing that the relationship between teachers and students is important and that she wanted to shepherd students. She also came confused about issues of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and how these intersected with practice, as well as how to reconcile the dual roles of mentor and disciplinarian, and how to view the relationship between students and their parents. With her collaborative action research project, Cindy began to make progress in understanding complex issues. However, it appears that after the incident with vanilla answers she gravitated toward data that reinforced her lay theories and left the collaborative action research process with those lay theories reinforced. Cindy now frames her beliefs as findings from research that was tested across three contexts and multiple grades levels. Although this project reinforced the importance of the teacher and student relationship, Cindy does not have greater understanding of why or how the teacher is important to learning and has misconceptions about the role of parents. She will continue to make meaning regarding these issues as

she fulfills the role of a teacher, but some opportunities were missed in her journey and the research process may have reinforced to some persistent misperceptions.

Jack's learning was apparent in conversation with him, but it was not reflected in the final paper. Rather than enhancing the journey, the collaborative structure might have limited Jack's learning experience. It appeared that Jack was fine with owning his learning without the need to assert his reflective thoughts and questions into the final project of the group. Jack also believed that occasionally it is important to step back before moving forward and that sometimes people get so caught up in needing to move forward that they lose value in where they are. Reflecting the ongoing nature of learning, Jack finished the research project with more questions than answers and was fine with that. Although the project has concluded, I believe that he will continue to ponder the experience and various interpretations of what was and what can be. However, I wonder where the learning experience might have taken him if he had completed the project on his own, if he was more assertive about challenging the thinking of his group, or if other group members had challenged his thinking in different ways.

Visions for Future Practice

Participant responses to questions about visions for future use of collaborative action research aligned strongly with their dominant traits. Kyle recognized that administrators are increasingly asking teachers to work in collaborative teams—often around research related work of data analysis and goal setting. While Kyle recognized his preference for independent work, he also seems resigned to the possibility of working on a team and views his experience in the MAT program as preparation for that experience.

The teachers at his placement school modeled a stance similar to Kyle's when working on the team; they met expectations, but did not embrace or own the process. I believe that Kyle sees collaborative teams as something he can live with, although he is not excited about it. He did demonstrate more enthusiasm when considering participation in research if someone singled Kyle out and invited him to join them on a project; he would be honored, although he also clarified that he has a reputation for saying no to requests as well. Once again, it appeared that his decision to join another in research depended on who asked. Finally, Kyle explained that when he gets bored, he likes to write. If he gets bored, he may consider doing research in the future for obtaining his doctoral degree or for publishing. The idea of teacher research for his professional growth did not enter conversation.

Cindy, largely influenced by the modeling of teachers at her first student teaching placement, looked forward to participating on a collaborative team so that she continue to fulfill her mission of working for the benefit of students. She made the connection between seeing issues in her classroom practice and use of the research process to learn more about the dynamics. When asked specifically about future practice, Cindy's stated, " ...I want action research to be a primary component of my professional practice during my teaching career. I'm someone who is deeply passionate about the growth of my students and about shepherding their development both personally and academically..." Cindy's answer included an explicit connection to her mission.

Cindy went one step further and discussed how she viewed her experience with research in the MAT program as transformational. When considering practical

application of her research findings, Cindy described two practices that she plans to use to strengthen the teacher-student relationship. Dedicating time during the first weeks of school to intentional community building was one idea. This is something Cindy's first cooperating teacher incorporated into her practice. The second example was using journals as a relationship-building tool. The emphasis of journaling as a pedagogical strategy was on providing a place for students to communicate their life issues to Cindy so that she could offer advice and encouragement. Cindy used her research results to reinforce the pedagogical strategies and her mission.

As Jack talked about his vision for future use of the practice, his focus was on process and purpose. He positioned himself as a newcomer in need of collaborative efforts and continual research to increase his knowledge. The relational aspect also appealed to Jack. He spoke of the isolation of being "stuck in your classroom" as a teacher and thought that processing educational issues in collaboration with other teachers would be amazing. Finally, Jack perceived collaborative action research as a practice that leads to learning for teachers and he connected continual learning with fueling passion. Jack saw the generative potential for the collaborative action research process and associated excitement with learning within the classroom.

Conclusions

The cases of Kyle, Cindy, and Jack illustrated the personal nature of journey of becoming a teacher as mission, identity, and beliefs intersect with practice. Noordewier, Korthagen, and Zwart (2009) encouraged teacher educators to integrate the affective dimension into journey to becoming a teacher. My research findings also suggest that

attending to affective elements is critical for a holistic education. The organizational structure of the following conclusions parallels the five themes from my research interpretations. The first theme, the influence of dominant traits, relates to Research Question #1. The second, third, and fourth themes are in response to Research Question #2; the second theme is the visible or hidden nature of misalignments, the third theme is that the participants' strengths shaped the negotiation process, and the fourth theme is the transformational potential was limited by the negotiation process. Finally, the fifth themes relates to Research Question #3—visions for future practice aligned with dominant traits.

Dominant Traits Influencing the Alignment between Trajectory and Practice

Influence of dominant traits. This research project allowed me to listen closely to the dreams, visions, beliefs, fears, frustrations, and hopes of three individual preservice teachers. Seeing the intensity of their emotional and cognitive challenges, I realized that by focusing on areas of mission, identity, and beliefs, teacher educators have an opportunity to support preservice teachers in a deeper way during a time of focused identity development. Korthagen (2004) stated, "How a person's values and goals mediate between external events and the quality of experience is something that is directly relevant to teacher education" (p. 85). Viewing prior beliefs as helpful schemata on which to build, yet also as potentially powerful and misleading resources for learning (Holt-Reynolds, 1992), it is important to understand the beliefs of preservice teachers and their role in the mediation process. It seems equally important to understand how mission and identity influence the negotiation process. If an individual's trajectory influences the

way in which preservice teachers process elements of teacher education such as theory, practices, and pedagogical strategies then it may be helpful for teacher educators to determine opportunities for the explicit exploration of mission, identity and beliefs within the curriculum. Insight regarding dominant traits may be especially helpful in understanding issues of alignment and misalignment and how preservice teachers negotiate meaning in practices.

Although it is important for teacher educators to understand the interconnectedness of trajectories and professional identity development, it is also important that preservice teachers gain an understanding of how their personal identity and life experience influences professional identity development. Laughran (2006) found that preservice teachers often enter teacher education programs with the view of teaching as simplistic, static, and technically proficient. If preservice teachers expect to receive formulaic pedagogical strategies and right answers to dilemmas, they might feel uncomfortable with the encouragement to explore issues of mission, identity, and prior beliefs in teaching. It may be useful to begin to deconstruct teaching situations using scenarios of others to put some emotional distance in the analysis process before beginning to explore one's own experience.

In addition to supporting preservice teachers during a teacher education program, it is important to facilitate self-understanding by helping them to make connections between their trajectory and educational practices. With a long-term perspective, supporting preservice teachers as they negotiate meaning of educational practice is more than just helping them through the dissonance of an intensive program. Meijer and

colleagues (2009) asserted that “Professional behavior becomes more effective and also more fulfilling if connected with the deeper layers within a person” (p. 298).

Individuals will continue to negotiate meaning as they participate in educational practices. Various contexts, influential people, and experiences will challenge thinking in new ways and provide new perspectives to consider. Therefore, it may be helpful to equip preservice teachers with methods to deconstruct situations and understand self.

