

## ABSTRACT

LONG, SHERYL RENEE. Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Film in English Language Arts Instruction. (Under the direction of Dr. Carol Pope).

While film has long been included in English language arts instruction, it has typically been relegated to the position of supplementary resource and considered a nontraditional text. The interest in expanding English language arts instruction to address twenty-first century literacies demands difficult choices about what textual forms to include and necessitates a reassessment of film's importance. Because they are at an important juncture in their experience with the English language arts, preservice teachers offer an interesting perspective on this question. They are completing years of study in which they have been the recipients of English language arts instruction. Now students of a teacher preparation program, they receive direct instruction from faculty who are closely attuned to the theoretical movements within the discipline. Simultaneously, they are engaging in fieldwork that allows them to observe K-12 teachers' instructional practices. As they form their own philosophies of English language arts instruction, they must reconcile these multiple perspectives into a personal understanding that will shape the ways in which they teach – in effect, their refined understandings represent the future of English language arts instruction.

This qualitative study utilized a multiple case study approach to explore preservice teachers' perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. The participants in this study were five preservice teachers who were enrolled in an adolescent literature course in a large public university. Data included interviews, participant observations, and student

documents. Findings suggested preservice teachers believed film could be used as a complement to print texts in English language arts instruction. They saw film as useful for creating interest in print texts, for comparing and contrasting with print texts, and for assisting struggling readers. While they expanded their concept of text to include film as a nonprint form of text, they regarded print texts as authoritative to nonprint texts. Findings also indicated that preservice teachers closely associated digital video with the use of film in English language arts instruction and were eager to use digital video for composing student-created texts. These results suggested that teacher education programs can influence preservice teachers' perceptions of film by providing meaningful experiences that integrate film.

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Film in  
English Language Arts Instruction

by  
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
North Carolina State University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Curriculum and Instruction

Raleigh, North Carolina

2010

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## DEDICATION

To my parents – your love, encouragement, and prayers have sustained me daily.

## BIOGRAPHY

Sheryl Long is a native of Columbus County in southeastern North Carolina. After graduating from Meredith College with a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1994, she returned to Columbus County with plans to teach high school English. Instead, Sheryl found herself teaching eighth grade at Tabor City Middle School. What began as a temporary job became her life's passion, and Sheryl remained at Tabor City Middle for nine years. In 2002, she was named Tabor City Middle School Teacher of the Year and received National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification in Early Adolescent English Language Arts.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research study – and the journey it represents – would have been impossible without the support of my family. From the moment I first considered pursuing a graduate degree, they have offered unfailing encouragement. In my moments of doubt, they have maintained faith in me and in the value of my goals.

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Candy Beal, Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, and Dr. Carl Young. Their patient guidance has extended well beyond this study, and I will be forever grateful.

I wish also to thank my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Carol Pope. I came to North Carolina State University with the hesitant desire to become a teacher educator. Dr. Pope recognized that desire, and she guided me beyond the hesitancy. Over the past five years, she has been my teacher, mentor, and friend.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Background

Over the past fifteen years, English language arts education has moved toward a broader concept of literacy. Rather than literacy's being conceived only as the ability to read print-based texts, the field has shifted toward an appreciation of multiple forms of literacy and an acknowledgement that people employ "a variety of ways to mean (art, music, movement, etc.)" (Harste, 2003, p. 3). Simultaneously, there has been rapid development of new technologies that are changing the ways through which students read and write. The result has been the emergence of the new literacies movement that takes into account the multimodal nature of communication and addresses the influence of information technology. The National Council of Teachers of English (1996) and the International Reading Association reflect the influences of this movement in their *Standards for the English Language Arts*, which address the importance of visual literacy and nonprint texts

As increased emphasis is placed on a multiliteracies approach to the English language arts, educators face the challenge of determining what textual forms to include in their instruction and prioritizing the attention that will be given to each form. Traditionally, English language arts instruction has centered on print text. Relatively few forms of nonprint text have been included in standard classroom instruction; film has been one of the few such forms to be incorporated in English language arts instruction. Indeed, such an inclusion seems logical since film is a delivery medium for drama, a major genre of literature; similarly, many literary forms like novels and short stories are frequently adapted for film.

However, even as film has been included, it has routinely been regarded as less important than the print-based texts (Teasley & Wilder, 1997).

Although film may frequently be valued only as a minor text in the classroom, a great number of students are extremely skillful at making meaning through film and are, in effect, expert readers of this medium. For many of them, commercially produced film narratives, such as children's television programs and Disney films, are their primary engagement with narrative forms. As small children, many of their earliest experiences with story came through daily exposure to television characters such as Elmo from *Sesame Street* and popular children's films like *Toy Story*. As these children have grown, they progress from Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel to the CW television network and the regular visits to the multiplex theaters; filmed narratives remain a daily part of their lives. For them, film literacy is a common practice, an everyday literacy.

A multiliteracies approach to the English language arts demands that credence be given to everyday literacies and all forms of making meaning. Because students have access to a multitude of communication tools, they draw from all of these forms of representation to construct meaning. In order for classroom instruction to be most productive, it must be open to all modes of communication (Kist, 2000). English teachers have long been challenged by how to make literature instruction most effective. Frequently, they complain that their students have poor comprehension skills and are resistant to reading outside of class. Yet these same students are completely absorbed by motion picture blockbusters such as *High School Musical*, a film that experienced tremendous popularity with young audiences. While English teachers may debate the literary value of *High School Musical*, the fact remains that

it does present a fictional narrative and one which young people seem to comprehend easily. As viewers, they directly engage with this filmed narrative, interpret its cinematic elements, and construct meaning; in effect, they read this text.

Effective English language arts instruction must acknowledge and build upon these already developed reading skills. English educators must also question why students are so facile at reading film texts when they frequently struggle with print texts. Proponents of multiliteracies might suggest that students process film differently because the reading of film is a multimodal experience. The film experience is both visual and auditory and one that often includes music (Mast, 1993). Therefore, students draw upon these multiple modalities to make meaning of the film. As they do so, they hone their abilities to analyze and think critically about a text -- in this situation, a film text. Considering the degree to which they engage with film, it becomes necessary to reevaluate its importance in English language arts instruction.

Preservice teachers offer an interesting perspective on the use of film in English language arts instruction because they are at an important juncture in their experience with the field. They are completing years of study in which they have been the students of English language arts. Their perspectives on how film has been taught can be revealing, for they speak not to the intention of the teacher, but to the understanding of the students, the consumers of instruction. As students of a teacher preparation program, they receive direct instruction from faculty who are closely attuned to the theoretical movements within the discipline. At the same time, they are engaging in fieldwork that places them in classrooms to observe teachers' instructional practices. As they begin to form their own philosophies of

English language arts instruction, they seek to reconcile these multiple perspectives into a personal understanding that will shape the ways in which they teach – in effect, their refined understandings represent the future of English language arts instruction.

#### Purpose of the Study

Preservice teachers often face the challenge of reconciling personal theory based on prior experience and beliefs with the formal theory and suggested practices they encounter in teacher education programs (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983; Britzman, 2007). For future teachers of English language arts, the concept of multiple forms of texts may present such a challenge. This research project is particularly concerned with how they envision film's purpose in classroom instruction. Film has traditionally been included in English language arts as a supplementary text. With the field becoming more accepting of nonprint texts, as is evidenced by the inclusion of nonprint texts in the *Standards for the English Language Arts* (NCTE, 1996), it becomes valuable to examine whether that shifting focus alters the value placed upon film, and preservice teachers who are being trained from a multiliteracies stance may offer insight into whether such a change is occurring. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the research question: what do preservice teachers perceive to be the role of film in English language arts instruction.

#### Pilot Study

To determine the value of this study, I conducted a pilot study that explored preservice teachers' perceptions of film in the English language arts curriculum. I conducted this informal study at the same public university as the current study and worked with participants who were preservice teachers enrolled in Literature for Adolescents, a required

course for the Middle Grades Language Arts and Social Studies major. For this study, I looked specifically at student presentations of Video/Booktalks, a course requirement that directly incorporated film. I observed student presentations and examined class documents related to these presentations. I also interviewed two of the students about their experiences with film in the classroom and how they believed film should be used in English language arts instruction.

The results of this study indicated that students' K-12 experiences with film had mostly been that film had been used for entertainment or to supplement literature study. These students shared a belief that film should not be used as a reward or entertainment. They did, however, perpetuate the perspective that film's role should be one of supplement. While they consistently referred to film as text, results of the study indicated that they viewed print forms as authoritative texts against which to measure the merits of film texts. In fact, they expressed no possible uses for film other than presenting film versions of an original print text.

Results of this study also showed that students envisioned few uses of film that had not been directly demonstrated in their teacher education program. Although the students were currently enrolled in two methods courses where the instructors had adopted a multiliteracies approach to instruction, the students made no mention of these courses or ways in which these courses might influence their perception of film. This finding suggested the preservice teachers were not influenced by their professors' pedagogical stances unless the course explicitly addressed film as did the adolescent literature class.

While the pilot study led to initial findings, it also suggested that more in-depth research was needed to explore more fully preservice teachers' perceptions of film and how they envision its use in the English language arts classroom.

### Significance of the Study

Research has shown that preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with “initial assumptions that literacy [is] essentially a matter of reading and writing print text” (Trier, 2006, p. 512). With teacher education programs increasingly adopting a multiliteracies stance, it becomes of interest to investigate how preservice teachers are reconciling these conflicting conceptions of the English language arts.

From the perspective of teacher education programs, it is important to learn more about preservice teachers' initial understandings of literacy and how these concepts have been shaped. If their notions of literacy directly reflect the philosophy of the classrooms in which they have been taught, then that knowledge may foster a better understanding of the current state of English education in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Looking specifically at perceptions of film offers a promising means of exploring this issue. As a media form that has been widely accessible to the public for almost one hundred years, film might be considered a more traditional information source, yet it is unquestionably a nonprint text (Giannetti & Eyman, 2001). While film has come to be an accepted media form in English language arts instruction, it has typically been relegated to the position of supplementary resource. In fact, the trend has been for teachers to regard film as “an inherently inferior medium” (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 4). With the emergence of digital technology, the uses of film are rapidly evolving. Not only are students able to view

film texts through television, computers, and personal digital devices, many of them now have easy access to technology that enables them to create their own film products. A multiliteracies approach demands recognizing both the traditional school literacies and the everyday literacies at which students can be quite accomplished. If teachers are continuing to regard film from the traditional position that it is a minor text, such a view may be indicative of their overall philosophy toward English education and their receptiveness of a multiliteracies pedagogy.

Because this study is concerned with preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher education program that assumes a multiliteracies stance, this research can provide a better understanding of how successful such programs are in promoting this philosophy. This study examined case studies of five preservice teachers who were studying adolescent literature within a course that directly integrated the use of film texts. Exploring how their perceptions evolved during this experience speaks to the degree to which teacher education programs influence preservice teachers' concepts of literacy. While the study was specifically concerned with film as a multimodal literacy, the insights gained from this research may prove useful considerations for future explorations of multiliteracies and teacher education.

#### Overview of Approach

This study employed a qualitative methodology. The primary objective was to learn more about preservice teachers' perspectives of film in English language arts instruction, information that could not be measured or assessed quantitatively. Utilizing qualitative methods through a multiple case study approach allowed for in-depth and detailed inquiry (Patton, 2002).

More specifically, the study used a multiple case study approach. A case study design was especially useful for this specific project because it permitted investigation of “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Thus the research of this project investigated preservice teachers’ perceptions of film as they were experiencing the influence of a multiliteracies program of study and within the context of that teacher education program.

I chose the multiple case study design over the single case study because the multiple case study is a form of instrumental case study that allows the researcher to search for “insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (Stake, 2005, p. 445). The multiple-case study allows for comparison between cases and strengthens the study because “analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case” (Yin, 2009, p. 6). In addition to the cross-case comparison, the study was strengthened by triangulation of multiple data sources (interviews, participant observation, and documents).

#### Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following frequently used terms are defined, and discussion of each will be expanded in the literature review.

Digital video – products created through use of digital video recording devices, referring specifically in to this study to easily accessible personal recording devices and their products.

Film – in its most general sense, can refer to any set of moving images captured on film or through digital recording devices; the term has come to be synonymous with a

commercially produced motion picture and as a “a general term for the art of motion pictures” (Mast, 1992). In this study, the term refers specifically to commercially produced film narratives.

Film narrative – a film form that presents a narrative (usually fictional) “told through sound and image, that builds toward a climax and culminates in a resolution” (Dick, 1990, p. 2); the term *film* is frequently used as a synonym for film narrative (Dick, 1990).

Literacy – defined by NCTE (1996) as “the capacity to accomplish a wide range of reading, writing, speaking, and other language tasks associated with everyday life” (p. 49); literacy involves “ a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups” (NCTE, 2008) and necessitates the use of “a wide range of abilities and competencies” (NCTE, 2008) to make meaning.

Multiliteracies – a pedagogy that recognizes the multiple modalities through which students learn and that takes into consideration learning as a sociocultural practice (Harste, 2003)

Narrative – any form of text that tells a story

New literacies – a pedagogy of literacy that has emerged from multiliteracies; in addition to considering learning as multimodal and sociocultural, new literacies pedagogy is strongly concerned with the influence of new and emerging technologies (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004).

Nonprint text – a text that communicates meaning through images, sound, or both

Prior beliefs – the “psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the work that are felt to be true” (Richardson, 1996, p. 103)

Print text – a text that communicates meaning through writing

Reading – the process of creating meaning by “using semantics; syntax; visual, aural, and tactile cues; context; and prior knowledge” (NCTE, 1996, p. 51).

Text – defined by NCTE (1996) as “printed communications in their varied forms; oral communications, including conversations, speeches, etc.; and visual communications such as film, video, and computer displays.” (p. 52)

Preservice Teachers – students enrolled in a teacher education program who are not currently teaching nor have previously taught

### Organization of the Study

The following chapter provides an overview of literature related to preservice teachers, film and English language arts instruction. Chapter Three explains in detail the context and research methodology to be used in this study. Chapter Four presents the findings of this study while Chapter Five provides a discussion of these findings, contributions to the field, implications for teacher educators and possibilities for future research. The Appendix includes the interview guides that were used for data collection.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In light of the growing emphasis on multiple literacies, English teachers are redefining their concepts of literacy and making new choices about what forms they recognize as text. The pressure to redesign English language arts (ELA) instruction to address twenty-first century literacies demands difficult choices about what should or should not be included. Challenged to recognize such media forms as MySpace pages and weblogs as texts, teachers are re-evaluating the textual forms already included in their instruction and making necessary decisions about the importance given to each form. With the time constraints of the school setting and the pressure to alter their approaches to include new texts and possibly new forms of instruction, they must determine which texts are essential to effective instruction in the English language arts. One such text which teachers are re-evaluating is film. While having long been included in English language arts classes, film has typically been relegated to the position of supplementary resource and has been considered a nontraditional text.

Even as in-service ELA teachers are forced to consider the texts included in their instruction, preservice teachers are asked to reconcile multifaceted concepts of text, literacy, and the English language arts. Their university programs train them in the more recent theories of literacy while their field experiences allow them to observe practicing teachers' methods of addressing literacy skills. They live in a world where technology is rapidly changing the means through which messages are communicated. Perhaps even more important than the influences of their teacher education programs and emerging technologies are their preconceived views of literacy and English language arts instruction. As they

respond to the influences of current and prior experiences, what textual forms do preservice teachers foresee using in their own instructional practices? Looking specifically at their views of film can offer insight into how they view text and literacy.

This chapter offers an overview of literature related to preservice teachers and their perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. It presents research related to preservice teachers and prior beliefs, expanding views of literacy, film, film and the English language arts, and preservice teachers, film and English language arts instruction.

### *Preservice Teachers and Prior Beliefs*

In order to understand more fully preservice teachers' perceptions of film in English language arts instruction, it is helpful to understand how their perceptions of teaching and content are influenced by their prior experiences as students. While preservice teachers may be new to the profession of teaching, they are by no means new to the field of education. Having spent the majority of their lives as students, they are experts who are thoroughly familiar with school from an inside perspective (Hoy & Murphy, 2001). Lortie (1975) explains that "teaching is unusual in that those who decide to enter it have had exceptional opportunity to observe members of the occupation at work" (p. 65). In effect, this extensive time spent in schools serves as what Lortie calls an apprenticeship of observation. Years of schooling have provided them with "protracted face-to-face and consequential interactions with established teachers" (p. 61).

As a result, preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with already formed notions of education, school, and teaching. Within the research literature, these preconceived notions may be referenced by a variety of terms (Clandenin & Connelly, 1987; Pajares, 1992),

but the most widely accepted term would be *prior beliefs*. While there is some debate over how to define beliefs (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992), this study accepts the definition put forward by Richardson (1996): “psychologically held understandings, premises or propositions about the world that are felt to be true” (p. 103). Richardson (2003) also stipulates that beliefs are “propositions that are accepted as true by the individual holding the belief, but they do not require epistemic warrant” (p. 2).

For preservice teachers, prior beliefs about school and teaching are based on their experiences as students (Graham & Hudson-Ross, 1999; Stockinger, 2007). Through their extensive observations of their teachers, prospective teachers have developed detailed conceptions of teaching (McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008). Britzman (2007) explains that “newcomers learning to teach enter teacher education looking backward on their years of school experience and project it into the present” (p. 2). Because these prior beliefs are often quite different and sometimes directly contradictory to the theories and pedagogy taught in university classrooms, preservice teachers are, therefore, forced to make decisions regarding new learnings and prior beliefs (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983). Britzman (2007) describes this as “a paradox from which teacher education operates: that we grow up in school and that we return there as adults, that we bring to teacher education our own history of learning, only to meet the teacher educator’s history of learning” (p. 8).

While they may not always be aware of this process, preservice teachers often use their prior beliefs as “filters to help make sense of the program content, their roles as student teachers, their observations of classrooms at work, and their translation of program content into teaching/learning activities” (Hollingsworth, 1989, p. 62). Thus preservice teachers are

constantly challenged to reconcile their personal theory (beliefs and perspectives that are formed by personal experiences and ideas about teaching) with formal theory (classroom knowledge of theory and practices) (Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994). Because personal theory is rooted in experience, it typically has more intense associations for prospective teachers and, as a result, exerts greater influence over their formation of new concepts (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983).

Among these prior beliefs is an existing concept of literacy and the English language arts. Trier (2006) contends that the concept of literacy plays a formative role in the development of a teacher and that concepts of curriculum and pedagogy will be influenced by existing beliefs about literacy (p. 512). In his research with preservice English language arts teachers, he found that most of them “[conceptualize] literacy – both the performing and the teaching of it – only in terms of reading and writing print text” (p. 512). From her experiences working with graduate preservice teachers, Britzman (2001) found that they have a limited view of English language arts. She concludes that “years of schooling in English studies have reduced the complications of language to a preoccupation with teaching the nomenclature of grammar” (p. 253). She further explains that “many graduate students expect to teach what they have been taught, the ‘canon’” (p. 253).

As preservice teachers are called upon to recognize other textual forms, their prior experiences and established concepts of literacy influence their willingness to accept nonprint texts and affect how they choose to use these texts in the classroom (Begoray, 2001). It is important to recognize that through these decision processes, teachers exercise tremendous control over instructional content (Simmons, Shafer, & West, 1976). Regardless

of the curriculum or standards in place, the ultimate decisions about instruction are made inside the classroom by the teacher.

While preservice teachers are greatly influenced by their prior experiences with schooling, research suggests that teacher education programs can be successful in influencing their beliefs about teaching. In a study that examined preservice teachers' beliefs about integrating technology, Bai and Ertmer (2008) found that preservice teachers were influenced by the beliefs of their instructors; however, the influence was small when their interaction was limited to one semester. In order for teacher education programs to be more influential, they must expose preservice teachers to consistent philosophies over a period of extended time (Bai and Ertmer, 2008). Hollingsworth (1989) proposed that preservice teachers were influenced by the beliefs of their teacher education programs when there was "some sequential order to program focus" (p. 186) and "preservice teachers were not required to think about all the aspects of teaching at once." (p. 186).

#### *Expanding View of Literacy*

Recent movements in the field of the English language arts call for a more comprehensive understanding of literacy. English educators have come to recognize literacy as more than simply reading and writing print texts. Scholars and educators have given increased attention to the multimodal nature of learning (New London Group, 1996; Albers & Harste, 2007). Addressing multimodal learning requires a closer examination of the means through which a message can be communicated and recognizing that these forms can constitute a text (Harste, 2003; Albers & Harste, 2007). The result has been an expanded view of literacy that recognizes the multiplicity of texts. The importance of multiple forms of

text has been embraced by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association, who in their *Standards for the English Language Arts* (National Council of Teachers of English, 1996), maintain that “all students need to know about and work with a broad range of texts, spoken and visual as well as written” (p. 11).

This expanded view of literacy looks beyond the literacies traditionally used in school and seeks to incorporate the everyday literacies with which learners are most familiar (Hinchman & Chandler-Olcott, 2006; Albers & Harste, 2007). Albers and Harste (2007), well-regarded experts on the inclusion of multiple literacies in the English language arts, maintain that “educators must be prepared to work with how messages are sent, received, and interpreted” (p. 6). They argue that literacies must include “the visual, musical and performance arts” (p. 8). Doing so creates a more holistic and complex concept of literacy (Cowan & Albers, 2006).

Even as educators have begun to recognize multiple modalities of communication, they have also become highly focused on the inclusion of information communication technologies (Kinzer and Leander, 2003). The *new literacies*, a term first used by Gee (1996), look at language and literacy through a sociocultural perspective while giving consideration to the influences of information communication technologies (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). In their research brief addressing 21<sup>st</sup>-century literacies, NCTE (2007) asserts that technology is “transforming our society” (p. 1) and describes the world as “technology-driven” (p.1). This technological transformation creates the need for “both old and new sets of literacies and social practices” (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006, p. 357).

While acknowledging the importance of emerging technologies, NCTE (2007) in its research policy brief on 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies also addresses the misconception that 21<sup>st</sup>-century literacies, or new literacies, are concerned only with technology integration and stresses that “other dimensions of learning are essential” (p. 2). To address the integration of technology with the education of English language arts teachers, Pope and Golub (2000) stress that the focus is not on the technology but rather the learner. Describing the “learner-centered classroom,” (p. 95), they suggest that technology be used to create an environment in which “students participate actively and directly in their own education” (p. 95). In an *English Journal* article that set the stage for new literacies in teacher education, Swenson et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of “both print-based and multimodal literacies and their accompanying social practices” (p. 357). The authors explain that “new literacies are in a synergistic, reciprocal, and constantly evolving relationship with older literacies” (p. 357). Educators should not see the long-established English language arts content and texts as divided from emerging technologies and new literacies but should instead look to integrate their understanding into a broader concept of literacy (p. 353).

As the concept of literacy expands, so too does our understanding of what constitutes a text. Swenson et al. (2006) assert that the proliferation of digital texts is “challenging our ideas about what texts are and how they work” (p. 354). These digital texts include newer forms such as websites, blogs, and wikis, but they can also include digitized forms of existing texts (p. 354). Therefore, even as English educators in teacher education programs are beginning to address these newer digital genres as textual forms, they are also finding that technology is revolutionizing the means through which traditional texts can be delivered.

Such changes will have significant effects on film's role in English language arts instruction. Digital technologies have dramatically increased accessibility to commercially produced films. Students today can watch motion pictures on iPods or other digital devices and access film clips through YouTube and other video sharing websites. Simultaneously, the development of digital recording devices has made it relatively easy for students to create digital video products using portable digital video cameras and publish these digital texts through the Internet. Within this context, it is logical to conclude that film is an everyday literacy with which students regularly engage. As a literacy that proliferates the daily lives of students, it is deserving of attention within the English language arts classroom

### *Defining Film*

Given the expanded contexts in which film now appears, it is valuable to explore how the field defines film. Witmer (2007) explains that the film industry and the discipline of film studies have struggled with defining the term *film*. In its most basic form, it refers to the medium used to record moving images. However, the term has come to be synonymous with cinema as "a general term for the art of motion pictures" (Mast, 1992, p. 632) and as a reference to the product of cinema -- the movie or motion picture (Witmer, 2007). To emphasize the prevalence of defining film as a movie or motion picture, Witmer references the *Oxford English Dictionary* and quotes its definition of film as "'a cinematographic representation of a story, drama, episode, event, etc.'" (Witmer, 2007).

The commonly accepted definition of film as a product of the industry, a movie or motion picture, most often refers to a film narrative or its use for storytelling (Mast, 1992, p. 42). Mast defines the film narrative simply as "a movie whose story is primarily or entirely

fictitious” (p. 635). Dick (1990), also acknowledging the difficulty in defining the term *film*, says the term is frequently used as a synonym for film narrative. He points to American playwright and screenwriter John Howard Lawson as a source for defining film narrative and describes it as “ a narrative, told through sound and image, that builds toward a climax and culminates in a resolution” (p.2). He emphasizes that this is the definition most people are implying when they speak of “a movie” (p. 2) or a film.

### *The History of Film in the English Language Arts*

The moving film image was first created by scientific researchers such as William Dickson and Thomas Edison, who were primarily interested in using film to capture scenes of real moving images. But interest in this new medium quickly turned to using it to present narrative action (Sobchack & Sobchack, 1994). The earliest narratives portrayed scenes from the real world; however, by the turn of the twentieth century, filmmakers began to experiment with fictional narratives, which enjoyed tremendous popularity with the general public. In 1927, *The Jazz Singer* made history as the first film with sound. The addition of sound revolutionized the still fledgling medium because it gave film the ability to convey a complete narrative. These moving pictures, or *movies* as they came to be called, only increased in popularity with the general public, thus leading to even greater film production. As a result, filmmakers quickly became “expert at the art of telling stories both aurally and visually” (Sobchack & Sobchack, 1994, p. 182).

Almost immediately, scholars and teachers took note of motion pictures as a form of story-telling. The intense popularity of the medium demanded notice, and experts quickly recognized that while film was a modern version of narrative, its roots could be traced to

earlier narrative traditions (Costanzo, 1992). This understanding led to efforts to place film within the context of literature studies. In 1932, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) officially recognized this new medium with the creation of the Committee of Photoplay Appreciation (Applebee, 1974). This committee made recommendations about film use in English classes and generated study guides for teachers. However, the attention to film was not well received by all educators, and critics asserted that teachers were not properly trained to teach film (Hatfield, 1935). Yet film continued to have its advocates. Speaking at the 1947 NCTE convention, Frazier (1948) called for educators to seek a common ground between books and film and asserted that teachers could “combine films and books on a basis of equality” (p. 176).

So while some experts readily accepted film as an interest of the English language arts, others were not willing to regard it as equal to traditional written texts. Frazier (1948) attributed this skepticism to film’s “lowly origin, its humble associations” (p. 175). Written narratives remained the province of the learned; film required no prerequisite education and was accessible to all (Monaco, 2000). Film was popular culture while literature was high culture. Therefore, one could not be equal to the other. Such an attitude is not limited to the first half of the twentieth century but can still be found today. In a 2003 article describing how film might be used in teaching fiction, Ostrander writes that “a viewer of film has to do little work, other than stay awake to complete the cinematic image” (p.35) and suggests that the easiness of films may be “why most people believe that the book is usually better” (p. 35).

Less discussed is the perception that film is a threat to the traditional order of the English class. In a guide to using film in the classroom, Miller (1979) asserts that “not enough has been said about teacher resistance to using film” (p. 96). She attributes much of this resistance to teachers’ fears about film. She explains that hesitations resulting from the sense of not being competent in teaching film can be easily overcome with training (p. 96). What Miller finds more alarming are those teachers who avoid using film because they are unwilling to alter their control of content and consider nonprint texts (p. 96). Other teachers are threatened by film’s popularity and fear that movies will prove more popular than their instruction (p. 96). Perhaps this fear of being upstaged by film is partially responsible for teachers’ choosing to reserve film for use as a reward or presentation as supplementary entertainment (Whipple, 1998; Golden, 2007).

#### *Established Approaches to Film*

As the film industry grew in popularity and influence, film came to be seen as an established art form. Just as with other art forms, scholars approached film from multiple perspectives. Some were primarily interested in the craft of filmmaking while others were more concerned with interpretation and approaches for film analysis. This emerging field of film studies generated a body of film theory related to “structuralist approach, psychoanalytic theory, feminism, cultural studies, lesbian and gay analysis and a literary/textual approach” (Nelmes, 1999, p. 1). Film studies has become a separate discipline from the English language arts, and English educators have been more concerned with using film in ways that align with their approaches to literature studies than with film studies.

However, whether knowingly or not, they have more commonly used film in ways that align with the literary/textual approach of adaptation theory (Phillips & Teasley, 2008).

In adaptation theory's seminal work, *Novels into Film*, Bluestone (1957) discusses the film industry's penchant for adapting popular novels into film. He addresses the concern about a film's fidelity to the original text but ultimately concludes that the result of a film adaptation is a new text with distinct qualities of its own. Literary scholars have typically been critical of film adaptations and assumed that the adaptations must be judged in comparison to the novel (Hutcheon, 2006). Stam (2005) goes so far as to describe this concern with fidelity to print text as a form of prejudice that may result from what he describes as *logophilia*, an attitude that valorizes the book. Within the K-12 English language arts classroom, teachers most typically approach film from a perspective that closely resembles adaptation theory.

Among those educators who have included films in English language arts instruction, the tendency has been to use it as a supplement to a print text with teachers presenting film adaptations of the literary works their students read. Teasley and Wilder (1997) define this approach as a "'read-the-book-see-the-movie' pattern" (p. 6) and argue that such an approach "does a disservice to both film and literature by portraying literature as the difficult business in the classroom and film as a frivolous experience" (p. 7). They find that many teachers strongly believe that "literature is inherently superior to film" (p. 3). Teasley and Wilder conclude that teachers frequently do not allow students to make independent judgments about the film but rather present the film as "an inherently inferior medium" (4). This type of

instruction denies students the opportunity to make critical assessments and instead trains them to identify how the film adaptation fails to measure up to the original print text.

In *Reading in the Dark*, Golden (2001) also mentions using film adaptations in English classes. Although he devotes relatively little discussion to this approach, Golden acknowledges that it is the most common use of film and describes it simply as “an extension of the written text” (p. xiii). In a more recent article, Golden (2007) describes an attitude he sees as common among English teachers: “We want them to love the book first” (p. 24). Based on that belief, film has been incorporated in ways that focus “on how the film and the print text are different” (24). Golden finds that often this comparison of the two forms “is where students begin and end their analyses” (p. 24).