Negotiating Meaning Regarding Collaborative Action Research

The visible or hidden nature of misalignments. The concept of alignment and misalignment appears reasonably simple—if alignment exists, individuals are able to engage authentically with, and be fully present in their work. Obstacles between or within levels cause misalignment and result in fragmentation or a lack of presence in one’s work (Korthagen, 2004). However, as with all human activity, the complexities became evident upon examination. Kyle and Cindy both experienced considerable misalignment and relied upon their strengths to reestablish what may have been only the perception of realignment. They appeared to find livable solutions to assist them through this particular project. However, without addressing underlying issues, the solutions may have been only temporary. In discussion of similar situations, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) connected this form of problem solving to cultural norms. They explained,

Look closely at how teachers generally reflect, often influenced by the specific school culture, we see that the pressure of work often encourages a focus on obtaining a ‘quick fix’—a rapid solution for a practical problem rather than shedding light on the underlying issue. (p. 48)

Time issues, cultural norms, and the natural desire to alleviate discomfort may have led to temporary solutions and therefore the perception of alignment.

Although the participants experienced some relief from their realignment, they did not appear to develop an understanding of their deeper issues or gain methods for identifying and addressing similar situations in the future. Kyle may be asked by administrators to participate in practices that challenge his independent nature or conflict with his beliefs. Most likely he will react similarly—internally conflicted and outwardly critical of leadership and process, he will rely on his strengths to power through. Cindy, carrying the heavy weight of responsibility for student success, may perceive that she has failed a student at some point. Without methods to process the situation, potential for intense self-criticism and personal crisis exists. As highly capable and successful individuals, Kyle and Cindy have both honed their survival skills. They can continue to persevere through a delicate sense of alignment; however, without addressing core issues they may live their professional role divided to some degree and experience limited fulfillment and effectiveness. Attending to alignments and misalignments in teacher education program, presents an opportunity for preservice teachers to learn a skill that may continue to serve them well as inservice teachers.

When working with preservice teachers who are experiencing misalignment discernment seems necessary. Whether misalignments are visible or hidden, teacher educators must determine when to address issues and when to stand back. It may be helpful for teacher educators to communicate to preservice teachers how they see their role in addressing alignments and misalignments before conversations about issues occur.

Miller-Marsh (2002) explained that to support and develop the knowledge of preservice teachers, she identified herself as a co-constructor of knowledge. Employing discernment, Miller-Marsh would occasionally interject on a subject or guide a discussion in a certain direction and other times stand back and allow class members to be the more capable peer for the group. Similar discernment seems necessary when working with preservice teachers experiencing misalignment. When a teacher educator noticed a misalignment, he or she must make a decision regarding when to invite conversation, when to provide space for the individual to work through the dissonance, and when to allow another in the class to become involved as the more capable peer.

More than an issue of personal satisfaction or effectiveness in a particular circumstance, Korthagen (2004) connected long term misalignment with teacher dissatisfaction and issues of retention. If obstacles continually inhibit an individual from realizing her or his ideals, burnout could result. Korthagen asserted that teachers must attend to their ideals and receive collegial support in realizing those ideals for wholeness and fulfillment in teaching. Even if one's ideals may not be reached, it may be helpful for teachers to better understand the dynamics in order to better hold the tension. Helping individuals understand the importance of their trajectory and providing them with tools to deconstruct the dynamics of the intersection of trajectory and practice may hold career-long implications.

Participants' strengths shaped the negotiation process. While examining the dynamics of how participants negotiated the collaborative action research process, I noticed the important role of their individual strengths and the ideals of their mission.

Addressing issues that interconnect with identity and mission can be challenging especially as preservice teachers are in the vulnerable process of seeking acceptance in a new community. I returned to Korthagen's (2004) model of core reflection as a possible method for facilitating understanding of the negotiation process. This approach builds on the qualities, commitment, and inspiration that teachers already possess.

With a strengths-based approach, Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model and core reflection process provide a way to scaffold the exploration of alignments and misalignments. Rather than a study of self in isolation, the intent is the identification of alignments and misalignments experienced during practice and then focusing on accessing potential within as misalignments occur. Core reflection is a process to broaden and build on people's strengths in a way that allows them to identify when misalignments exist and to enter into reflective practice that reaches core issues.

Contrary to a quick fix for misalignments, core reflection requires the individual to work through multiple cognitive and emotional issues to broaden understanding of a situation. Meijer and colleagues (2009) determined six non-linear stages in the core reflection process: (1) chaos and a focus on problems; (2) deepened awareness, but also confusion and fears; (3) reflection at the identity layer and confrontation with an existential tension; (4) the discovery of presence and deconstruction of core beliefs; (5) deepening presence; and (6) movement towards autonomy in core reflection and maintaining presence. This process requires the investment of, and trust between, the preservice teacher and the teacher educator. It is important for teacher educators and

preservice teachers to be able to hold the tension of misalignment rather than facilitating a quick fix.

As teacher educators implement core reflection with preservice teachers, it is important to examine closely the cognitive and emotional levels of alignment and use discernment regarding conclusions about alignment. Sexton (2008), who studied alignment between identity and role in preservice teachers, explained that people often associate alignment with harmony and something to strive for while misalignment is associated with negativity and something to avoid. However, Sexton found that both alignment and misalignment possessed limiting and advantageous elements and both needed attention. Dissonance, while uncomfortable, pointed out areas in need of professional growth. Consonance, on the other hand, confirmed for preservice teachers that they were on the right track while possibly concealing areas for growth. There might be times when teacher educators discern alignments based on misconceptions or prior lay theories and choose to invite a preservice teacher into the core reflection process even though the preservice teacher does not recognize a concern.

Transformational potential limited by the negotiation process. If misalignments serve as obstacles to redirect the project away from the questioning, analyzing, deconstructing processes and cause research projects to fall short of their potential, then it is important for teacher educators to attend to the negotiation process as previously discussed. However, it is also important for teacher educators to examine how they present practices such as collaborative action research, how other contextual elements influence the process, and how the practice is scaffolded.

One area for teacher educators to consider is how projects such as action research are structured. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999b) posited that rather than taught as a *way of knowing*, action research has often been assigned as a final project. Positioning action research as a final project can shift the emphasis from process to end product. Framing it as *the* project that earns preservice teachers their master's degree elevates the notion that action research is a test to pass rather than a way of knowing. In my study, the writing of preservice teachers provided a beautiful place to articulate beliefs and past experiences. Framed as an inquiry tool rather than an end product, there is potential for such writing to be the starting point for a transformational experience.

In thinking about the participants in my study, I realized elements other than misalignments influenced the process and at times limited their ability to take risk, hold tension, and examine beliefs. As preservice teachers in an intensive eleven-month MAT program, the participants were navigating multiple demands. As well as the pressure of meeting time intensive and challenging requirements, the evaluation of competencies by cooperating teachers, professors, and university supervisors were interconnected with issues of acceptance as newcomers into the educational community. A realistic expectation about the level of transformation of preservice teachers within a challenging environment is a topic to examine closely.

Time, collaborative structures, and alignment between a preservice teacher's trajectory and a practice such as collaborative action research do not in themselves lead to an experience of learning and critical examination of practice; teacher educators need to scaffold the experience as well. While participants were beginning to see the classroom

through the lens of a teacher, the insight gained from their accidental apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) continued to dominate their perspective. Loughran (2006) explained that teacher education must be a place where preservice teachers challenge their deeply held beliefs about teaching and learning, but due to the hidden nature of beliefs they cannot be examined until they are made explicit. Teacher educators have an opportunity to enter the inquiry process and actively scaffold the experience to assist preservice teachers in identifying lay beliefs and supporting them as they gain deeper understanding of teaching. In this study, I did not examine the structure of the classroom or the perspective of the professor to understand scaffolding that was or was not present. However, from my study, it is clear that scaffolding is important to the transformational process.