In pointing to the shortcomings of the comparison approach, Golden (2001) does not condemn it as futile. He instead advocates for extending this method of textual analysis. He cites adaptation theory to show that examining two versions of the same text can “promote active interaction between print and film” (p. 25). Golden argues that if teachers are willing to lead their students through a deeper comparison of film and print text, “there is a tremendous amount of accessible analytical work that students can do while working closely with both mediums” (p. 25).

Even in promoting a deep analysis of film, Golden (2007) gives film a position of less importance than the written text. In his conclusion, Golden asserts, “I am not a film teacher: I’m an English teacher who happens to like movies” (p. 30). This statement carries the implication that being an English teacher does not inherently mean teaching film. He instead

places film in a supplementary role as a resource that can “help students do better at the subject [he] is teaching” (p. 30).

Such a position is not uncommon. Christel (2008) suggests that some teachers may see film’s popularity as a threat to print texts, but she also says that it is “probably the medium that teachers are most comfortable integrating into a literature unit” (p. 53). Even William Kist (2000), a current advocate for new literacies, admits that when he began his teaching career, he used film “mainly to support and enrich a printed text” (p. 711). Teasley and Wilder (1997) see this philosophy as so prevalent that they caution against it. In fact, in their text *Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adults* (1997), they encourage teachers to use films as stand-alone texts. Costanzo (1992) supports such a position and says that “because they tell a story, feature films can be read as literature” (p. 8). Fehlman (1996) argues that “if ‘literary’ describes thoughtful textual response, then viewing can be as literary as reading” (p. 47).

Contributing to the discussion of film’s value for English instruction, Muller (2006) cautions that in looking at the literary strengths of film, teachers must be careful to distinguish film from print texts. She finds that many educators teach film in the exact ways they do print literature by focusing on “elements such as plot, symbolism, and setting – elements they would analyze in reading a printed text” (p. 33). She advocates using film to help students visualize literary theory but proposes that teachers do so by teaching the cinematic techniques and the vocabulary of film. Muller insists on the importance of teaching film as a film text, not merely an adaptation of a print text that should be analyzed from the same perspective. She suggests that teaching students to analyze film for its cinematic

attributes allows teachers the opportunity to teach visual examples of theory and then lead students to “apply and translate this understanding to printed texts” (p. 37). Both Golden (2001) and Muller (2006) present an approach that centers on teaching cinematic techniques and the language of film as opposed to examining it for its use of literary elements.

### *The Film Experience*

Even among film scholars, interest in the actual process of creating meaning from film is limited. Close examination of introductory film textbooks reveals that these texts are premised on the assumption that readers have mastered the basic skills of film comprehension. These texts instead focus on instruction in the technical aspects: shot, frame, angle, *mise en scène* (all the elements within the film frame), etc. (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008; Gianetti, 2008). This knowledge is necessary for a more sophisticated understanding of film texts and a more thorough understanding of how films are created and produced. The goal is to lead viewers into critical analysis and to prepare them for film theory.

Phillips (2000) has shown some interest in analyzing the comprehension process. In *Understanding Film Texts: Meaning and Experience* (2000), he presents an in-depth explanation of film’s technical aspects but also outlines the basic process by which viewers create meaning from film. Offering little detail, he identifies four aspects of film viewing: processing information, directing attention, interpreting, and evaluating (p. 14). In these first two stages, the viewer decodes visual and aural cues in the film text and directs attention to the information presented so as to respond either cognitively or affectively (p. 7). It is in the interpreting stage, that the viewer makes meaning of text (pp. 7-8). Finally, the viewer performs the more advanced work of making critical judgments (p. 8). This fourth stage can

occur only after the viewer has an initial understanding of the film and is ready to engage in a more critical analysis. It is this fourth stage that is the focus of film studies (p. 9). Indeed, Phillips thinks it unnecessary to elaborate on the earlier stages, for he explains that “the basic comprehension skills we need to make sense of a film are learnt from childhood onwards in our regular and frequent exposure to movies” (p. 7). His assumption is that the viewer does not need instruction in the comprehension of film, only the analysis.

These assumptions that the viewer has already mastered the basic reading of film lead to a significant question. Why? Why are viewers so adept at creating meaning from film texts? Film’s detractors might argue that it is easier because it involves less mental engagement. As Ostrander (2003) says, the film presents the image while the written text demands that the reader create the image. But the perceived simplicity of film is deceptive (Kolker, 1998). Phillips (2000) contends that reading a film is a “complex mental experience” (p. 7) that demands viewers “‘decode’ both visual and aural information” (p. 7). Gianetti (2008) emphasizes that films “[bombard] the spectator with literally hundreds of symbolic ideas and emotions at the same time” (p. 536). Like any other text, film relies upon the cohesion of these various elements to create meaning (Kolker, 1998, p. 11). That these elements come together so seamlessly as to allow viewers to consider comprehension effortless speaks to film’s sophistication, not its simplicity (Kolker, 1998; Phillips, 2000).

As film scholars reference the viewer’s proficiency with understanding film, they consistently speak of how the viewer responds to the film experience. Phillips (2000) believes the viewer derives meaning through a response to experiencing film (p. 6). Bordwell and Thompson (2008) describe film as an art and write that it pulls together many technical,

creative, and physical resources to “create an experience for audiences” (p. 47). In this estimation, the purpose of film is to engage audiences in a unique experience (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 2). Similarly, Dick (1990) maintains that “film provides an experience that cannot be found elsewhere” (p. 201) because “it can crystallize an emotion or an idea into a visual image” (p. 201) and integrates words and images “so that they become inseparable” (p. 201).

The intensity of these experiences with film is undeniable; the power of this experience comes because the viewer is so intensely involved with its message. McGinn (2005) says that viewers are “*gripped*” (p. 4) by film because “the mind seems to step into another sphere of engagement” (p. 4). Viewers are not merely seeing a story presented; they become part of that story as they intimately experience it for themselves (Costanzo, 1992). The immediacy of film intensifies the engagement and, as viewers respond emotionally to this experience, the connection with the film becomes even more personal (Sheridan, Owen, Macrorie, & Marcus, 1994; Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). This sense of engagement has become such an established element of the concept of movies, that the viewer approaches a film with the primary expectation of being engaged (Sobchack & Sobchack, 1994).

The intense engagement with film and its resulting sense of experience might be attributed to its being a multimodal medium. Most obviously, it incorporates both sight and sound (Jinks, 1972; Mast, 1983). The two dimensions are not activated separately but rather are woven together (Phillips, 2000, p. ix). Within these dimensions, film utilizes other modalities such as color and music (Costanzo, 1992). But film is not limited to sight and sound. Movement and its sequence are also integral elements of film (Jinks, 1972; Mast,

1983). Taken as a whole, film becomes a multisensory experience that provides physical stimulation (Mast, 1983, p. 53) and generates a level of engagement quite different from that of written texts (Whipple, 1998).

### *Reading Film*

Many film experts describe the experience of viewing and understanding as “reading film,” and within the English language arts, the term is frequently applied to the interpretation of multiple types of text. Therefore, it is helpful to look closely at what is meant by this term *read*. NCTE (1996) defines reading as “the complex, recursive process through which we make meaning from texts, using semantics; syntax, visual, aural, and tactile cues; context; and prior knowledge” (p. 51). By this definition, reading describes the entire process from the initial decoding of the various textual cues to the act of comprehension in which the reader responds to those cues to construct meaning. It would, therefore, apply to the first three of Phillips’ (2000) four stages of reading film – processing information, directing attention, and interpreting – the steps which he assumes come easily.

Similarly, reading involves both reader and text in a process that is most frequently described as transactional. The idea of reading as transaction has its origins in the reader-response theory first proposed by Louise Rosenblatt in the 1930s. In the fourth edition of *Literature for Exploration* (1983), Rosenblatt asserts that “the text brings into the reader’s consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes” (p. 30). The reader then responds to these stimuli by making personal associations and using these associations to create meaning. The reader brings “intellectual and emotional meanings” (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 25) to the text, which in turn

provides a channel for “thoughts and feelings” (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 25). In this view of reading, the text is not the authority with the reader trying to access an inherent meaning; instead the reader and text are equally important to the transactional process that results in meaning (Rosenblatt, 1994; Rosenblatt, 2003). This transaction between reader and text generates “a more or less organized imaginative experience” (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 25).

This transaction between reader and text is an active process (Goodman & Burke, 1989; Wilhelm, 1997; Beers, 2003). In order to perform this transaction, the reader must be engaged with the text. The reader does not perform this process in a vacuum but brings to the text prior experiences and understandings of the world (Beers, 2003; Weaver, 1994). Within the mind of the reader, these prior experiences and understandings have formed schemas or “organized chunk[s] of knowledge or experience” (Weaver, 1994, p. 17). For reading comprehension to occur, the reader draws from this schematic context “to relate ideas in the text to ideas in the world and their own beliefs, to place what they are reading within a relevant context of their lives” (Beers, 2003, p.35). In this way, it can be said that “reading means bringing meaning to a text in order to get meaning from it” (Weaver, 1994, p. 42).

The transaction between reader and text is also influenced by context, which “can be an event, a place, a social group, a realm of knowledge or a moment in time” (Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000, p. 165). For this reason, many experts describe reading as a social process (Rosenblatt, 1994; Weaver, 1994). In a series of case studies, Moje (Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000) finds that “the group [readers] worked with [and] the individuals in the group made a difference in what was learned and in the literacy practices they use to learn” (p.

173). Even when reading is a solitary act, the reader activates the schematic context which draws upon prior social interactions and even future anticipated ones (Weaver, 1994).

While this process of transaction may be so refined as to come automatically to accomplished readers, it is neither simple nor instantaneous. Research has shown that readers are continuously engaged in the process throughout the reading event (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001). As they decode the material, they draw from prior knowledge and their context to interact with the text. Researchers have also found that successful readers approach this process strategically (Goodman & Burke, 1989; Israel, 2008). In considering this process, strategies can be thought of as “moves and actions that readers of all levels engage in all the time while reading almost all materials” (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2001, p. 31). The reader does not move linearly through a set sequence as called for when decoding (Moje, Dillon, & O’Brien, 2000; Block & Duffy, 2008). Instead, the reader relies upon a store of strategies, drawing from this store the particular strategy as needed.

Although research on the reading of film has been limited, it appears that the viewer engages with the film text in a similar process – one that is both transactional and strategic. The viewer brings to the film prior experiences and knowledge (Phillips, 2000). Based upon his work teaching film to high school students, Fehlman (1994) has described the process as transactional and asserts that, whether reading print or film texts, his students work toward the same goal: “to make thoughtful connections between school experiences and personal experiences” (p. 39). Shull (1989), also working with high school students, reaches the similar conclusion about the “transactional relationship” (p. 53) between the viewer and film

and finds that through film her students “experienced the fullness of the reader’s role” (p. 56).

Bordwell & Thompson (2008) discuss how the viewer’s knowledge of film genre aids in the understanding of the film. Drawing from this knowledge of genre, the viewer approaches the film with set expectations and makes predictions and judgments based on those expectations. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) specifically state that understanding of genre is a type of prior experience that influences the way in which the viewer responds to the film’s cues (p. 58). This assertion supports the idea of reading film as transactional process and illustrates the way in which a viewer incorporates a specific contextual understanding.

In a study that used transactional theory to examine children’s responses to literature, Cox and Many (1992) analyzed children’s responses to both print literature and film. From this study, they stipulate that transactional theory can be applied to film as readily as to a print text and call for expanded research to explore responses to multiple textual forms (p. 42). Examining the students’ responses, they found evidence of personal connections with film in that “a large percentage of the efferent responses to films were related in some way to the students’ lives (p. 67). Based on their analysis, Cox & Many (1992) conclude that film “has the same potential as a valid way of knowing, learning, and understanding as that of literature” (p. 61). In a later discussion, Cox (1996) again asserts that children respond to film just as they do to literature (p. 458).

In a study of kindergarten children, Fingeret (2008) examined how the students responded when the teacher built an instructional unit around a film text rather than a written

text. Fingeret's conclusions align with the research of Cox and Many. She found that the students responded to the film text in similar ways as they did to written texts. What she found even more significant was that the students tended to retain information from the film text longer than they did with print texts. While Fingeret is unable to offer a conclusive explanation for why the children's retention of the film text was stronger, she strongly points to the teacher's instructional methods and explains that the teacher employed methods that caused the students to engage directly with the text.

### *Students as Expert Readers of Film*

If the processes of reading written text and film are so similar, why is it that understanding film is considered to be automatic, a skill children acquire easily, while comprehending print texts creates a struggle for so many readers? Is there something about film that better prompts the reader to engage in this transactional process? These questions provide rich material for research as few studies have fully explored the reading of film, and there is little empirical evidence to explain how and why the reading of film appears to be more easily mastered. At this point, the research merely points to possible explanations.

Some researchers credit the accessibility of film for students' proficiency with this textual form (Whipple, 1998). Cox and Many (1996) hypothesize that the reader is more familiar with film and feels more authority and ownership of this text. They describe the students with whom they worked as "veteran movie-goers and budding film critics" (p. 65) and propose that these students "may be more equipped to critically and authentically analyze film than literature" (p. 65). Because they do not typically see film analysis as a school activity, these students were able to respond to a film without fear of being right or

wrong. Cox and Many believe students feel ownership of film while “they may identify ownership of literature with teachers and schools” (p. 66).

Although a sense of authority may contribute to the reader’s competence with film, it cannot solely account for the reading proficiency. Looking closely at how the reader experiences film reveals another potential explanation. As discussed above, film scholars largely agree that film is a powerful medium because of its ability to engage the viewer. The reader does not simply view a film, but rather experiences it. It is this active engagement that enables the reader to successfully read the film. In fact, reading researchers have long established that active engagement is a key element of reading print texts, and the ultimate goal of reading has been seen as “the creation, in concert with texts, of significant experiences and meanings” (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 16).

Again, the question becomes one of how the film generates this type of engagement. The answer may be that film is a multimodal text. While there is widespread agreement that film effectively communicates because it is multimodal, relatively little research directly investigates how this characteristic functions in helping the viewer create meaning, nor is there much research that seeks to examine this aspect of film in contrast to the reading of a print text. One discussion that broaches the topic can be found in Wolfe’s (1979) argument for the inclusion of film in English instruction. He suggests that to interpret film, the reader must utilize both left and right brain neurological function (p. 62). However, Wolfe does not provide research to support this argument; he simply appeals to teachers to use film “to facilitate students’ development of oracy, visual literacy, and imagistic thinking processes” (p. 62).

While film encompasses a number of learning modalities, it is frequently considered to be primarily a visual text. Research points to the visualization as a crucial element of the reading process and one that has frequently been identified as lacking in struggling readers (Block & Duffy, 2008). Hibbing and Rankin-Erikson (2003), who describe themselves as scholar-practitioners, say that their classroom research has shown that students who are unable to visualize what they read are more likely to have difficulty with reading comprehension. As a result of his classroom-based research, Wilhelm (2004) believes so strongly in the importance of visualization that he has focused much of his work on strategies to increase visualization and has even published a text entitled *Reading is Seeing*.

Block and Pressley (2003) suggest that readers more often struggle with visualization than with the other processes of reading comprehension. For this reason, some educators have paired film with reading print text as a means of helping students with the visualization process. Begoray (2001) proposes that this strategy is especially helpful for middle school students who “are still moving from concrete to abstract thinking.” She believes that students can be taught to transfer the strategies they use with film text to print texts. Ostrander (2003) also uses film to help students visualize print texts and specifies that it can be especially effective with students who are visual learners.

### *Preservice Teachers and Film*

Little has been written about preservice teachers and their perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. Albers and Harste (2007) reference a program that teaches preservice teachers how to create digital video and another teacher education program in which preservice teachers “learn about and create multimodal texts using IM, iMovie, blogs,

wikis, and iPods to explore more fully the potential of medial tools to communicate and to critically study how media can shape interpretation” (p. 19). While these programs include instruction in how to create digital movies, the authors do not discuss how this program regards traditional film texts. Miller (2007) also presents research that explores how digital video composing influences prospective teachers’ use of multimodal literacy practices, but her research focuses on the composition process rather than the reading process.

Trier (2006) is one of the few researchers who have written about research with preservice teachers and film. Trier acknowledges the shift to a multiple literacies approach and summarizes research concerned with literacies that develop outside of the school setting (p. 510). He advocates using film “to engage preservice teachers in a process of reconceptualizing the traditional, autonomous views of literacy that they had upon entering the teacher education program and of acquiring a sociocultural view of multiliteracies” (p. 511). Trier uses both written texts and film texts to guide his students through an exploration of the concepts of literacy.

Finding that his students entered his teacher education course with the “initial assumptions that literacy was essentially a matter of reading and writing print text” (Trier, 2006, p. 512), Trier provides the students with a theoretical framework for analyzing discourse and literary events. He then calls on the students to apply this theoretical framework by analyzing what he terms *school films* or “films that are in some way, even incidentally, about an educator or a student” (p. 515). Trier finds that his students began to develop “a broad conceptualization of what constitutes a *text* . . . and of what constitutes *reading*” (p. 517). Concluding the discussion of his research, Trier asserts, “Though

academic print texts were quite important, the film texts that we took up were equally important” (p. 520). Hence, Trier advocates for instruction that regards film as equal to written text. It is important to note, however, that while Trier discusses how instruction in film and discourse theory affected his students’ understanding of literacy, he does not directly discuss their perceptions of film’s place in instruction. He instead focuses on his belief in film’s importance.

Boustead and Ozturk (2004) explore the comparison of film adaptations and the original written text through a research study they conducted with preservice teachers in England. The authors base their research on the theory of “narrative as the key link between written text and visual media” (p. 53). In helping their preservice teachers to understand their own facility with film analysis, the researchers hope to help them recognize “their prospective pupils as expert readers of moving-image texts” (p. 53). Through their work with these preservice teachers, Boustead and Ozturk conclude that “viewing is never a passive process” (p. 55) and that film is a text that can be read for meaning. Again, the research study is concerned with preservice teachers, but the researchers do not directly address the preservice teachers’ beliefs about how film should be situated within English language arts instruction. They broach the topic by quoting a student who describes herself as open to including moving image and changing technology in her classroom, but the student does not reveal how she would include such literacies (p. 56).

### Conclusion

In order to provide a context for this study preservice teachers and their perceptions of film in English language arts instruction, this chapter has presented an overview of

research that examines the preservice teacher and prior beliefs, film, film within the English language arts, and preservice teachers, film, and English language arts instruction. The following chapter will detail the research methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore preservice teachers' conceptions of film and how they envisioned its use in the English language arts classroom. Therefore, it sought to answer the research question: what do preservice teachers perceive to be the role of film in English language arts instruction? This chapter describes the research process used to explore this question. The discussion of research procedures includes an overview of the topic, the theoretical framework, site selection and participants, data collection, data analysis, research validity and reliability, safeguards against researcher bias, ethical issues, and limitations of the study.

### Overview of the Topic

A multiliteracies approach to English language arts instruction calls for teachers to reexamine their instruction so that greater emphasis is given to nonprint texts such as music, visual arts, and film (Harste, 2003). With much attention being focused on emerging technologies and digital texts such as weblogs, wikis, and digital video for both reading and composing, the positioning of film in English language arts instruction comes into question. As a nonprint text, film has long been included for the purpose of better illuminating a print text, but seldom has it been regarded as a primary text (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Vetrie, 2004). As outlined in the review of related literature, the call for a multiliteracies approach to English language arts instruction brings into question whether film will be given greater primacy or if it will be overlooked in favor of more popular nonprint forms.

Preservice teachers are uniquely positioned to provide an interesting insight into this issue. The current generation of traditional students, those between eighteen and twenty-two

years of age, are typically regarded as digital natives who have grown up with and are proficient in using various forms of digital media (Prensky, 2001). Being not so far removed from the middle and secondary school experiences, they are still able to speak to the ways in which film was addressed in these classrooms. While their current involvement in a teacher education program provides them with instruction in pedagogical approaches to literature and texts, field observations allow them to analyze teaching practices in real-world settings. Therefore, these students are at the nexus of multiple influences. Given their multiple views of their own experiences as students, their exposure to innovative practices, and their current classroom/field observations, learning how they see film situated within instruction can be enlightening, for it may also reveal how preservice teachers are responding to and internalizing these multiple influences.

#### Appropriateness of the Research Approach

An exploration of preservice teachers' perspectives on film in the English language arts classroom called for the use of a qualitative approach. This study was primarily concerned with the individual perceptions of a phenomenon. My goal was not to quantify or measure perceptions, but rather to explore the depth of these perceptions. Through naturalistic inquiry, I gathered data that told the stories of how these preservice teachers formed their conceptions of the English language arts and film as a text.

To discover the ways in which these preservice teachers came to understand film, I used a multiple case study approach. A qualitative case study methodology was well suited to my goals, for it "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). In this situation, I was concerned with how preservice

teachers make meaning and form perceptions from the multiple influences of their social and educational contexts. As defined by Yin (2009), case study inquiry is appropriate when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

Working with multiple cases afforded me the analytic benefit of being able to compare across cases (Yin, 2009). The cases consisted of five individual preservice teachers, who were selected from a university adolescent literature class. These five cases were “selected *purposefully* to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon [preservice teachers’ perceptions of film in the English language arts instruction] *in depth*” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). The participants and the methods for selecting them are described in greater detail below.

### Theoretical Framework

I approached this study of preservice teachers and their perceptions of film and teaching with an interest in learning more about how they respond to the multiple influences of prior experience, their teacher education program, and classroom observations to create meaning. To inform this study, I relied upon social constructivism as a theoretical framework. I selected this theory because the understanding of reality is individually constructed by each learner (Patton, 2002, p. 96). Additionally, individuals construct this understanding of the world in a social context. They are exposed to countless experiences and variation in their lives as well as interactions with others, all of which help to give shape to their conceptions.

The purpose of this study was to explore preservice teachers’ perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. It was important that I remember that constructivism is a

theory of learning. While I was working with individuals who were preparing to be teachers, my primary interest was not in how they teach; it was in how they construct meaning. I wanted to learn more about how they internalized their prior experiences, their social context, and their educational setting to form a view of how film fits into the English language arts. Research has suggested that preservice teachers use prior knowledge and belief systems as “filters for processing program content and making sense of classroom contexts” (Hollingsworth, 1989, p. 168). A constructivist stance assumes that “phenomena can only be understood within the context in which they are studied” (Patton, 2002, p.98). Investigating the perceptions of these preservice teachers necessitated that I learn as much as possible about their context. By entering as a participant observer into the environment of their Literature for Adolescents class, I immersed myself in the social context in which much of their learning took place.

#### Site Selection and Participants

The site for this research study was a Middle Grades Language Arts and Social Studies program in the College of Education at a large public university. Because this program embraced innovative technologies and emphasized a multimodal approach to English language arts, it was an appropriate choice for this research study as it allowed me to explore preservice teachers’ perceptions of film within a context that recognized the importance of both print and nonprint texts.

The participants in this study were preservice teachers enrolled in the Literature for Adolescents course as a requirement for their major in Middle Grades Language Arts and Social Studies. While in general their program of study advocated a strong multiliteracies

stance, their adolescent literature course specifically addressed the relationship between film and print novels.

As much as is possible, the students completed this teacher education program as a cohort group, and most had similar class schedules. They were enrolled in Literature for Adolescents during the fall of their senior year, the semester prior to full-time assignment as student teachers. In addition to adolescent literature, they were simultaneously enrolled in Methods for Teaching Language Arts, Methods for Teaching Social Studies, and other courses needed for degree completion.

During the semester, these students received their student teaching placements. As a requirement of the program, they completed a minimum of twenty hours of fieldwork within the classroom where they would be student teaching in the spring. Therefore, the semester's experiences were structured to provide for extensive coursework at the university and considerable time spent in an actual middle school classroom. This combination of experience allowed students to consider the English language arts from both a theoretical and a practical perspective.

The adolescent literature class met weekly from 12:25 until 3:10 on Wednesday afternoons. From the beginning of the semester through mid October, the class met in the education building of the College of Education. For the last third of the semester, the class was held at the College of Education's research facility where the preservice teachers worked directly with middle school students to create a project based on an adolescent literature text. This project was seen as the semester's culminating experience and was designed to include the creation of a digital film product.

One of the major requirements of the adolescent literature class, prior to the culminating project with middle school students, was the presentation of a Video/Booktalk. This assignment required students to work in pairs to select an adolescent literature text that has been adapted to film. Students prepared a presentation that discussed both the written text and the film adaptation. To accompany their presentation, the students also created a one-page handout that described the film, analyzed the stylistic characteristics, critiqued the film's relationship to the original print text, and explored methods for using the film in a middle school classroom.

I selected five preservice teachers to serve as the individual cases. As is typical of qualitative research, this study focused on a small sample size. Working with multiple cases afforded me the analytic benefit of being able to compare across cases (Yin, 2009). My first priority in selecting case subjects was to choose participants from whom I could learn the most (Stake, 2005, p. 451). To do so, I employed a purposeful sampling, a method of sampling that "focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 230) In selecting my five cases from the population of the Literature for Adolescents class, I used a maximum variation sampling method, a type of purposeful sampling that "aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (Patton, 2002, p. 234).

The class consisted of fifteen students, thirteen females and two males. Two of the female students were African American. The remaining eleven female students and the two male students were European American/Caucasian. Twelve of the female class members were traditional age students who had enrolled in college directly after completing high

school. One of the female students and both of the male students had entered college after pursuing other careers.

Taking into account differences in age, gender, and ethnicity, I selected five individuals who varied as much as was possible within this group. Since the class was predominantly female, I selected four female participants and one male. Of the four subjects, three were traditional-age European American/Caucasian women, and one was an African American woman who had returned to college after some years away from school. The fifth case study subject was a male European American/Caucasian re-entry student. By choosing individuals who showed some variation in characteristics, I wished to discover if there were any emerging themes that were common to all of these subjects

When the study began, these preservice teachers had not yet received their student teaching placements. Because their program met the requirements for licensure in both middle grades English language arts and middle grades social studies, these preservice teachers could be assigned to student teach in either or both of these content areas. When the subjects received their student teaching placements in September, two of the five were assigned to teach only English language arts, two would be teaching social studies only, and one was assigned to teach both subjects.

Restricting the study to five subjects allowed for comparison across cases while permitting in-depth investigation of each subject. Merriam (2009) asserts that “the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (p. 49). However, Creswell (1998) cautions that “the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis” (p. 63) and suggests limiting the multiple-

case study to four subjects. However, I chose to select five subjects to account for the possibility that a subject might drop out of the study; if such a circumstance were to occur, the four remaining subjects could provide enough information for a viable study. I also chose five subjects to allow for a careful balance between variety and the opportunity to learn (Stake, 1995). Because I was greatly interested in looking for themes across subjects, five subjects additionally offered a better opportunity to evaluate if and to what extent there were such commonalities or whether there were noteworthy differences.

### Data Collection

To develop complete case studies of the five participants of the study, data collection included three forms: interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews provided the primary data source as each subject of the case studies was interviewed twice. Participant observations were conducted in the adolescent literature course, and relevant documents produced by each subject in this course were included in the data analysis. Both interviews and participant observations also yielded extensive field notes. These multiple data sources allowed for triangulation of data and helped to support the validity of the study.

#### *Interviews*

Interviews provided the primary data source for this research study. The five subjects of the case studies were individually interviewed twice: at the half-way point of the semester and again at the semester's end. Each round of interviews was conducted within a one-week period at the convenience of the individual subjects. Interviews were conducted on campus in a private room in either the education building or in the College of Education's research facility.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to be relatively brief (approximately 15-30 minutes each) and focused on prepared questions. As researcher, I followed an interview guide (See Appendices A and B.) but allowed myself the freedom to probe for further clarification of answers and to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes. Prior to introducing the planned questions at each interview, I opened with a greeting and a few moments of general conversation about school-related topics. Because I had spent considerable time with the subjects in their classroom setting, we had developed an amicable rapport, a fact that helped establish a comfortable setting for the interview process. In each interview session, I reiterated the purpose of my study, reassured the subject that he/she could decline to answer questions or choose to end the interview at any time, and explained that I would be asking prepared questions. I ended all interviews by asking participants to share any additional thoughts that had occurred during the conversation.

The first round of interviews was conducted in October at the halfway point of the semester during the week after the students returned from their fall break. By this time, the students had all presented their Video/Booktalks and observed their classmates’ presentations. They had also completed assigned readings about the teaching of adolescent literature; these readings had included sections about the integration of media. During these interviews, I asked questions about the subjects’ background experiences with film in previous English language arts classes as well as their experiences with film in the Literature for Adolescents class. I also included questions that asked the subjects to explain their

understanding of literacy and how they see film as fitting into English language arts instruction. (For the complete list of questions, please see Appendix A.)

The second round of interviews was conducted in December during the exam week after the semester's regular classes had ended. Subjects had then completed their participation in *The Outsiders* Project, in which they worked with seventh grade students to create digitally recorded music videos that integrated music and literature response. Following the same protocols as in the earlier interviews, I again established a friendly, conversational setting, asked questions from a prepared interview guide, and allowed subjects to share additional information of their choosing. In this interview, I asked specifically about their experiences with *The Outsiders* Project and about connections they saw between this project and the Video/Booktalks. I also asked the students to explain their definition of *text* and to discuss the concept of film as text. I again asked subjects about their perception of how film should be used in English language arts instruction. (The complete list of interview questions is included in Appendix B).

All interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder. Participants were fully aware that they were being recorded and were given the option to stop the interview should they become uncomfortable with the questions. Within two weeks of the interview, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. As advocated by Merriam (2009), the transcription process helped me to develop "intimate familiarity" (p. 110) with the resulting data. To check for accuracy after the initial transcription, I carefully reviewed the data while listening to the audio recordings and made all necessary changes. I made notes of long pauses and included

any sentence fillers (ahm, uh, well, etc.). Following each interview, I also completed field notes that documented the experience and included my observational notes.