Visions for Future Practice

The process and outcomes of the participants' collaborative action research projects are somewhat unsettling. After circumventing steps of action research, Kyle concluded that journals do not work based on the testimony of veteran teachers. Cindy believed that she entered fully into the process, but left with some unsupported generalizations and reinforced assumptions about the huge role of teachers and negative influence of parents that might contain problematic implications for future practice. Moreover, Jack's name was attached to work that did not reflect his beliefs. The participants went through the process, but did not at a rather surface level. Regarding the use of action research, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999b) explained that participation in the practice can affect significant educational change or leave the educational cultural

fundamentally unchanged. They cautioned against allowing the marginalization or trivialization of a practice intended to be generative. If the participants, as inservice teachers, continue to implement the practice of collaborative action research in a manner similar to their MAT experience, rather than generative, they may marginalize the practice. That is troublesome.

What preservice teachers learn in a teacher education program potentially has long-term implications for the education of future students. Teacher educators have a responsibility to insist on integrity in the practices such as collaborative action research. That responsibility includes getting involved in the negotiation process of preservice teachers. If misalignments or historically based lay theories present obstacles, teacher educators need to take an active role in addressing them. If preservice teachers are able to enter the process of collaborative action research in a manner that aligns with their trajectories and work through misalignments, there is potential for wholeness for the individual and an inquiry stance that leads to generative practice that will positively affect the education of their students. If the trajectory of preservice teachers is in strong misalignment with a practice such as collaborative action research or if the preservice teacher is not able or willing to practice self-reflexivity, teacher educators need to entertain some difficult questions around criteria for evaluation of the research process. Is it enough to have preservice teachers complete a technically proficient project? How do teacher educators differentiate expectations for preservice teachers who are in strong misalignment with a practice? Is it possible to work with preservice teachers to modify

practices in ways that have stronger alignment with their core qualities and therefore result in authentic and generative learning?

As with most research, I am left with questions. The alignment of trajectory and practice is important for a teacher to experience wholeness in her or his role. That wholeness is associated with effectiveness of practice. Effective practice is the essential ingredient, but also the heart of the issue. How do teachers define and measure effective practice? The way teachers negotiate practices directly relates to how they educate children.

Significance of the Study

With the onion model as a framework, my study builds on and adds to the scant body of literature regarding the theoretical work of Korthagen (2004). Prior studies have focused on use of the Onion Model and Core Reflection in student teacher supervision (Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2009) or professional development workshops for teachers within a school setting (Noordewier, Korthagen, & Zwart, 2009; Vasalos, 2008). My work builds on these studies by narrowing the lens to examine how the trajectories of preservice teachers intersected with elements of an educational practice and how participants negotiated meaning through that experience.

Additionally, my study adds to the body of literature that examines how identity influences how one teaches (Borich, 1999; Hamacheck, 1999; Palmer, 1998; McLean, 1999; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Schempp, Sparks, & Templin, 1999; Sfard & Prusak, 2005), how past experiences and ongoing discourses shape current situations (Alsup, 2006, Britzman, 2003; Hollingsworth, 1989; Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Jalongo & Isenberg,

1995; Laughran, 2006; Lortie, 1975; Miller-Marsh, 2002), and how teachers negotiate meaning through practice (Agee, 1998, 2004; Alsup, 2006, Sexton, 2008). My case studies provided examples of these concepts in lived experience.

Finally, the case studies provided insight into how the participants navigated collaborative action research. My work builds on a body of knowledge around collaboration (Achinstein, 2002; Graham, 2008; Nelson & Slavit, 2008) and action research as a way of knowing (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992, 1999a, 1999b; Phillips & Carr, 2006). By using case study methodology and focusing on the intersection of trajectory and practice, my work allows the reader access to how participants experienced the practice. Understanding their experience offers insight regarding curriculum and instruction for teacher educators.

Limitations

This study followed three preservice teachers as they negotiated the process of one educational practice—collaborative action research. The study was comprised a small number of participants, for a short period, as they participated in one practice within a program with many challenging elements. Believing that knowledge is socially constructed, contextually understood, constantly shifting, and limited (Britzman, 2003), the case studies are partial and limited. The case studies provided a glimpse—a snapshot of information at a given time. Many contextual elements influenced each participant's journey—the particular group members with whom they collaborated, the topic their group chose, the practicum environment in which they implemented the program, their relationship with their cooperating teacher and professor are a few of the influential

elements. While acknowledging that these contextual elements influenced the negotiation process, they were not explored in this study.

Another limitation of the study is that I identified the alignments and misalignments between the participants' trajectories and the practice of collaborative action research. While grounded in data, the ideal would be for the participants to name the alignments and misalignments themselves. Time was another limiting factor. As I conducted this research toward the end of their MAT program, we did not have time for participants to participate fully in the Core Reflection process. As mentioned earlier, this process is intended for deep work over time. Therefore, I analyzed the data in attempt to understand how participants' trajectories aligned and misaligned with collaborative action research.

I found irony in the study of participants negotiating a research project while I negotiated my own. In many ways our journeys paralleled one another. As I conducted this research project, I was aware of my own cognitive and emotional journey. Just as I mapped the experience of each participant as teacher and student, I could do the same for myself. In both roles I experienced emotions similar to those of the preservice teachers—excitement, confusion, frustration, empathy, discouragement, joy, and enthusiasm. I am aware that my own mission, identity, and beliefs shaped the choice of topic, structure of the design, implementation, analysis, and conclusions of this project. In some ways my strengths enhanced the project, but I am sure that my own trajectory limited in the process as well. While grounded in theory and data, I acknowledge that my interpretations are partial and limited.

Future Research

Further research is needed to explore the intersection of trajectories and practice. Additional case studies would provide greater depth in understanding the dynamics of alignments and misalignments and the negotiation process. Missing from this study was an exploration of the influence and perspective of the other members of the collaborative group. Including all members with additional observations as the group worked collaboratively would further situate the study in context and provide greater understanding of the group dynamics influencing the experience. Understanding of and attention to the similar or dissimilar background experiences of group members may be especially insightful regarding their ability to identify and challenge assumptions and to extend thinking around the group's topic. Additionally, case studies that followed participants as they navigated several practices within a teacher education program would provide a greater understanding of the role of individuals' dominant traits and other factors influencing the negotiation process. Another powerful study would be to follow participants as they enter their teaching career and again five years later; such a study would provide greater insight into the influence of trajectories on educational practice and the influence of educational practice on trajectories over time.

If teacher educators use Korthagen's (2004) Onion Model and core reflection processes to explicitly address issues of alignment and misalignment as preservice teachers negotiate educational practices, further research would provide insight into their usefulness as self-assessment and pedagogical tools for preservice teachers. Again, it would be helpful to follow individuals through a teacher education program and into their

first years of teaching. Similarly, helpful research could focus upon types of scaffolding implemented by teacher educators as they support preservice teachers through new practices.