### *Participant Observations*

As another data source, I engaged in participant observation throughout the Literature for Adolescents class. Attending all meetings, I observed the subjects over the course of an entire semester and documented my observations through field notes. My intent was to go beyond merely observing the preservice teachers in this setting, but to enter into their world and experience this setting with them (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Patton, 2002). I read the required texts and participated in class discussions. My relationship with the students was honest. They were aware that I was working on a study related to the use of film in the English language arts and that I was particularly interested in the use of film in their Video/Booktalks. In accordance with policies outlined by the Institutional Review Board of the University, all students provide prior consent to my observing their class and accessing their class work.

The participant observations yielded extensive field notes. During and immediately following each class session, I documented in these notes descriptions of the classroom setting, the classroom participants, and the day's conversation/experience. I included direct quotations from both the professor and class members. The goal of the observations was not to use the observational data to draw conclusion about the subjects; rather the observations enabled me to understand fully the context in which they were experiencing the integration of film in English language arts instruction. My observations and resulting field notes were not limited to the five case study subjects but also included other students in the class. This

attention was necessary to document fully the social context the five subjects experienced and provide a detailed academic context for the data triangulation.

### *Documents*

For the purpose of this study, I examined all professor and student-generated documents associated with the Literature for Adolescents class. I collected all documents prepared and/or distributed by the professor including the course syllabus, directions for assignments, miscellaneous handouts, and a journal article describing how film might be used in an English language arts class. I examined the course website which, in addition to providing the course syllabus and guidelines for student assignments, also included overviews of the required novels in the course and databases of young adult literature that had been created by students from the previous five years.

I also examined all work products turned in by the students. These documents included in-class writings, weekly response assignments, book reviews, guides for the Video/Booktalks, digital recordings of the Video/Booktalks, and digital recordings of *The Outsiders* Project music videos. Each week the instructor began the class session with an in-class freewrite. On most occasions, students were allowed to keep these writings as personal reflections. However, three of these writings focused specifically on film, and the instructor collected these writings. Students were aware that both the instructor and I would be reading these reflections. These writings occurred at the beginning, middle, and end point of the semester. I collected these writings from all class participants because I believed they would help to develop a more complete portrait of the class as well as provide specific data for each case study subject.

Each week the students submitted a written response to the assigned textbook readings. The professor referred to these responses as *Q & As* because the students were asked to determine a pertinent question related to the reading assignment and prepare an answer based on their understanding of the text. I reviewed all of these submissions but chose to limit my collection of data to the case study participants. While I reviewed each week's submissions, I chose to use only those assignments that I deemed relevant to the research question.

I collected all student-prepared handouts. These handouts included two book reviews from each student. Because some students were including information about whether the book had been adapted into a film, I considered these handouts relevant. The third student-prepared handout accompanied the students' presentations of their Video/Booktalks. As prompted by their assignment guide, these reviews included information about both the young adult book and film, a plot summary, a critique of the film in relation to the text, and suggestions for using the film in the classroom.

In addition, I digitally recorded the class members' Video/Booktalks and used those digital artifacts for analysis. Because the case study subjects partnered with other members of the class, it was necessary to record presentations that included other class members as well as the case study subjects. These recordings included the actual student presentations and the whole-class discussions that followed the presentations. Later in the semester when the students were working on their collaborative projects with the middle school students, I also collected copies of the final digitally recorded projects for *The Outsiders* Project. These videos were created by groups of university and middle school students with approximately

ten people in each group. I considered them relevant data as both class documents and examples of student-created digital videos, a form which the preservice teachers closely associated with the use of film.

### Data Analysis

As outlined above, the three sources of data for this study were interviews, participant observations, and documents. All data were analyzed and coded for emerging patterns and themes. As Merriam (2009) emphasizes, “data collection and analysis is a simultaneous process in qualitative research” (p. 165). Therefore, I began initial data analysis soon after entering the Literature for Adolescents class for participant observations. As mentioned above, I took detailed field notes as I observed the class sessions. In keeping with Patton’s (2002) recommendations, I included in these field notes my “insights, interpretations, beginning analyses, and working hypotheses” (p. 304). I chose to delineate these initial interpretations by indenting, marking them with arrows in my notes, and labeling them as “observer comment.” I also engaged in memo writing. These memos were separate analytic notes I recorded after I left the field setting and reviewed my field notes. As explained by Glesne (1999) these memos were a “type of data analysis conducted throughout the research process” (p. 53) and they represented my first attempts at interpreting the data.

Once I had completed the first round of interviews, I reviewed all data and began initial coding. I used a method of open coding in which I made “notations next to bits of data that [struck me] as potentially relevant for answering [my] research question” (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). This preliminary analysis provided me a sense of patterns that were beginning

to emerge and helped to guide the research that followed. I continued to analyze and follow a process of open coding throughout the semester.

After completing all data collection, I then reviewed the data in its entirety. While I had generated initial codes in my preliminary analysis, this second analysis offered a more holistic view of the evidence. I did not use statistical software but instead coded the data personally by hand. Having reviewed all of the open codes, I began to group these codes into categories. In this way, I began to use a method of analytical coding that represented my interpretations of the data (Merriam, 2009). I followed this process for all data – interview transcripts, field notes, and documents. I then merged these sets of categories into “one master list of concepts derived from [the] sets of data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 180). This close examination required that I give full attention to all information and resulted in my intimate knowledge of the data.

As Patton (2002) suggests, there is no absolute prescribed method for analyzing qualitative data. The goal is to search for and identify the emerging themes. Such a task can be overwhelming when considering the large amounts of data generated by the qualitative study (Patton, 2002). Here I relied upon my research question and my theoretical framework. Therefore, as I looked for patterns and themes, I sifted through the information to determine what data were relevant to my concern with preservice teachers’ perceptions of film in the English language arts. At times it was necessary to re-sort the data into different categories, to merge categories, and to recognize that some of the emerging patterns were not relevant to my question. Because I was conducting a multiple case study, I gave careful attention to the themes that emerged across cases. I made note of the themes that emerged only within an

individual case and used those themes to create the individual portrait of that case study. Once I had identified relevant themes that emerged across cases, I used the theoretical framework to provide a structure. I used the constructivist theory to guide my analysis of how these preservice teachers create meaning.

### Research Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are perceived differently in qualitative research than in quantitative research. For the purposes of qualitative research, valid research provides sufficient evidence to demonstrate its plausibility and trustworthiness (Johnson, 1997). Two of the criteria established in Guba's well-accepted model of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for addressing validity and reliability are truth value, and neutrality. Of these criteria, Krefting (1991) judges truth value to be the most important for measuring the validity of qualitative research. She defines truth value as "[establishing] how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants, and context" (Krefting, 1991, p. 215). One method through which I strengthened the truth value of my study was by spending prolonged time on field research. My research design called for spending a full semester with this group of preservice teachers and being present for all meetings of their Literature for Adolescents class. The data generated from the observations provided a full portrait of the context and helped me to understand how the preservice teachers developed in that context.

Another method of strengthening the truth value is to generate multiple sources of evidence. For this study I depended on three sources of evidence (interviews, participant observation, and class documents). Analyzing these multiple sources allowed me to

triangulate the data and make comparisons across data. Conducting member checks in which I “[solicited] feedback on [the] emerging findings from some of the people [I] interviewed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 217) also improved the validity. After completing interviews, I shared the transcripts with the case study subjects and asked them to review the data. Because these data are intended to be their words, the most effective means of assuring accuracy was by giving them the opportunity to correct or add to the transcripts.

For qualitative research, neutrality does not mean that the researcher is absent from the study or that the researcher is free of all feeling and thought on the topic. Here neutrality refers to the research design. This characteristic can be addressed through an audit trail. I carefully documented all steps of the research process in such detail that the procedure could be replicated. Triangulation also helps to affirm neutrality. By comparing the data that resulted from three sources (interviews, observation, and documents), I was able to triangulate the data and determine if results were consistent across sources. Because the researcher is such an integral part of the qualitative process, personal experiences and potential biases must be acknowledged. This reflexivity is demonstrated through my subjectivity statement presented below.

In addition to assuring neutrality of research procedures, the audit trail and subjectivity statement aided in establishing the reliability of this study. In qualitative research, the main goal of reliability is to “minimize the errors and biases in a study” (Yin, 2009, p. 45). Within Guba’s model, reliability is described as consistency. The audit trail should be described in such full detail that someone could replicate the study with similar results. Yin (2009) makes an important distinction that this replication must be of the same

sample. In qualitative research, it should not be expected that the same procedures would produce the same results with a different sample, for qualitative research does not contend that its results are generalizable to the larger populations.

#### Safeguards against Researcher Bias

I cannot remove myself or attempt to obscure my presence from this study, for qualitative research is predicated on the assumption that the researcher is the instrument of the study. Indeed, a postmodern perspective like constructivism embraces the researcher's presence. Yet I cannot pretend that I do not bring my own set of experiences, biases, and ways of knowing to this study. Standards for validity in qualitative research demand that I acknowledge those influences.

I am a middle school English language arts teacher. Although I have been away from that teaching role for almost three years, that identity still strongly colors my view of the world. I cannot read a book, watch a movie, view a photograph, or listen to a song without wondering how it would speak to my students. During my eleven years of teaching middle school, I came to understand that individuals understand the world in different ways and that those differing ways of understanding affect their approaches to reading and writing.

My teaching experiences provided me with countless opportunities to use film in the classroom, and over the course of eleven years as a classroom teacher, my philosophy about the use of film evolved greatly. I began my teaching career with the perception that film should be used only as a supplement to a written text. However, any an experience during my first year of teaching caused me to reconsider my concept of film in English language arts instruction. While showing my students the film adaptation of a short story they had read in

class, I noticed that the students appeared to be highly engaged with the film. My initial reaction to this engagement was somewhat dismissive; this particular group of students included a number of struggling readers, so it seemed natural that they would enjoy the film version more than the print text. As we progressed through the movie, I continued to note the degree to which these students were participating with the text. Ignoring my directions to remain quiet, they frequently spoke aloud to the characters on the screen, and many of them asked questions about the characters and the plot – questions they had not asked when we read the print text.

I was especially impressed by Evan, an extremely weak student who was performing below grade level in all of his academic courses. Because his behavior was sometimes disruptive, I sat next to him while the class watched the film. Throughout the entire film, Evan whispered to me the observations he made about the characters and events in the film. He posed questions and spoke of his conclusions about why the characters were making specific choices. He made connections that I had not previously seen in the film. In fact, Evan's engagement with the film was so great that he offered to the entire class his ideas about how the lead actor portrayed the story's main character and why he believed the actor had been successful. I was amazed. I had never before seen Evan so involved in any content we had addressed in class, nor had I seen him express himself with such confidence.

As a result of this experience, I became greatly interested in why my students, especially my weaker students, seemed to respond so well to film. I familiarized myself with research that suggests struggling readers have difficulty visualizing the material they read. Based on this knowledge and my personal observations of students, I determined that film

should occupy a more prominent role within my English language arts instruction. I became an advocate of teaching film as a text and one that did not have to be presented in conjunction with a print text.

I am now a doctoral student preparing for a future in teacher education. As a teaching assistant, I am familiar with this academic program and the faculty who teach within it. This familiarity offers me an advantage, for I enter the students' world with an understanding of that setting. I realize that my understanding may not be the same as theirs; however, I also recognize that they do not all share a common view. I believe that each student's understanding of the preservice teacher experience has been shaped by prior experiences and by interactions in this program. By being truly reflexive about my prior experiences and my understandings of this setting and by looking at how these factors influence my concept of teaching, I can better illuminate my efforts to explore their perceptions.

#### Ethical Issues

As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in individuals and how they experience the world around them. At all times, my utmost concern must be to treat these individuals ethically and respectfully. As outlined above, I entered into the subjects' classroom community as a participant observer. I worked to form relationships with these preservice teachers and to become an accepted member of this community. Even as I was successful in that goal, I became even more keenly aware of my responsibilities as researcher. I could not use that relationship to manipulate or deceive my subjects; I consistently treated them as individuals and honored their rights. Before engaging in the study, I secured the approval of the University's Institutional Review Board and strictly adhered to our agreed upon

requirements for securing the confidentiality of the participants, storing data and protecting the participants.

To ensure that I protected the rights of the participants, I was completely transparent with them about my research. I shared my purpose for conducting this study and explained that I hope this research will add to the body of knowledge about teacher education and of film in English language arts instruction. They did not receive any compensation for participating in the project, but I explained that participation offered them an opportunity to contribute their voices to this type of research.

The participants were entitled to their privacy, yet it was be extremely difficult to guarantee their anonymity. For that reason, I promised only confidentiality. I have used pseudonyms for everyone involved in the project – case study participants, other members of their cohort group, the professor, other faculty members, and any individuals to whom the participants made reference. I am aware that being present for all class sessions gave me access to information that the preservice teachers may not wish to have shared publicly. At the beginning of the semester, I established parameters for my work with them. I have not reported any information that does not relate to my topic. More importantly, all participants had the right to request that specific information remain private; however, no one made such a request. As the semester progressed, the participants grew increasingly comfortable with my presence and regularly engaged in conversation with me before and after class. I regarded those conversations as personal and respected their expectation of privacy. On occasions when those conversations did seem relevant to this study, I specifically asked, “Do you mind

if I use this information in my research?” Upon receiving their permission, I then recorded written notes as we continued the conversation.

Students selected for the individual case studies were not in any way coerced to participate. I explained to them in detail my plans to use interview data and to collect documents from their class submissions. I proceeded only with their informed permission. In addition, they were fully aware of their right to withdraw from participation at any time.

#### Limitations of the Study

Typically a small sample size such as this one would be regarded as a limitation, but for the purposes of qualitative research, small sample sizes are common. With a goal of in-depth exploration, I was served well by the small sample of five individuals. I sought to collect information-rich data, and I could best do so by focusing my efforts toward a detailed investigation of a small sample. My objective was depth, not breadth.

The completion of this project as a doctoral dissertation also points to another limitation of the study; I am a novice researcher. While I have completed rigorous coursework in qualitative research, this project was my first extensive use of those skills. However, I completed the study under the careful guidance of my dissertation chair and committee. The experienced researchers served as invaluable resources as I navigated the challenges of dissertation research. I also worked within the parameters dictated by the Graduate School and my doctoral program. Their requirements provided structure to my study and assured that I engaged in rigorous research.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described how I used a multiple case study approach to explore preservice teachers' perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. The next chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the findings that resulted from this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This qualitative research study was driven by the question, what are preservice teachers' perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. In order to explore the research question, this study used a multiple case study approach to focus on five preservice teachers. Beginning with a portrait of the Literature for Adolescents class, the context from which I studied all five case study subjects, this chapter details the findings of this multiple case study. The class overview precedes a profile of each of the case study subjects. These profiles are followed by a presentation of major themes that emerged from cross-case analysis of the case studies.

### The Class

Literature for Adolescents is a required course for all students completing the Middle Grades Language Arts and Social Studies program. Offered in the fall only, its enrollment is limited to students who will be student teaching during the following semester. During the semester of this study, the course was taught by Dr. Presley, the English education professor who designed Literature for Adolescents as a "methods-type course." Classified by the University as both an English and an education course, Literature for Adolescents addressed young adult literature and the pedagogy used for teaching this literature. The course syllabus reflected that dual focus in its overview: "Designed for prospective teachers of English language arts, this course acquaints students with the history, types, and characteristics of literature for adolescents. It emphasizes the literature itself with a supporting pedagogy."

As outlined on the course syllabus, the class required six texts – five adolescent novels and a young adult literature textbook. In addition to the five required novels, students

were responsible for reading another six young adult novels of their choice. Based on these additional readings, they generated two book reviews and a database of young adult literature. Each week students prepared a “Question and Answer” (Q&A) assignment in which they developed a question based on that week’s textbook readings and then offered an answer that reflected their understanding of that reading. The students also took part in an “On-line Literature Community,” in which they participated in both asynchronous and synchronous discussions of the books they were reading for the course.

During the semester of this study, there were fifteen preservice teachers enrolled in Literature for Adolescents. All of these students were also enrolled in other classes to meet the requirements of their major. Upon receiving their student teaching placements, they were responsible for completing twenty hours of field observation in the classroom in which they would student teach the following semester. Because the students would be licensed to teach both middle grades language arts and social studies, their teaching assignments could be in either or both of those subjects. The students received their teaching placements in mid September; therefore, those teaching placements were unknown when this study began.

The Literature for Adolescents class met on Wednesday afternoons from 12:30 p.m. until 3:15. During the first ten weeks of the semester, the class met in the University’s education building in a classroom that included a technology station with a computer, document camera, DVD player, and LCD projector. On the first day of class, Dr. Presley asked the students to arrange the desks in large circle so they could sit facing one another. In the subsequent class sessions, the students rearranged the desks upon arriving and seated themselves in a circle without prompting. For the first ten weeks of the semester, class

meetings followed the same pattern for the first ten weeks of class. Before class began, Dr. Presley returned the students' Question and Answer (Q&A) assignment from the week before. Once everyone had arrived, she opened each class with quiet writing time; she provided a prompt relevant to that day's topic, and then she and the students wrote quietly for approximately ten minutes. These writing prompts frequently asked the preservice teachers to reflect on what they were learning about specific concepts and strategies related the teaching of young adult literature. After the writing time, Dr. Presley answered any questions the students had about their Q&As and addressed any relevant information such as program/College of Education announcements and reminders about homework assignments. Beginning the third week of class, the writing time and general discussion were followed by the day's Video/Booktalk presentation(s). At the conclusion of the Video/Booktalk(s), students usually took a ten-minute break and returned to class to focus on the assigned novel for that week.

Dr. Presley opened the second half of class with a general discussion of the assigned young adult novel; she offered background information, entertained student questions, and asked for personal responses to the novel. During this discussion, she asked students to draw connections between the topics in their young adult textbook and the novel they had read for that week. After whole-group discussion, students usually divided into groups to complete an activity that addressed that week's novel or a related literary genre. After the group activity, they would come back together as a whole class to review the day's topics and close the class. During this discussion, Dr. Presley encouraged the students to reflect on their group activity and how it could be used for teaching literature in a middle school setting.

Two major projects of the course, the Video/Booktalk and *The Outsiders* Project, related to film. The first of these assignments, the Video/Booktalk, extended over the first ten weeks of class; for this assignment, students worked as partners to present a booktalk that examined a young adult book along with the film adaptation of that book. To help the students prepare for this project, Dr. Presley provided a handout detailing the expectations for their presentations. As outlined on this handout, students were to “display a copy of the book” and “provide information regarding the title, author and other crucial data.” Their presentations were to include a “brief, tantalizing summary of the book,” an oral reading of a selection from the book, and a two-minute video clip (or trailer) of the film adaptation. Having presented selections from the book and its film version, students would then offer discussion of how the two versions differed and “how the film is text – i.e. what techniques/devices does the film maker use to create an effective ‘text’ and aid the meaning-making process for the viewer?” Students were also required to prepare a “one-page representation of [their] discussion” to be distributed to their classmates. This handout was to include “title, author, video information, brief summary and critique of the way the text is represented by the video, and possible classroom uses to build students’ media literacy.”

During the second class session, Dr. Presley discussed this assignment and her goals for the project. She explained its purpose by saying, “We’re trying to draw the connection between film and print text.” Saying that the assignment offered “a way to reinforce the visual,” she explained that “it brings film into [the Literature for Adolescents course] as a complement to print texts.” She suggested that through the pairing young adult books and

film adaptations of those books they would be able to explore the question, “What can film do that print can’t do? And vice versa.”

In addition to discussing the assignment’s requirements and goals, Dr. Presley also modeled a Video/Booktalk. In the third class session, she presented a Video/Booktalk for *Tuck Everlasting*, one of the course’s required novels. She followed the procedures she had outlined for the students. Beginning with background on the author and a summary of the novel, she then read aloud from the book and showed a short film clip of the scene that corresponded to the selection she had read. After the film clip, she opened the discussion by saying, “So what you saw was somewhat different from what you heard.” She then led the students through a discussion of how the print and nonprint texts differed, the techniques the filmmaker had used to create the scene, and ideas for how they might use the book and/or the film in the classroom. While Dr. Presley presented the project as an opportunity “to invite film into [the] class,” she was clear that the course’s main focus was young adult literature and that they were examining film through its relationship to that literature. Reiterating that point, she closed her model Video/Booktalk by stating, “For our purposes in our class, we want to look at how young adult literature is represented in film.” (This chapter’s case study profiles will provide more information about individual Video/Booktalk presentations.)

After ten weeks, the structure of the Literature for Adolescents class changed to allow the preservice teachers practical experience working with middle school students. Beginning the final week in October, the class met at the University’s educational research facility for *The Outsiders* Project, an assignment the preservice teachers reported strongly associating with the use of film. In this four-week project, the students from the Literature for

Adolescents class joined sophomore students from the Teaching in the Middle Years course to work with seventh graders from a public middle school that adjoined the research facility. These three groups met together in a large classroom space. The room contained tables that were set up so that groups of eight or nine people were seated together.

The main task of the project was the creation of a music video for *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), a novel the seventh graders had read in their language arts class and one of the required works in the Literature for Adolescents class. As Dr. Presley prepared the Literature for Adolescents students for this project, she told them that it would “bring literature alive” and provide a way “to create your own visual representation.” She distributed a handout entitled “The Plan,” which outlined the agenda for class sessions during *The Outsiders* Project. Among the goals listed for the project, this handout specified that the project would help the preservice teachers to “practice and use the language of literature” and “expand and use multi-modal technology skills as appropriate for content, research, and creative development.”

The students were divided into eleven groups of eight or nine people, with each group consisting of three preservice teachers and five or six middle school students. Each group was assigned one of three songs written about *The Outsiders*. The preservice teachers led the middle school students in a discussion of the novel, analysis of literary elements within the book, and how those literary elements were exemplified in their assigned song. Using the ideas the middle school students generated, each group determined how they would represent their song and the novel in a music video. The groups choreographed movements and created props to be used in their videos. During their third meeting, which the preservice teachers

and middle school students referred to as “filming day,” they recorded their music videos using handheld portable digital video cameras. On the final meeting of *The Outsiders* Project, the groups came together for a presentation day to view all eleven videos.

### Case Study Profiles

This multiple case study focused on five preservice teachers during the semester prior to their student teaching. To generate a complete profile of each case study subject, I drew extensively from the three sources of data: interviews, participant observations, and documents. In presenting a profile of each subject, I describe each subject’s background and prior experiences with film to illuminate any influences that might affect the subject’s perception of film in the English language arts class. Based on the participants’ frequent references to the Video/Booktalk and *The Outsiders* Project as influential to their understanding of film, I focus on these two projects as relevant learning experiences that occurred within the context of the Literature for Adolescents class. Information about each subject’s student teaching placement is important because each subject spent extensive time in that classroom during this semester and because the subject was involved in planning instruction for that particular setting. References to the student teaching placement were also frequent in interview and observational data, therefore, making it necessary to contextualize those references. Finally, I end each profile by explaining how each preservice teacher described his/her plans to implement film in English language arts instruction.

#### *Greg*

*Background.* Greg, a twenty-eight year old male, was often serious. Both in class and in personal conversations, he sometimes gave the impression of being distracted or worried.

During the first day of class, he shared with his classmates that he was, indeed, dealing with distractions. His father, who lived in another state, was seriously ill, and Greg had spent part of his summer break traveling to be with his family. As the semester progressed, he provided updates on his father's condition in personal conversations with his classmates, but after the first day of class, he seldom referenced his father's health to the entire group. Several weeks into the semester, Greg expressed in a personal conversation that, in addition to being concerned for his father's well being, he also feared his father's condition might necessitate his missing time from the school semester. He admitted that he was having problems keeping up with the semester's workload, and he worried he would not be able to catch up if he had to miss a week or more of school.

Married to a music teacher, Greg was the father of a one-year-old son. In whole-class discussions, Greg made occasional references to his wife and son, but he talked about them frequently in interviews and one-on-one conversations. At that time, his wife was teaching private music lessons, but she was a state-licensed teacher and had previously worked in the local school system. Greg said her training and career experiences had been helpful to him as he prepared to teach. He liked talking to her about his education program and sought her input when he was wrestling with a new idea or trying to decide his position on an educational issue.

Greg described himself as "an old school kind of guy" and said, "I'm fairly conservative, I guess." He was active in his church, and he reported that his faith strongly influenced his decisions. Even as he was pursuing teaching licensure, Greg expressed

concerns about the public school system and shared with me that he would be cautious about sending his son to a public school.

Reflecting on his kindergarten through high school experiences, Greg characterized himself a weak student. He attributed some of his school struggles to his family's frequent moves. He explained, "We moved like 13 times from kindergarten through eighth grade. So I went to six different schools." Greg also shared openly that he wished his family had "pushed harder" for him to succeed in school. Greg was the youngest of eight children in a family he called, "mine, yours, and ours." He spoke of how his father would remind him to do homework but not follow through to make sure he was actually doing the work. Greg reported that his academic problems continued throughout high school, but he eventually graduated with a 1.9 grade point average.

When Greg decided to pursue a college degree, he knew it would be an academic challenge. He first attended the local community college and came to the University as a transfer student. Greg openly admitted that his teacher education program had been difficult. He said, "I still struggle with [reading comprehension] a little bit," and he believed he had to work harder than many of his classmates to keep up. He also acknowledged that he had "a history of struggling with time management."

That struggle with time management was evident during the semester. Greg missed his first scheduled interview because he had forgotten to record the date. He was extremely apologetic and emphasized that he was completely at fault for not being there. On the morning of the rescheduled interview, Greg arrived on time but was clearly flustered. He had come directly from an English class for which he had not been prepared, and so he had been

confused by the class lecture and discussion. In addition to being behind in the English class, he had not yet completed the assignments for that afternoon's Literature for Adolescents class, and he was worried that he would not have time to get all of his work done before class.

*Prior experiences with film.* Greg began the semester with strong concerns about the educational value of film's classroom use. During the third week of class, he shared those concerns in response to an in-class writing that asked how film might be used in English language arts instruction. Greg wrote, "To be honest I have a negative idea of the role of film in a language arts class." He explained that his opinion had been influenced by his experiences as a tutor and a substitute teacher:

I tutored at a great middle school a year or so ago where the class had a substitute and the lights were off and the students were literally watching a movie as they were lying all about the room, some sleeping. That is what I first think of with film in ELA classroom.

During his first interview, Greg spoke again of his negative impression of film: "The idea of using film in the classroom really turned me off. I thought of it as kind of something to use up time . . . . It seemed like it was just done to give the students an easy day." He emphasized that his opinion had resulted from experiences as a substitute teacher. He spoke of a situation in which a fellow substitute teacher had been left a PG-13 movie to show middle school students. Having walked into the room "during an inappropriate scene," Greg had been disturbed by the film's content. He found it equally troubling that the classroom teacher would place the substitute teacher in what he considered to be a difficult position.

Greg also shared stories of substitutes who brought their personal movies from home “to make their day easy.”

Greg could not recall any experiences with film during his elementary or middle school years. He said that because he had attended so many different schools, he had difficulty remembering those experiences but then added, “It could be that the teacher didn’t use film that much.” Greg also had difficulty remembering if film was used in his high school English classes. He had the sense of having seen films in high school, but he was not sure about in which classes. He said, “I can’t remember specifically, but I know we were given question or notes, or blanks we had to answer as we watched the film, whether it be a movie or documentary or what.” His only specific memory was of his social studies teacher’s presenting the *Schoolhouse Rock* production of “I’m Just a Bill” (Warburton, 1975), which he found to be “a little cheesy” but “helpful to understand how a bill works.”

*The Video/Booktalk.* For the Video/Booktalk project, Greg worked with his classmate Marah, and the two volunteered to be the first group of students to present to the class. They chose the film and memoir *Marley & Me: Life and Love with the World’s Worst Dog* (Grogan, 2000) as the subject of their presentation. Greg opened their Video/Booktalk by presenting biographical information about the author and read a summary of the book from their handout. After Marah had read the passage that described a disastrous dog training class and they had shown the corresponding film clip, Marah introduced the discussion of the film by asking their classmates if the film clip matched their mental image of the scene. After several students shared their mental images, Greg pointed to the scene’s use of music. He

described the sound of the music but did not discuss its effects. He then turned the discussion over to the class by asking, “Did you guys have any other observations?”

Greg later admitted initial uncertainty about selecting *Marley & Me* as the subject of the Video Booktalk. When his partner Marah suggested it, he said he “wasn’t interested in it” because he was “kind of more serious” and preferred “more deeper issues, life issues.” However, he wanted “to be flexible” in working with his partner and agreed to read the book. After reading the book, he realized that while it was “a fun, enjoyable story,” it also addressed important issues such as “trying to find identity with who you are.” Greg thought this theme would be especially relevant for adolescents.

Greg reported that as he and Marah prepared their Video/Booktalk, they went back to the print text to guide them in selecting a film scene. Greg, who had first wanted to focus on serious themes, now found himself attracted to “the ability of the writer to use humor in his story well.” He explained that he and Marah chose a reading passage based on his response to the novel’s humor:

We chose a scene that was about the dog owners’ taking the dog to get trained. So it was easy because . . . we were reading out loud together preparing, and I was just cracking up. I just couldn’t stop. I mean, I haven’t laughed that hard in public in probably ever. I was kind of embarrassed actually. I was wondering what people were thinking about me. I mean, I was crying, I was laughing so hard. . . . So I recommended that scene. Actually I think Marah may have recommended it.

Having agreed on the particular passage from the print text, Greg said that he and Marah then found the corresponding scene in the film adaptation of the memoir. In his discussion of preparing for the Video/Booktalk, he detailed that that the process began with the print text.

After presenting the Video/Booktalk, Greg reported that he had developed an understanding of the project's goals. He believed it served to "help teach students how to think critically about how meaning is made with literature." He explained that that examining corresponding scenes from the book and film could help "teach students how to think critically about how meaning is made with literature and also with how those are connected . . . and how you can find the comparison between those [film and book]." Greg saw the project as having the added benefit of "developing intrigue and piquing the interests of students, getting them interested and excited about literature."

As a result of the Video/Booktalk, Greg began to re-examine his position on using film in the English language arts classroom. He began to develop an appreciation for film adaptations of books and reported, "I've learned from doing the booktalks that the people making movies actually put a lot more effort and thought into creating scenes and creating the movie as a whole based on the book than I had ever really realized before." When asked to reflect in writing on his experience with the Video/Booktalks and what he had learned about film and young adult literature, Greg firmly declared, "There is an appropriate place for film in the literature/language arts classroom." In the October interview, he elaborated, "My respect for it [film] and my understanding of it is growing and has grown to the point where I understand that there's a value." However, Greg revealed that he still had anxieties

about using film in English language arts instruction: “I’m still apprehensive. . . . I’m just afraid that if I embrace the use of film too much that I’ll be easy on myself as a teacher.”