Additionally, for some preservice teachers, strong and continuous misalignment might signify that the teaching profession is not a good fit for them. If contextual constraints, philosophical beliefs, or social norms conflicted strongly with an individual's trajectory into teaching, perhaps teaching is not a good fit for that individual. Sexton (2008) found that for preservice teachers, misalignments highlighted areas in need of professional growth and led some individuals led to explore if teaching was a good career choice for them. Explicit examination of the intersection of an individual's trajectory and teaching may provide insight when counseling preservice teachers who experience strong misalignment throughout a teacher education program. Likewise, exploration of the intersection of trajectories and teaching might provide a useful tool in the admissions process or for coaching individuals who are considering a career in education. Further research is needed to determine possible connections between trajectories of preservice teachers and the admissions process.

Implications for Practice

These case studies offer several implications for the development of curriculum and instruction for teacher educators. First, teacher educators could develop opportunities for preservice teachers to identify and share their trajectories. As they identify and explore mission, identity, and beliefs about education, it may be helpful to introduce concepts such as prior history-based lay theories (Holt-Reynolds, 1992), the accidental

apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), the social construction of knowledge (Britzman, 2003), and the ongoing influence of discourses (Miller-Marsh, 2002) so that individuals gain or deepen understanding of the powerful influence of past experiences on shaping current beliefs. In sharing their trajectories, teacher educators will also be able to gain insight into the motivation, characteristics, and beliefs of their students.

In my study, I gained an understanding of the trajectories of my participants and how they negotiated the practice of collaborative action research. Ultimately, however, I believe that the power and usefulness of the Onion Model and Core Reflection belongs to the preservice teachers; the end goal is to facilitate self-understanding and to work toward experiencing wholeness and presence in teaching (Korthagen, 2004). Sharing the model early in a teacher education program may provide preservice teachers with a tool for analyzing and deconstructing reactions to new educational practices as well as understanding obstacles that occur in classroom situations. The tools of Onion Model and Core Reflection may be used by teacher educators as a coaching model or used by the preservice teachers to identify and work through issues as they arise. Ironically, because the Onion Model and Core Reflection are new practices, an individual may experience misalignment between his or her trajectory and the practices. It seems probable that teacher educators will need to provide space and support for preservice teachers as they learn the process.

Finally, the case studies highlighted the need for teacher educators to scaffold the experience of collaborative action research. It may be helpful for teacher educators to assist preservice teachers to (a) find a topic that aligns with their mission and identity, (b)

identify history-based lay theories (Holt-Reynolds, 1992), and (c) understand possible influences of those lay theories as they develop their critical question, problem-statement, and research design. Creating assignments that allow individuals to identify and explore prior beliefs and experiences prior to collaborative meetings and then to have the collaborative groups create a synthesis may broaden understanding. Encouraging explicit analysis of alignments and misalignments by preservice teachers as they work through the process of collaborative action research may also lead to greater ownership and self-understanding. Investing time to teach how to collaborate and how to engage in dialogue that addresses core issues, explores bias and preconceptions, and multiple perspectives may facilitate a process that results increases the potential for transformed practice.

Final Thoughts

The case studies of Kyle, Cindy, and Jack provided insight into the ways in which an individual's trajectory into teaching can influence the negotiation of an educational practice. This study showed the powerful influence of the dominant traits of individuals in both the areas of alignment and negotiation process. It also demonstrated the importance of attending to misalignments in relation to both the investment and fulfillment of self in the practice and for the outcome of the experience. Teacher educators have the responsibility to attend to affective aspects of the preservice teacher's journey and to take an active role in helping to identify and understand the negotiation process.

Clandinin (1993) framed teacher education as “the ongoing writing of student teachers’ lives, not a separate preparation for something disconnected from what came before and a readying for what is to come after” (p. 11). It is important that teacher educators pay attention to the influence of trajectories on the educational process. The mission, identity, and beliefs developed before entrance into a teacher education program influence how preservice teachers negotiate the journey. As Holt-Reynolds (1992) found with lay-beliefs, prior knowledge can serve as helpful schemata on which to build or as powerful and potentially dangerous resources that mold experience. Teacher educators must pay attention and take an active role in the journey as well. Korthagen’s (2004) Onion Model and core reflection process might facilitate the journey through specific requirements of a teacher education program. Providing a strategy for preservice teachers to use to own the core reflection process might serve to facilitate their continued negotiation process as they enter their career as an inservice teacher.

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Appendix A: Project Overview

Purpose of the project: The study will explore how preservice teachers make meaning out of a new practice and what influences shape the meaning-making process—specifically how preservice teachers process the experience of collaborative action research. The researcher will examine how individuals’ mission, identity, beliefs, and contextual elements work together to shape how preservice teachers internalize the practice of collaborative action research. Participants will be selected from a pool of middle level preservice teachers in the 2009-2010 Full-time MAT program.

Data Collection: Triangulation is important for trustworthiness in this research project. Therefore, participants will be asked to (a) participate in interviews, (b) allow observations during action research class sessions, and (c) allow the researcher to examine archived documents. The research design includes two interviews that should each take approximately one hour. Interview locations and times will be arranged with individual participants in order to make them as convenient as possible for the participants. Participants will also be asked to allow two observations while working in collaborative groups. Another professor will conduct the observations because the researcher is teaching at the same time they will occur. The archived documents include materials created for admissions to the MAT program (i.e., application materials), class assignments from previous courses (i.e., journal entries from EDUG 520: Action Research I), assignments from the current action research class (i.e., the action research proposal and final paper), and email correspondence.

Timeline: Three participants will be selected from the group of middle level preservice teachers. The researcher will notify all who have agreed to participate regarding their status within one week of the project overview meeting. Data will be collected in two phases—one interview and observation will occur during late February or March, and the other interview and observation during April. Documents from the admissions process and previous courses will be examined as part of the first data set and documents from the current collaborative action research process will be part of the second data set.

Outcome of the project: The outcome of this research is expected to help teacher educators to understand different ways individuals process new practices to better assist preservice teachers as they learn new practices. The participants may also find value in the process as they explore their thoughts and feelings about collaborative action research.

Confidentiality: Information that is obtained from this study will be kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used on all data. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, but only the researcher will have access to the information from the sessions. Archived data will have the names removed. Protocols and data will be kept secured in the researcher’s office in a locked file cabinet. When information from this study is shared in presentations or articles, participants’ names and other identifying information will not be used.

Voluntary Status: Participation is voluntary. Participants' grade, status in the School of Education, or your relationship with the researcher, other professors or other participants in the program will not be affected by a decision to participate or not to participate in the study. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without affecting their relationship with the researcher, their cohort, professors, the MAT department, or the university.

Response: Please complete the Participant Response Form and return it to the researcher. On this form, participants will indicate whether or not they are interested in participating in the study.

Appendix B: Participant Response Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Please select one response from the options below to indicate your willingness to have your name placed in the pool of possible participants for the research study. Three preservice teachers will be selected for participation. If you are willing to participate, you will receive an email within one week of the information meeting informing you whether or not you have been selected.

1. Authorization (circle one): MS/EL MS/HS

2. Response (Select One):

- ☐ **I am interested in exploring how I negotiate meaning with collaborative action research and agree to participate in the study.** I agree to participate in two interviews, allow two observations in class, and agree to allow Jan to examine documents from MAT program admissions and my coursework.
- ☐ **I am not overly interested in the study, but I am willing to participate.** I agree to participate in two interviews, allow two observations in class, and agree to allow Jan to examine documents from MAT program admissions and my coursework.
- ☐ **I may be interested, but need a couple of days to think about it—I will email you within the next two days and let you know my answer.**
- ☐ **Thanks, but I am not interested in participating in the study.**

3. If you are willing to participate in the study, please describe your thoughts and feeling about collaborative action research in a few words below.