The *Outsiders Project*. Greg experienced considerable frustration with *The Outsiders Project*. These frustrations resulted from feeling rushed in his work with the middle school students. He reported that his group ‘had a hard time staying on course, staying focused and concentrating on the activity,’ which caused him to be consistently worried that they would not have enough time to complete the project. For Greg, the main challenge of *The Outsiders Project* was being able to work successfully with middle school students within what he considered to be a pressing time restraint.

Despite his worries over time, Greg noted that he began to feel more successful when he realized that the students were thinking of ways to present ideas on film. He laughingly shared stories of students who became excited about their acting roles, which Greg believed indicated that they were thinking more deeply about the novel. Greg saw the goal of the project as being able “to create meaning using multiple aspects on video” and believed his students were creating that meaning through their performances. He thought the project was relevant to English language arts instruction because it involved “a kind of internalizing and comprehending” and required the middle school students to demonstrate “their own understanding of certain aspects of the book, like certain themes.”

After completing *The Outsiders Project*, Greg summarized the experience by saying, “we join our students in taking our current knowledge about a piece of literature and exploring deeper into elements and meaning within that literature by finding creative and original ways to physically illustrate that meaning and understanding together.” Greg

thought it important that in *The Outsiders* Project, the students were actively involved in a physical representation of the print text. While he acknowledged the challenges of working with the students to create a music video in a short amount of time, Greg pointed out that the students were mindful that their video would be seen by their classmates, and they looked forward to performing on camera.

*Student teaching placement.* During the semester, Greg received his student teaching placement and discovered he would be working at an area middle school with Mr. Adams, a cooperating teacher who taught both English language arts and social studies as a member of a two-person team. Mr. Adams had extensive experience working with the University's Middle Grades Language Arts/Social Studies program, and faculty members described him as a strong mentor to student teachers. Greg began observing in his cooperating teacher's classroom but acknowledged that it had been difficult to meet the required twenty hours of field experience.

Greg reported that he was pleased with his student teaching placement and was looking forward to learning from Mr. Adams. Although Greg assessed that his cooperating teacher was "afraid of using the technology," he found Mr. Adams to be welcoming of new ideas. Greg described him as "not just a regular textbook guy" who was not "stuck in some kind of old fashioned traditional ways." He said Mr. Adams was excited to see other teachers using technology and enjoyed discussing those ideas. For that reason, Greg thought his student teaching experience would allow him to try out many of the strategies he had learned in Literature for Adolescents and other education classes.

*Future uses of film.* Greg experienced a shift in his perception of film's value in English arts instruction. He began the semester with serious doubts about its usefulness. In October after he and classmates had completed their Video/Booktalks, he revealed that "had been thinking a lot" about the concept. He said that he "wouldn't want to show the whole movie" but he thought he would like to use film clips to help his students "think critically about comparing and contrasting" a book and its film adaptation. He thought that strategy would help students "think critically about the text they've been reading" and call for them to "[interact] with the film and the written text." He had also begun to consider specific activities such as asking students to rewrite a selection from a book as a screenplay.

After classes had ended in December, Greg responded to an interview question about how he would like to use film in English language arts instruction by discussing ideas for how he would use digital video to create ways of delivering instruction. He spoke of a specific social studies lesson he was developing in the unit plan he was preparing as the major project in his methods class. He said in this lesson he was using the video to present information on India; however, some of the information would be incorrect, and he would ask students to find those inaccuracies.

Greg also spoke of asking students to create digital videos. However, he was not yet sure of exactly how he would integrate this technology; he said, "I haven't really hashed out the specifics, but I've been envisioning something related to them making a video with them being on film in some way." He suggested that they might use digital video as a response activity. Referencing his teacher-prepared video on India, he considered asking the students to create videos that presented the corrections to his errors. Although Greg was making

immediate plans for student teaching in both social studies and English language arts, he did not discuss any concrete ideas for using digital video in English language arts.

*Kathy*

*Background.* Thirty-nine-year-old Kathy had returned to school to finish a degree she had begun working toward some years earlier. Upon graduating from high school in 1988, she had joined the military. It was while in the Army that she first began working toward her college degree. Because most of her classes had been satellite courses offered on the military base, she did not consider herself to have had a typical college experience. Toward the end of her military service, Kathy had been assigned to one of the nation's larger military bases. During that assignment, she had attended classes on campus at a local private college and had enjoyed that opportunity to be part of the college setting.

After leaving the military, Kathy focused much of her attention on her family. Married, she was the mother of two daughters who differed in age by almost eight years. As her younger child began school, Kathy had been able to follow through with her goal of becoming a teacher. She talked about how studying education had changed her perception of her daughters' school experiences. Kathy found that fact to be especially true with her younger daughter; she reported that her better understanding of education and the learning process had given her insight into her younger daughter's academic development, and she spoke of comparing her understanding of her younger daughter's progress to how she had viewed her older daughter's experiences at that age. Kathy also believed that what she had learned about adolescent development was helping her as the parent of a teenager.

*Prior experiences with film.* Asked to discuss her prior school experiences with film, Kathy was unable to recall specific memories that involved film in elementary, middle, or high school. She attended a private Catholic school for kindergarten through eighth grade; she thought that films were used in her social studies and English classes, but she could not remember the context. Of her English language arts classes, she first said, “I don’t remember a lot of film in our English classes” and then added, “We probably saw some, but I just don’t remember it.” Of her experiences in a larger urban high school, Kathy had general memories of film having been included in her social studies classes, but she did not remember any use of film in her secondary English classes.

Of her college experiences, Kathy said her classes had not included any use of film until she reached the University. There she identified a number of positive experiences with film. She said instruction in her Spanish class had incorporated film clips; she benefitted from this use of film because “it helped to put a visual with that language.” Both her world history and her communications classes had made use of full-length theatrical films. In world history, the professor followed lectures with film narratives that depicted a story in the historical setting of interest. Kathy spoke of enjoying these films, yet she sometimes “got tired watching the movies.” She reported that the professor usually presented the film in its entirety before discussing it.

Kathy said the best use of film had occurred in her communications class. Just as the world history class had used theatrically released film narratives to illustrate the concepts and information covered in class, so too did the communications course. Kathy mentioned two specific examples of these films, *Bend It Like Beckham* (Chadha, 2002) and *The Story of Us*

(Zweibel & Reiner, 1999). Kathy recognized that the professor used the films to teach “the stuff that [they] were talking about it in the book.” She reported that prior to viewing each film, the professor presented them with questions about the film and the concepts. After viewing the film, the students divided into groups and “answered questions about the film through [their] discussions.” Kathy pointed out that the process of working together to answer the questions aligned with the class’s focus and content because it demanded communication among the students. She summarized the experience by saying, “So it all tied together, and that was really effective.”

*The Video/Booktalk.* Kathy partnered with her classmate Danielle for her Video/Booktalk. The two often sat next to each other in class, and on the day Dr. Presley introduced the project, they chatted with each other and decided to work together on the assignment. Kathy reported that Danielle was interested in using *Stand and Deliver* (Edwards, Menendez, & Musca, 1989) as the subject of their presentation. While Kathy had heard of the film, she had not seen it or read the book. She trusted Danielle’s enthusiastic recommendation and agreed to that selection. She spoke of reading the book that chronicled the story of calculus teacher Jamie Escalante and revealed that she “wasn’t that impressed with it in terms of a great book to read.” She did, however, find that the book contained strong uses of dialogue and determined that it might be useful in a classroom setting. After they had each read the book, Kathy and Danielle watched the film together to “figure out what scene [they] wanted to use.” Describing the movie as “good” and interesting,” Kathy was surprised to find how much she liked it.

The partners began their presentation of the Video/Booktalk by using the document camera to project the book cover, which depicts scenes from the film and states that the book is “based on the motion picture.” Pointing to the projected image of the book cover, Danielle offered an overview of the story. She opened by saying the story is based on true events and summarized it as “the story of how [Jamie Escalante] takes a group of students who no one believes can learn and actually takes the students above and beyond their expectations.” Kathy then read aloud the passage that details Mr. Escalante’s conflict with fellow teachers and his having to teach summer classes in a locker room. After Kathy’s oral reading, they showed the film clip that presented the corresponding scenes.

Following the film clip, Kathy began a discussion of how “how the movie assumes that you already know things.” Danielle elaborated by offering an example of a scene in which a character is working on his car. She says the book describes what he is thinking, but the “move just already assumes that you know that.” Danielle then continued to discuss themes she and Kathy had identified in the story and characteristics of the print text. As she was concluding her remarks, she said “One thing we also noticed about this book . . . was that the movie was actually written based on the book instead of vice versa.” Although Danielle had incorrectly stated the fact, neither Kathy nor their classmates corrected her, and her following comments suggested that she reversed her words and did understand that the film was the original work. She continued, “I thought that was kind of cool. . . . That’s why, for the most part, everything that was in the book, was in the movie.”

In her first interview, Kathy mentioned the film’s being the original text and said that aspect of the relationship between the book and film was “interesting” and “different.”

When asked to elaborate, she referenced the book as being “more descriptive,” but suggested no explanation for that difference.

In reflecting on the Video/Booktalk, Kathy focused considerably on her initial experience of seeing Dr. Presley present. She said that presentation “grabbed” her and left her with the impression that the project was “the most awesome thing that they ever came up with.” Kathy expressed excitement for the pairing of films and books for teaching media literacy. She also described the Video/Booktalk as motivation to read. Referencing again her experience with *Tuck Everlasting*, she confessed that she had problems maintaining interest in the opening chapter and said, “It just wasn’t getting to me the way I thought it would.” Remembering Dr. Presley’s Video/Booktalk motivated Kathy to continue with the book: “I kept reading because of the clip that she used to introduce the book, because I wanted to see what was going to happen. When they get to that point, what’s going to happen after that.” Recognizing how this process had worked for her, Kathy believed the Video/Booktalks could be just as motivating for middle school students.

*The Outsiders Project*. When asked to reflect on what she had learned from *The Outsiders Project*, Kathy focused on the process of working with her students and peers in her teacher education program. In the early stages of the project, she worried that the students did not understand the literary elements, and she found working with her peers required a certain degree of diplomacy. Kathy reported that these challenges became more manageable, and by the time her group completed recording its music video, she realized that “maybe it did work.”

Kathy found value in *The Outsiders* Project because it asked the students to have an original response to a literary work. She said the project required the students “to interpret the book and put that on film.” Creating the video was important because “it’s their finished product”; but before the students could create that product, they “made a connection to the book.” Kathy believed that making that personal connection and then engaging in a creative process offered the students a learning experience “that’s just something they’ll never forget.”

*Student teaching placement.* Kathy’s student teaching assignment placed her in a sixth grade social studies classroom. She reported being disappointed not to be teaching English language arts because it was her stronger area and the subject she preferred to teach. Within a few weeks of receiving her student teaching placement, Kathy’s disappointment faded, and she quickly developed a friendly rapport with her cooperating teacher, whom she described as “warm” and “so helpful.” Throughout the second half of the fall semester, Kathy grew increasingly excited about student teaching and attributed much of this excitement to the strong teaching skills her cooperating teacher was modeling and the supportive environment she had created. Kathy spoke of seeing her cooperating teacher use film in social studies instruction and admired the way “she kept asking questions all throughout the movie . . . and kept them interested in watching what was on the screen.”

*Future uses of film.* As an overall assessment, Kathy stated that film “would really help them [students] to analyze critically.” Looking forward to how she planned to teach English language arts, Kathy declared, “I will definitely use film.” She spoke again of her positive experience with the Video/Booktalks and how she was motivated to read because of

Dr. Presley's Video/Booktalk for *Tuck Everlasting*. Kathy thought this version of booktalks offered students "something different they can do" and saw them as an alternative to traditional book reports. Because her student teaching placement was in a social studies classroom, Kathy was also considering how she would use film in that content area during the upcoming semester. She said in her unit plan she planned to use an informational film about Southern Europe, but she had not yet determined how else she might use film in social studies. She laughingly vowed, "Anything that I can find that will help them see whatever I'm talking about, I'll use that."

Kathy also spoke of using digital video for students to create products. She suggested a variation on the booktalk would be to have the students prepare booktalks and film their presentations. She identified this strategy as "a good way to use film with booktalks." She also proposed that digital video could be used as a way for students to publish their research "in the form of a documentary."

### *Jillian*

*Background.* Jillian, an outgoing twenty-two year old female, grew up in the state's largest city a little more than two hours away from the University and graduated from high school there in 2005. The second of four daughters, Jillian reported that the experience of growing up with sisters had greatly influenced her personality development. One of her younger sisters attended a nearby women's college, and in personal conversations, Jillian made frequent references to this sister and sometimes drew comparisons between their experiences. She discussed the sense of community her sister had developed in the smaller college setting. Jillian had initially found it difficult to develop a strong sense of belonging in

the large university setting, but she eventually found it in her sorority and in the Middle Grades Language Arts /Social Studies program.

Because Jillian had transferred into her teacher education program from another major, she had needed extra time to include the required courses and was, therefore, in her fifth year at the university. While she had first been disappointed about postponing her graduation date, Jillian was content with her decision. She said she had benefitted from the extra year and could not imagine trying to carry heavier course loads. She considered it important to allow herself time to focus her full attention on her studies and to be involved in her sorority activities. Jillian believed extracurricular activities were important and helped to prepare her for the varied duties of a teacher.

Jillian was a passionate reader. During the first class meeting, she declared, “I love, love, love reading.” That love for reading had developed when she was a small child; she laughingly told classmates that her mother had punished her by taking away her reading privileges instead of television. Her love for reading had continued into her adult years, and she was undeterred by her busy college schedule. She said, “I carry a book around with me all the time, so I can read whenever; I mean there’s always a book in my purse.” Jillian reported that she easily became consumed by the story was reading and described the intensity of her reading experience by saying “Sometimes my mind would be so loud.” She said that at those times, it would be almost unbearable to stop reading and she tried to continue reading in any way possible. To illustrate her point, she confessed that she even read while driving. She explained, “I know I shouldn’t, but sometimes I just can’t stop myself.”

*Prior experiences with film.* Although Jillian had no memories of film's being used in her high school courses, she had a distinct impression of its use in middle school. She described the middle school experiences as "just watching the movie." Emphasizing that "in middle school we never did compare and contrast," she reported that they would sometimes watch a film adaptation after having read the book but "didn't ever make a connection between the two." She said there would be no follow-up to the film; the experience was "just watching." Jillian spoke specifically of watching the *A Christmas Carol* in sixth grade English language arts, but she could not remember if her teacher had been present. She suspected that the film may have been an activity left for a substitute teacher or that her teacher may have thought, "Ahhh, it's almost Christmas. I don't know what I want to do."

Of her university courses, Jillian said she had also had few experiences with film. She cited her British literature course as the only class to integrate film narratives. In that class, they had read Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and then watched the film version. Jillian said they discussed "the difference and similarities [of the book and film] and how that [comparison] made you look at it differently." As Jillian was describing this process, she considered, "I think that was similar to seeing the film as text, but [the professor] never used that phrase."