Appendix C: Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jan Carpenter for her doctoral work at Portland State University.

The researcher will explore how preservice teachers make meaning out of a new practice and what influences shape the meaning-making process—specifically how preservice teachers process the experience of collaborative action research. The researcher will examine how individuals' mission, identity, beliefs, and contextual elements work together to shape how preservice teachers internalize the practice of collaborative action research. You were selected as a potential participant because you are a middle level preservice teacher in the 2009-2010 Full-time MAT program.

As you know, triangulation is important for trustworthiness in a research project. Therefore, if you volunteer to participate, and are one of the three preservice teachers selected, you will be asked to (a) participate in interviews, (b) allow observations during action research class sessions, and (c) allow the researcher to examine archived documents. The research design includes two interviews that should each take approximately one hour. Interview locations and times will be arranged with individual participants to make them as convenient as possible for the participants. Participants are also asked to allow two observations while working in collaborative groups. Another professor will conduct the observations because Jan Carpenter is teaching at the same time they will occur. The archived documents include materials created for admissions to the MAT program (i.e., application materials), class assignments from previous courses (i.e., journal entries from EDUG 520: Action Research I), assignments from the current action research class (i.e., the action research proposal and final paper), and email correspondence.

The researcher will notify all who have agreed to participate regarding their status within one week of the project overview meeting. Data will be collected in two phases—one interview and observation will occur during late February or March, and the other interview and observation during April. Documents from the admissions process and previous courses will be examined as part of the first data set and documents from the current collaborative action research process will be part of the second data set.

The outcome of this research is expected to help teacher educators to understand different ways individuals process new practices in order to better assist preservice teachers as they learn new practices. The participants may also find value in the process as they explore their thoughts and feelings about collaborative action research.

Information that is obtained from this study will be kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used on all data. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, but only the researcher will have access to the information from the sessions. Archived will have the names removed. Protocols and data will be kept secured in the researcher's offices. When information from this study is shared in presentations or articles, your name and other identifying information will not be used.

Your participation is voluntary. Your grade, status in the School of Education, or your relationship with Jan Carpenter, other professors or other participants in the program will not be affected by your decision to participate or not to participate in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher, your cohort, your professor, the MAT department, or the university.

If you have concerns about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182. If you have questions about the study, please contact Jan Carpenter at 503-554-2860 or jcarpenter@georgefox.edu.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in the study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this informed consent for your records.

Signature

Date

Appendix D: Protocol for Interview #1

Interview #1: Understanding participants' personal trajectories and perceptions of collaborative action research

Instructions for participants: This interview consists of 14 questions divided into four sections; some of the questions are about your journey into teaching in general and some are focused on the practice of collaborative action research. Although this is an interview, the intention is to have a conversation about topics of educational importance. I am interested in your story, your perceptions, and your experiences. If you are uncomfortable with any question, you may decline to answer. If you would like to end the interview at any time, you may do so without repercussions of any kind. I appreciate your time and willingness to share with me.

Section 1: Participants' Background Information

Instructions for participants: The first section of the interview contains general questions about your journey into teaching. I am interesting in getting to know you a little better and to find out about is important to you. There are five questions in this section.

1. How did you decide to become a teacher? Tell me the story.
2. What do you hope to accomplish in your role as a teacher?
3. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
4. Tell me about a time in your student teaching experience that affirmed your decision to become a teacher.
5. What has surprised you about teaching?

Section 2: Understanding of Collaborative Action Research

Instructions for participants: Collaborative action research is the focus of this section. I am hoping to find out about your current understanding of the purpose and the process of collaborative action research. There are four questions in this section

6. What has been your prior experience with collaboration? With research?
7. What is your understanding of the purpose of collaborative action research?
8. How would you describe the role of teachers with collaborative action research?
9. What are some premises of collaborative action research?

Section 3: Perceptions regarding the collaborative action research process

Instructions for participants: While the last section focused on your understanding of collaborative action research, in this section we will explore your experience with the process. There are four questions in this section.

10. What did you think and feel when you first heard that you would be participating in collaborative action research?
11. Describe the collaborative action research process for you so far.
12. How would you describe your cooperating teacher's involvement in the process?
13. Do you see your cooperating teacher or others in the building participating in any collaborative or research related activities? Please explain.

Section 4: Vision for the future use of collaborative action research

Instructions for participants: The final section has just one question and it pertains to your thoughts about using collaborative action research in the future.

14. Based on what you know and have experienced with collaborative action research, how do you see collaborative action research fitting with your vision for teaching?

Appendix E: Focus of Analysis Interview #1

Interview Protocol #1: Focus of Analysis		
Research Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? 2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? 3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? 		
	Interview Questions:	Focus of analysis:
Interview Section 1	1. How did you decide to become a teacher? Tell me the story.	RQ #1: mission, identity, beliefs
	2. What do you hope to accomplish in your role as a teacher?	RQ #1: mission, identity, beliefs
	3. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?	RQ #1: identity
	4. Tell me about a time in your student teaching experience that affirmed your decision to become a teacher.	RQ #1: mission, identity, beliefs
	5. What has surprised you about teaching?	RQ #1: beliefs—shaping and changing
Interview section 2	6. What has been your prior experience with collaboration? With research?	RQ #1: beliefs
	7. What is your understanding of the purpose of collaborative action research?	RQ #1: understanding of collaborative action research.
	8. How would you describe the role of teachers with collaborative action research?	RQ #1: understanding of collaborative action research.
	9. What are some premises of collaborative action research?	RQ #1: understanding of collaborative action research.
Interview section 3	10. What did you think and feel when you first heard that you would be participating in collaborative action research?	RQ #1: beliefs, identity RQ #2: possible negotiation of meaning
	11. Describe the collaborative action research process for you so far.	RQ #2: listen for “flow”—alignment between all levels of the onion model or areas of conflict
	12. How would you describe your cooperating teacher’s involvement in the process?	RQ #2: Influences on the negotiation process. Environmental level of the onion; influence of cooperating teacher as model of teacher behavior
	13. Do you see your cooperating teacher or others in the building participating in any collaborative or research related activities? Please explain.	RQ #2: Influences on the negotiation process
Interview section 4	14. Based on what you know and have experienced with collaborative action research, how do you see collaborative action research fitting with your vision for teaching?	RQ #3: vision for future use of collaborative action research.

Appendix F: Protocol for Interview #2

Interview #2: Exploring the Negotiation of Meaning Around Collaborative Action Research.

Instructions for participants: This interview will be slightly different than Interview #1. There are two sections in this interview; section 1 is similar to Interview #1. It consists of four questions about your experience with collaborative action research this year. The second section, however, includes an activity using core reflection to guide the reflection process. After you have answered the questions in the first section, I will explain the process of core reflection and see if you are willing to explore your experiencing using that process. As with interview #1, I appreciate your time and willingness to share with me. If you are uncomfortable with any question, you may decline to answer. If you determine that you would like to end the interview at any time, you may do so without repercussions of any kind. As with Interview #1, I appreciate your time and willingness to share with me.

Section 1: Interview questions focused on the Participants' Experience with Collaborative Action Research During Phase 2

Instructions for participants: This section contains questions that will help me to understand your experience with collaborative action research since we last spoke. There are four questions in this section.

1. Tell me about the results of your collaborative action research project. What did you learn about _____ (participant's topic)?
2. If you were to choose one word to characterize your experience with collaborative action research, what would it be and why?
3. What was the most rewarding or beneficial aspect of this collaborative action research for you? Why?
4. What areas of concern or frustration did you experience during the process?

Section 2, Activity 1: Using the Onion Model as a Tool to Explore the Experience of Collaborative Action Research

Instructions for participants:

- **Explain the purpose of the Onion Model:** A researcher named Korthagen developed a tool to help facilitate reflection on educational or life experiences. He refers to this tool as the Onion Model.
- **Explain theory behind multi-level learning showing a copy of the Onion Model to participants:** Korthagen explained that we experience or process events, life, our work on many levels including mission, identity, beliefs, competencies, behaviors, and environment. If there is alignment between all levels, Korthagen explained that we experience flow or energy around the experience. However, obstacles can occur between levels or within a level—and those obstacles that cause tension or conflict for an individual. For example, a teacher might believe in constructivist models of education, but teach (behave) in a teacher-directed manner. This gap between belief and behavior can be categorized as a misalignment and lead to frustration, resentment, a lack of fulfillment in his/her work, etc. The onion model can be a helpful tool for a teacher to identify areas of alignment and misalignment. When areas of misalignment are identified, we can gain a greater understanding of what is happening.
- **Explain the exploration process:** One way to use the onion model as a tool to facilitate reflection is to place six cards on the ground. You will notice that each card corresponds to one layer of the onion model and that they are laid out in order from the internal to the external levels. As we begin discussing your experience, you will physically move from one layer to the next as we identify different levels involved. I will use the example above to illustrate how to move from one layer to another. If a teacher were describing beliefs about constructivist teaching, she would stand on the card labeled “beliefs.” If asked to describe a lesson she taught recently, she would move to the card labeled “behavior.” Once a misalignment was identified between a belief and a behavior, the teacher could explore the root causes of the misalignment and the complex and multiple pressures shaping the experience. The facilitator might guide her to talk about why she chose to teach in the manner described. As she begins to explain, the facilitator identifies the related layer of the onion model and asks the teacher to move there while speaking.
- **Explain the role of the facilitator:** You will notice that the role of the facilitator is to ask questions that generate reflection. In addition to questions related to the levels on the onion model, the facilitator will ask questions about your thoughts, your feelings, and what your ideal outcome would be for given situations. Although the facilitator guides the process, you can decline to discuss areas or choose to take the conversation into areas that you are particularly interested in exploring. Explorations can include areas of alignment and/or misalignment you experienced in the collaborative action research process.
- **Emphasize the purpose of this reflection:** The purpose of this exercise is for you to identify areas of alignment and misalignment that you experienced in the process of collaborative action research and to facilitate your understanding of how you negotiated meaning during the process. We are not trying to fix anything or solve problems, only to understand the process. While I am interested in your experience with collaborative action research and how you have developed meaning around it, I also hope that this process might provide a helpful tool for you as you develop your teaching practice.
- **Invite participant into the process of exploring his/her experience with collaborative action research:** Would you be willing to explore your experience with the collaborative action research process using the onion model? (If the participant is willing to proceed, ask if he/she would like to identify a place to begin or if he/she would like the facilitator to begin. If the facilitator is asked to begin the process, I will use pre-determined information from the Interview #1 or from the questions at the beginning of this interview as a starting place).

Section 3, Activity 2: Alignment of participant's trajectory and participant's understanding of collaborative action research

Trajectory:

- Based on our previous conversation, I have mapped a trajectory for your journey into teaching. It includes your mission, identity, and beliefs as we have discussed them. This is not considered to be a thorough or static map—just a snapshot of your thinking at this time and place. (This map will show the levels on the map of the onion model.
- What I need you to do is to read it for accuracy. If there is something that I misunderstood, it can be deleted or revised. If there is something important that is not present, we will add it.
- Provide time for participant to read and make additions, deletions, or revisions on the trajectory.

Practice of collaborative action research:

- Next we will do a similar exercise with your understanding of collaborative action research. Based on our prior conversations, I have created a map that identifies your understanding of the purpose, the role of the teacher, and some important premises of collaborative action research. What I need is for you to complete the same process as you did with the trajectory map. Please make additions, deletions, or revisions to the map.

Alignment of Trajectory and Practice:

- The next step is to compare the two maps to see where alignment and misalignment exist. This is another way of looking at some of the issues that we just talked about in activity #1. We will compare each of the three levels of the maps in order to try to understand the alignment. We will begin with mission and the purpose of collaborative action research. How do you envision collaborative action research fitting with your personal mission as an educator?
- Walk through each step of the map seeking to understand how the participant conceptualizes the relationship between the two.

Section 4: Final Interview Question

Instructions for participants: This section contains questions one last question and it is same one that I finished with during the last Interview.

1. Based on what you know and have experienced with collaborative action research, how do you see collaborative action research fitting with your vision for teaching?

Appendix G: Member Checking Documents

Summary of Kyle's Trajectory		
Mission in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage/challenge the intellect through discussion of big life issues 	
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reckless Leader Task-oriented Driven Takes initiative Former "high needs kid" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writer Intelligent Independent Inquisitive Writer
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life is problematic Young adolescent development provides opportunity for educator influence Family involvement, or lack thereof, has an influence on a child's education Parents as problematic: Absent parent, parent who allows poor choices, overly involved parent Purpose of collaboration: Division of an open-ended task Team members are given a responsibility that corresponds with their talent Collaboration is chaotic and exhausting Collaboration lifts the pressure as each member takes a piece of the stress 	

KYLE'S BELIEFS SPECIFIC TO COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH (from data set one: application information, journal entries, interview #1)	
Purpose of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The advancement of learning techniques, strategies, furthering education. ○ Staff unification – group cohesiveness ○ For a group of people to accomplish and open-ended task.
Characteristics of teachers who participate in collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They have respect for colleagues ○ They have equality with all others in group
Premises of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each group member has different strengths and is given certain responsibilities that coincides with their given talent. ○ Action research is needed because society changes and teaching needs to change to provide for the needs of the next generation. ○ Accountability – need to be able to prove the validity of our practices? ○ Two minds are better than one
Beliefs about collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can be somewhat chaotic as the number group members increases ○ Collaborative work time-exhausting and repetitive at times ○ Group process inefficient ○ Useful in the division of labor – the process was beneficial because they were able to break a large task into manageable pieces ○ The pressure is lifted as each group member takes a piece of the stress
Beliefs/experiences with collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The process and expectations were ambiguous ○ Working through the ambiguity with a group was stressful ○ Who he worked with was more important than the topic ○ Trust and academic ability are important factors in partners ○ Important to actually learn something rather than just going through the action ○ The collaborative research process is applicable to working in teams, such as PLCs, within a school therefore the experience of doing collaborative action research might be good training.

CINDY'S TRAJECTORY (from data set one: application information, journal entries, interview #1)		
Mission in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fulfillment in career—teaching as a calling ○ To teach middle school ○ To connect with and mentor students in order to have an impact on their lives 	
Identity	Participant's words	Words by referents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Caring mentor/guide/shepherd ○ Empathetic ○ Listener ○ One who guides students through middle school experience ○ Half counselor ○ Emerging disciplinarian ○ Detail oriented ○ Heart for middle school students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hardworking – outstanding work ethic ○ Learner ○ Tenacious ○ Leader ○ Inquiring mind ○ Intelligent ○ Patient ○ Great with young people ○ Provider of wisdom, grace, compassion ○ Self starter ○ High level of personal responsibility ○ Lives by Christian principles/high morals ○ Puts others first
Beliefs about education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Holistic view of education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Middle school is a unique and challenging stage of life. ○ Classroom is a place for the development of the whole child. ○ There will be students who experience extreme circumstances beyond the typical middle school experience. ○ Teacher has an influential role. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher holds the influence to shape and mold students. ○ Teacher must unconditionally believe in each and every student. ○ Teacher must provide opportunity for a rich and meaningful educational experience. ○ It is the teacher's responsibility to understand the lives of her students. 	

CINDY'S BELIEFS SPECIFIC TO COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH (from data set one: application information, journal entries, interview #1)	
Purpose of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improvement of teaching practice for the benefit of students ○ The purpose of collaborative work is to learn from one another, generate more ideas beyond our own, depend on each other's strengths, and share the responsibility for the outcome.
Characteristics of teachers who participate in collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are committed to whatever it is that they are researching. ○ Feel strongly about their topic. ○ Find meaning in their chosen issue. ○ Are engaged in finding solutions to unique contextual challenges.
Premises of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As one interacts with others, his/her knowledge, perspective, and understanding of possibilities is expanded. ○ Best practices change. ○ Context matters and teachers are in a position to best understand their students and the contextual elements of their classrooms.
Beliefs about collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Importance depends on objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When it benefits the students, collaboration is the highest objective. ○ Not as necessary in a school environment when the end product is only to meet the requirements of the teacher or professor. ○ The responsibilities of teaching necessitates collaboration of teachers. ○ Collaboration removes some of the burden. ○ Collaboration can be tedious depending on the members of the group. ○ Sharing the burden provides a somewhat selfish and personal benefit.
Beliefs/experiences with collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaborating on research will result in stronger research. ○ Saw the value of it in her placement—happening in the profession. ○ Collaboration will provide the opportunity to “share the load.” ○ Collaboration allows each group member to use her unique gifts and abilities to contribute to the project.

Summary of Jack's Trajectory		
Mission in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teaching as a spiritual calling ○ Make an impact on students' lives ○ Be a positive role model ○ Help students grow and develop through relationship 	
Identity	Participant's words	Words by references
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wacky – humorous ○ Relational ○ Listener ○ Leader focused on others ○ On-going learner ○ Reflective ○ Loved school and math growing up 	<p>Loves the energy of middle school students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Works well with young people ○ Self-directed and motivated to reach goals ○ Honest, trust-worthy, responsible ○ Willing and eager to get involved ○ Identifies problem students in class and is proactive in those situations
Beliefs about education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Investing in the lives of students by caring for them is a vital role of an educator ○ Teachers have a responsibility to develop a safe and respectful classroom environment ○ Lesson planning is a complex process that involves content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and a strong understanding of the students in your classroom. ○ Collaborative action research helps instill the healthy practice of examining own teaching ○ Collaborative action research preparation for teaching career ○ Teacher-researcher care, are willing to examine self, be able to work with others and know self 	

JACK'S BELIEFS SPECIFIC TO COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH (from data set one: application information, journal entries, interview #1)	
Purpose of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To better determine how their schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn by planning acting, developing, and reflecting. ○ Helps preservice teachers to instill healthy practice of examining teaching and looking for ways to improve. ○ Preparation for working in teams in a school environment.
Characteristics of teachers who participate in collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Care – teachers care about students, care about what is best for them, and care about improving self as an educator ○ A willingness to examine self and to be open to challenge.
Premises of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working in collaboration provides the opportunity to see things from other perspectives
Beliefs about collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working with others allowed those with more experience to help those with less experience.
Beliefs/experiences with collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The journey itself is a benefit ○ Disappointed in the results ○ Being new at using cooperative learning and coming into another person's class half way through the year may have impacted the results.

Appendix H: Purpose, Characteristics, and Premises of Collaborative Action Research

COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH	
Purpose, Teacher Characteristics, and Premises from <i>Becoming a Teacher Through Action Research</i>	
Purpose of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goal of improving simultaneously pedagogy and student learning (p. 10). ○ To empower or give voice to teachers (p. 38). ○ Student teacher action research is attempting to discover something meaningful to you: lessons you can carry with you as a professional educator that will make you a wiser, smarter, more creative, joyful teacher (p. 58).
Characteristics of teachers who participate in collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Risk-taker (potential for transformation) (p. 7) ○ Teacher as <i>intelligent inquirer</i> (p. 7). ○ Reflective, analytical (p. 15). ○ Teacher as expert (p. 19) ○ Listen hard (p. 37). ○ Teacher as learner (p. 39). ○ Story collectors... ability to hear in multiple layers the stories administrators, teachers, and students tell of their lives. (p. 37).
Premises of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AR is a powerful way of being a teacher (p. 7). ○ The goal is not to <i>prove</i> something to be “true” or “untrue” (p. 35). ○ Involves opening up possibilities through a reexamination of taken-for-granted ideas (p. 7). ○ The objective observer... a human designed myth (p. 19). ○ The narrative stories of teachers and students tell the story of the school in many different, diverse ways, each reflecting a unique and valuable perspective (p. 19). ○ Process of co-creating meaning with students and often other members of the school and community resulting in action (p. 29). ○ School communities are...complex; thus multiple ways of looking and analyzing issues, situations, and questions require more than statistical analysis alone (p. 29). ○ For preservice teachers, all of these methodologies represent elements of self-study (p. 31). ○ Your beliefs about what it is to be a good student will complicate and potentially enrich your action research project (p. 32). ○ Your own assumptions, theories, and beliefs may be questioned (p. 33). ○ This is a messy process; leave yourself open to this kind of open-ended process of discovery (p. 35). ○ To teach is to do research and to do research is to teach (p. 37). ○ Critical reflection... deliberate and result in transformed practice (p. 38). ○ Teaching and research are viewed as involving a continuous cycle or spiral of planning, implementing, and reflecting and/or evaluating (p. 38). ○ Your critical questions must be meaningful now, not in some distant, abstract or imaginary future (p. 42). ○ Data interpretation is a way of making and creating meaning out of the chaos of our practice as teachers (p. 94).

Phillips D.K., and Carr, K. (2006). *Becoming a teacher through action research*. New York: Routledge.

COLLABORATION, COOPERATION, DIALOGUE, AND DISCUSSION	
Purpose of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaboration will add depth through additional perceptions (Phillips & Carr, p. 51); The pooling of knowledge and ideas (Senge) ○ [Cooperation will] help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product (Panitz). ○ The purpose of dialogue is for all involved to learn from the experience (Senge) ○ Discussion is used when needing to reach a decision (Senge)
Characteristics of teachers who collaborate, cooperate, dialogue, and discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaborate/Dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Willing to discuss work sympathetically but critically (Phillips & Carr, p. 48). ○ Honest and open to suggestions (Phillips & Carr, p. 48). ○ Coaches (p. 48). ○ Willing to share their perspective (Phillips & Carr, p. 170). ○ Willing to self reflect, examine biases, ○ Cooperate/Discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individuals state their opinion, provide rationale for their perspective, and move the conversation or task forward (Senge).
Premises of collaboration, cooperation, dialogue, and discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaboration ...a way to make the research more credible (Phillips & Carr, p. 38). ○ As teachers we must not allow ourselves to become isolated by our own theories, beliefs, and ways of teaching and learning (Phillips & Carr, p. 47). ○ [Critical colleagues] are coaches and peers who lead us down paths and through thickets though which we would stumble on our own and probably choose to avoid altogether if we could (Phillips & Carr, p. 48). ○ Having critical colleagues ...keeps one energized in teaching by raising relevant and authentic questions, bringing possibilities to conversation, and ultimately shaping vision (p. 170) ○ Who you choose to engage with and who you choose to listen to may affect who you become as a teacher more than anything else (Phillips & Carr, p. 171). ○ Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle (Panitz). ○ [Collaborative learning] suggests a way of dealing with people which respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions (Panitz). ○ [In collaborative learning] there is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the groups' actions (Panitz). ○ The underlying premise of collaborative learning is based upon consensus building through cooperation by group members, in contrast to competition in which individuals best other group members (Panitz). ○ Collaborative learning practitioners apply this philosophy...as a way of living and dealing with other people (Panitz). ○ Cooperative learning is more directive than a collaborative system of governance and closely controlled by the teacher (Panitz). ○ [Cooperative learning] is teacher centered whereas collaborative learning is more student centered (Panitz). ○ Collaboration involves dialogue; dialogue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is a rich pooling of knowledge and ideas; ○ It creates space to examine one's thinking and biases; ○ It involves brainstorming; ○ Trust between colleagues is vital as individuals listen deeply to multiple perspectives and ask questions that challenge to deep levels of understanding ○ Growth is in the process [of dialogue] and that process can be tedious and challenging (Senge) ○ Both dialogue and discussion are important in collaborative work whereas discussion holds great value in cooperative work (Senge)

Appendix I: Focus of Analysis for Interview #2

Interview Protocol #2: Focus of Analysis		
Research Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the trajectories' of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? 2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research 3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice 		
	Interview Questions:	Focus of analysis:
Interview Section 1	1. Tell me about the results of your collaborative action research project. What did you learn about _____ (participant's topic)?	RQ #1: Trajectory: mission, identity, beliefs RQ#2: Process of negotiating meaning of the collaborative action research process.
	2. If you were to choose one word to characterize your experience with collaborative action research, what would it be and why?	
	3. What was the most rewarding or beneficial aspect of this collaborative action research for you? Why?	
	4. What areas of concern or frustration did you experience during the process?	
Interview section 2: Activity 1	Activity 1: Guided reflection of the collaborative action research process using the levels of the onion model	RQ#2: Process of negotiating meaning of the collaborative action research process.
Interview section 3: Activity 2	Activity 2: analysis of alignment between a participant's trajectory and the purpose, role of teacher, and premises of collaborative action research	RQ 1: Analysis of alignment between an individual's trajectory into teaching and the practice of collaborative action research.
Interview section 4	1. Based on what you know and have experienced with collaborative action research, how do you see collaborative action research fitting with your vision for teaching?	RQ #3: vision for future use of collaborative action research.

Appendix J: Observation Protocol

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL		
Name of Observer:		
Name of Participant being observed:		
Date:		
Time:		
Interview #		
Contextual Information	Setting: Describe the physical setting and climate of the environment. Include how many groups members were present, where members were sitting, and describe the atmosphere (relaxed, tense, focused, etc).	
	Activities: Describe the activities of the group during the observation: developing data collection tools, compiling data, interpreting data, etc.	
<p align="center">Note-taking/Note-making</p> <p>During the observation, record how the participant locates him/herself within the group (roles & relationships), what he/she pays attention to and ignores, and listen to comments made about him/herself, teaching, or the process of collaborative action research. Also, please take note if a colleague makes a comment of any kind about the participant.</p>		
<p align="center">Note-taking</p> <p>In this column, record specific statements or actions as you see them. Be objective as possible.</p>		<p align="center">Note-making</p> <p>This column is for the observer or the researcher to use to record thoughts, wonderings, questions, aha moments, etc. that are tied to the information in the note-taking column.</p>

Appendix K: Document Analysis Chart

[illegible]

Appendix L: Themes for Coding Data

Coding Themes From Data		
Research Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do the trajectories of preservice teachers align with the practice of collaborative action research? 2. How do individuals negotiate meaning regarding the practice of collaborative action research? 3. How do preservice teachers frame collaborative action research in relation to their future practice? 		
Research Question:	Focus of Analysis	Examples of words or concepts to listen for during interviews or observations and to look for in documents.
RQ #1	Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The reason I wanted to become a teacher.... ○ The most important thing I can do as a teacher is... ○ Framing teaching as a calling, involving a greater good...
RQ #1	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Words of self description by the participant such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The use of adjectives to describe current self: I am independent, collaborative, outgoing, etc. ○ Description that includes statements from the past—I have always been the type of person who... ○ Statements about the kind of person/teacher one wants to be in the future—the kind of teacher I want to be is.... ○ Characteristics about interests, personality, talents, limitations, etc. —I like to....or I do not like to.... ○ Reports by the participant about descriptions made by others to him/her—my father always told me that I would be a good teacher because.... ○ Roles chosen by the participant or suggested by other team members—individuals taking leadership, delegating, etc. ○ Words or statements that express epistemological or ontological perspectives. ○ Words of description about the participant by others. The same categories as above apply.
RQ #1	Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Should</i> (or <i>should not</i>) statements—teachers should... ○ It is important that.... ○ Evaluative comments about teachers, practices, time investments, roles, premises—good teachers..... ○ Attitudinal statements about collaborative action research and/or teaching. ○ During observations, watch for behaviors that might communicate tacit beliefs—participant tenses up and withdraws from conversation when two colleagues are experiencing conflict.

RQ #1	Understanding of collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statements about the participant's perception of the purpose of collaborative action research. ○ Intersections between the participant's understanding of the purpose and the purpose as stated by Cochran-Smith and Lytle. ○ Statements that address ideas about the working relationship with colleagues. ○ Connections with any of the premises of collaborative action research as delineated in the review of the literature.
RQ #2	Negotiation of meaning around collaborative action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explicit statements of conflict between two significant individuals in the life of the participant—my professor is telling me _____ but my cooperating teacher is telling me _____. ○ Statements of conflict between two levels of the onion model—I believe that collaboration is important work, but I am just not a researcher (identity level). ○ Statements of conflict within one level—I am collaborative, but I am not a researcher (both identity level). ○ Statements of prioritizing beliefs within one level of the onion model—I do not believe that collaborative action research could be an important part of a teacher's job but I believe that it is important to a new teacher entering the field. ○ Statements of rationale for behavior—although I do not believe action research is an important part of a teacher's job, I will excel at the process now because it is a requirement for getting my masters degree and I take my responsibilities as a student seriously. ○ Statements regarding, or actions communicating, emotions, "aha moments," frustrations, empowerment—This data is worthless. I am no good at writing data collection instruments! (although this is a statement of identity, it also speaks to a participant's assessment of his/her own competency with an element of the practice). ○ Statements that reflect wrestling with issues—I think collaborative action research can be an empowering process, but I do not see teachers taking it seriously. I wonder how.... ○ Statements that reflect the influence of cooperating teachers, of past teachers, of teachers in the media, of parents who are educators, of other professors—my cooperating teacher said that.... ○ Evaluative statements about the real world—this collaborative action research process is exactly what I see my cooperating teacher do with his colleagues on a regular basis. ○ Statements that suggest that the participant is recognizing and wrestling with assumptions.
RQ #3	Collaborative action research as future practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statements of willingness to participate in collaborative action research if it is part of the school culture or asked by an administrator or colleague to join—collaborative action research is important to my colleagues, I am willing to participate. ○ Statements of desire to participate in collaborative action research—When I am looking for a job, I will intentionally

		<p>seek employment in a school and use collaborative action research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Statements of willingness or desire to participate in collaborative non-research projects or individual action research, but not both.○ Statements of internalization of the collaborative action research process.
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