Jillian distinguished her British literature experience with film from her experiences in science course that used what she "would call boring stuff, documentary type stuff." She remembered these documentaries from both university and high school courses. When urged to recall specifics, she mentioned a biology film about embryos and said that the others were "about flowers or animals." She admitted that some portions of these documentaries were

interesting, but in general she found the narration to be tedious, or in her words, “so wah-wah.”

*The Video/Booktalk.* For the Video/Booktalk, Jillian worked with her classmate Jennifer. The two were friends outside of school and often carpooled to class together. Jillian said they quickly decided that they would like to work together on this project. When they were selecting their book and film, they wanted to choose a title that had not been referenced in class. Jillian credited Jennifer with their choice of *The Devil’s Arithmetic*. She described Jennifer’s prior experience with the book and film:

Jennifer is Jewish, and she had read *The Devil’s Arithmetic* a long time ago when she was in middle school, and she had gone to Hebrew school. . . . They kind of talked about it, and they had watched the movie, and she said it was really powerful for her because it was from an adolescent’s point of view.

Jillian was enticed by Jennifer’s recommendation, so the two proceeded with that selection. They began by reading the book and then watched the film adaptation. Jillian said they “were disappointed because the movie and the book were so different.” On the day that Greg and his partner presented the first student-led Video/Booktalk, Jillian shared that concern in class. Dr. Presley encouraged her that these differences “were not necessarily a bad thing” and suggested that the film’s being different “may make it easier to view the film as text.”

In their Video/Booktalk presentation Jillian and Jennifer emphasized the differences in the print text and the film adaptation. Jennifer opened their presentation by presenting a plot summary. Jillian read aloud a passage that described the main character’s experience in a

concentration camp. The pair then showed the film clip that depicted that passage that Jillian had read. After the film clip, Jillian outlined how that particular scene differed in the two versions. She then continued to share with the class other differences that she and Jennifer had determined were important. In pointing to these differences, Jillian initially did not express judgments. After sharing three differences, she then spoke of a scene that is omitted from the film and called that omission “disappointing.” Jennifer added that she was also disappointed that the film portrayed one of the supporting characters as much weaker than did the novel.

On the handout that they prepared and distributed to their classmates, Jillian and Jennifer included the three key differences they referenced in their presentation. They did not include the omission or the character portrayal that had disappointed them. They noted that the film had won three awards: the Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Directing, the Daytime Emmy for Writing in a Children’s Special, and The Golden Reel Award. On their handout they identified the writer of the teleplay and the director of the film as well as the author of novel. They were one of only two groups in the class to cite the screenwriter or the director.

Later in the semester, Jillian shared that she had been apprehensive about the Video/Booktalk and unsure about how to use film in an English language arts class. She suspected her apprehension resulted from having little meaningful exposure to film in English language arts. She said, “My experiences throughout my life didn’t parallel with that. So it was like something brand new.” Jillian’s immediate reaction was “I don’t know if I’m going to like this. I don’t even know how to do this.” She said those fears were eased by Dr. Presley’s demonstration and by being able to watch several of her classmates present.

Jillian considered the Video/Booktalks to have been a positive learning experience that “allowed [her] to make connections between film and literature.” As someone who was obviously passionate about reading, Jillian had previously been dismissive of film adaptations of books. She reported that the Video/Booktalks had helped her to consider film as text. When she did so, she began to appreciate the films. She said she “started thinking about it” and realized that there was “all this stuff that was happening in the movie.” She described seeing a classmate’s film clip and thinking, “They can’t show that in the book.” She realized that the print text “can show it as much as [the author] can through description, but you don’t see it happening.”

The *Outsiders Project*. Jillian spoke enthusiastically of her involvement with *The Outsiders Project*. She declared, “I loved it!” and “It was awesome!” She was impressed by the level of teamwork demonstrated by all of the groups, and she appreciated the relationships she had formed with her middle school teammates. Jillian first feared that the students would have difficulty identifying themes and literary elements from *The Outsiders*. Instead, she found that “they kind of knew how to show the themes through the video, and they thought of all the ideas that we did.”

Jillian saw a direct relationship between the Video/Booktalks and *The Outsiders Project*. She explained that relationship by saying, “[In *The Outsiders Project*] we connected themes from the book with the music video, as in the Video/Booktalk; we connected things that we saw in the book with things that we saw in the movie.” She thought having already studied film in the Video/Booktalks made her better prepared for creating music videos in *The Outsiders Project* because she “knew how text can be shown in film.” She suggested

that the middle school students would also benefit from experience with Video/Booktalks before they began filming responses to literature.

*Student teaching placement.* Jillian's student teaching assignment placed her on the same teaching team as Kathy. Jillian was excited about teaching sixth grade English language arts and was especially pleased to learn that she would be teaching *Tuck Everlasting*, one of the novels included in the Literature for Adolescents class. However, Jillian expressed some concerns that her cooperating teacher might not be receptive to some of her teaching ideas. She related, "He doesn't like technology. He already told me. He said, 'I hate technology.'" Jillian went on to explain that "He has two computers in the classroom, but he says that's enough because he says one is for him, and one is in case students need to do make up work." For instruction, her cooperating teacher chose not "to use anything other than the overhead projector." Jillian wondered if this resistance to technology would extend to other innovative teaching methods she wished to employ.

*Future uses of film.* When asked how she planned to use film in English language arts instruction, Jillian pointed to the Video/Booktalks and digital video. She first mentioned having included a Video/Booktalk in the unit she was preparing for her Methods class and that she planned to teach during the spring semester. She shared her plan to "read some of the book and then do the video" to "get [students] interested." During this teaching unit, Jillian hoped to extend her use of film. She described one such lesson, "I have a lesson where we watch a different section in the film, and we read a different section in the book, and we talk about imagery, and compare and contrast." Jillian stressed that while she wanted to use film

in instruction, she would never “just watch the video.” Instead, she would focus on “pulling out the similarities and differences and ideas and differences.”

Adding that she “didn’t know if this counts,” Jillian spoke of her plans to use digital video in English language arts instruction. She said she would like to use portable digital video cameras so that students could “create their own stuff.” She offered examples from her unit in which she planned for students “doing characterization as a drama and filming them doing interviews and talk shows and different stuff.” Jillian also expressed excitement about her idea to use digital video to deliver instruction when she was absent. She said, “I think it would be cool to have someone film me talking to the class. . . . It would be like via satellite or something. It would almost feel like I was there.” Jillian was thinking actively about how she would use digital video.

#### *Andrea*

*Background.* Andrea, a 2006 high school graduate, was from a coastal town several hours east of the University and often spoke of missing the beach setting. In personal conversations and occasionally in class, she talked of how a coastal port town was a much different environment from the city in which she attended school. She also shared that the schools in which she observed differed from the ones she had attended. She thought the beach setting influenced the personality of the schools and described her high school as a “rural beach” school. When she talked about reading for enjoyment, she immediately associated the activity with reading on the beach.

During the semester Andrea became engaged and planned to marry the weekend after graduating. Her fiancé, whom she had met at the University, had graduated and returned to

his home, a rural farming community in the eastern part of the state. After marrying, Andrea would be relocating to this area, where she would live and work in “a very high poverty setting.” This knowledge of where she would be teaching was an important concern for her. She considered teaching strategies and activities within the context of “how will this work with the kinds of kids I will be teaching.”

Andrea received a state-sponsored scholarship loan that helped pay her tuition cost in return for her teaching in the state for four years. She began her university career by entering directly into the Middle Grades Language Arts and Social Studies program, but throughout her first two years in the program, she questioned that decision and considered switching her focus to high school teaching. She thought her classes were too general and too removed from the realities of teaching. She explained

I feel like my freshman and sophomore year I was just kind of dangling around. I really didn't get a good grasp on things. It was not a fun experience. It wasn't “go for it” type of stuff. . . . Those first two years, I wasn't excited or happy, and I kept teetering back and forth from high school and middle school because I just didn't know what I was excited about. I was just like this isn't what I thought [it would be].

Andrea said the college experience changed dramatically during her junior year when her classes became much more focused on pedagogy. She explained, “I definitely think junior year we did a whole, whole lot. . . . I was like this is what I've been waiting for.” She was pleased that her program then began to integrate more technology and “innovative ideas.” Although she did not identify a focus on technology and innovation as necessary to her teacher training, she found it to be motivating because “the extra stuff gets people excited

about teaching.” Her excitement about technology also created some concerns about her future teaching practices. Because she planned to teach in rural school system, she was unsure what technological tools would be available for her, and she wondered if she would be able to put into practice all of the innovative strategies she was learning.

*Prior experiences with film.* Andrea was the only member of the Literature for Adolescents class to have received formal instruction in film. During high school she had completed an elective course in film. As she talked about this class, her enthusiasm was apparent; at three different times, she stated that she “loved” the film class. Of the course content, Andrea remembered that it included the history of film and attention to cinematic elements.

Beyond her film course, Andrea said her experiences with film were limited. She summarized the experiences in this way: “I don’t remember K through 12 ever being a substantial reason for watching a movie, other than just to watch the movie.” She had no specific memories of film’s use in middle school and characterized use of film in her high school English classes as “time filler.” She said she also sensed that film was being used as a reward. She explained, “I felt like they were congratulating us for reading the book.” Teachers occasionally asked questions after the film, but Andrea characterized those questions as “surface questions” and “just simple things.” Creating a video was sometimes presented as an option for a class project, but Andrea had never chosen that option.

Similarly, Andrea thought film use in her university level courses had been limited. However, her anthropology, social geography, and cultural geography courses had included documentary films. Prior to the current semester, her education courses had utilized only

“little clips.” In her English courses, professors had used film clips to illustrate the setting of literary works. Andrea specified that this use of film was “not film as text.” In her assessment, none of her university courses had asked her to “do anything analytical” with film. She considered their use to be “just to kind of give you something else to remember what you read.”

*The Video/Booktalk.* Andrea and her partner, Lindsey, chose *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1994) as the subject of their Video/Booktalk. According to Andrea, they did not make their decision immediately but considered a number of books before finally choosing this one. Andrea remembered loving the book in middle school, and Lindsey, who had not previously read it, thought it would be a good choice. In making their decision, Andrea said they also considered that the novel had been the subject of a “really awesome movie that came out not too long ago.”

Andrea and Lindsey opened their Video/Booktalk presentation by projecting to the class two different book covers of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and speaking of how book cover images were frequently updated. After Lindsey provided an introduction and overview of the novel, Andrea read aloud the passage in which one of the main characters first enters the wardrobe. The pair then presented the film version of this event. After the film clip, Andrea led a discussion of the differences between the film and the print text. She then transitioned to examining the cinematic elements of the film, which she described as “looking at the film as text.” Comparing the film and the print text, she spoke of how the film used cinematic elements to portray the mood that was created by the words in the print

text. Andrea emphasized how the film transformed the print text's description of the setting into a visual image and said she found it "amazing how the film can do that for you."

Of the seven groups of students who presented Video/Booktalks, Andrea and Lindsey offered the most thorough written discussion of film as text on the handout. While most of their classmates offered several bulleted points, Andrea and Lindsey presented a lengthy paragraph that explicated the use of music, camera angles, and camera shots throughout the entire scene. This discussion made up almost half of the information presented on their handout. In addition, their suggestions for classroom use also emphasized the importance of cinematic elements as they related to the written descriptions in the novel. They explained the purposes of these activities as examining "how these two [film and print text] correlate."

In October after the class had completed the Video/Booktalks, Andrea spoke of how the project had influenced her understanding of film. She said that she had "learned the relevance between what's written in word and what is visually represented." The experience of working with film in this class had reminded her of her high school class and how much she enjoyed studying and "figuring out" film. Having always known she would like to use film in English language arts but having feared she "couldn't justify it," Andrea thought that having worked on an assignment that connected film and print text had helped her develop a rationale for using film. In an in-class reflection, she wrote,

I have specifically learned how to integrate film into my classroom. I've always seen myself as a teacher who would use film in my class but have had trouble envisioning its place and purpose. The Video/Booktalks have given film a place and purpose in my classroom. . . . I now feel comfortable using film.

The *Outsiders Project*. Andrea's reflection on *The Outsiders Project* primarily addressed the interaction with the students and the application of what she was learning in her education courses. After finishing the project, Andrea spoke in her December interview about the challenges she experience from working with her peers and the middle school students. She realized that navigating the interpersonal dynamics of the group was necessary to successfully completing the assignment. Realizing that the peers in her groups were more tentative than she, she assumed responsibility for organizing their group. She explained, "It was a great experience for me to be a true leader and try to get everything done."

Once Andrea's group began working together smoothly, she was able to focus attention on using *The Outsiders* novel and music to create a music video. Andrea was pleased that the middle school students "were really responsive" and engaged in the process. Experiencing this process with the students helped Andrea to see this digital video project in its relationship to other concepts she had studied during the semester. She said

We spent the whole first half of the semester learning about how to make text exciting and how to apply it to their lives. But then when you do something like this film, it really does come to life because they're having to take the book, and they're having to internalize it and make it something of their own.

Andrea thought it important that the students had the opportunity to move beyond understanding the novel to creating a product that represented their interpretation of this story. In a November in-class writing, she described the process as offering students "an authentic experience" because it "cements concepts through its creation."

*Student teaching placement.* Andrea received her student teaching placement in an eighth grade social studies class. She was content with teaching social studies and appreciated that she would have an opportunity to integrate reading and writing skills within this content area. She believed being trained to teach English language arts would make her a better teacher of social studies because she understood how to help students make meaning of what they read. Overall, she was excited about student teaching and looking forward to her student teaching semester.

After completing her twenty hours of observation, she spoke of having seen her cooperating teacher use film clips with the students. Andrea said these clips were not from film narratives but informational clips included on a CD that supplemented the textbook. Because of her interest in teaching English language arts, Andrea had “talked to the students a lot about language arts” and asked “what they’re doing in there.” Andrea said that none of the students mentioned using film in English language arts, but she quickly added that she “didn’t know her [the language arts teacher] intentions.” Andrea hoped that both her teacher and her teaching team would be receptive of her teaching ideas even if they differed from what these teachers usually did in the classroom.

*Future uses of film.* As mentioned above, Andrea began the semester with an interest in using film, but she lacked a rationale for its use. After having used film in the Video/Booktalk and digital video in *The Outsiders* Project, she had developed “more confidence to use technology, especially film and videography.” In her December interview, Andrea said she planned to use film when she student taught social studies by asking her students to create films to present content material. She described a specific activity that she

called “a 21<sup>st</sup> century jigsaw.” While teaching the Civil War, she planned to divide the students into groups, assign them a related topic, provide time for them to study that topic, and then ask them to film a presentation to teach the topic to their classmates. She believed this activity would create “an enhanced lecture” because the students would learn from the other groups’ digital videos. In addition to using digital video to present information, Andrea spoke of integrating film by having the students create digital video responses to important topics in social studies.

Because she would be student teaching in a social studies class, Andrea had given focused attention to planning how she would teach this content area. However, she was certain of film’s importance in English language arts instruction and had general ideas for integrating it. She stated, “I see film in the English language arts classroom as a necessary component. I don’t see it really an option not to have it.” She added that it was necessary to remember that “it’s called English language arts for a reason” and explained that “it’s not just books and writing.” She planned to use film narratives by doing “the novel thing” and pairing books with film adaptations. Saying she would emphasize film as text, she wanted to help her students “see why things are done a certain way and how an end product comes about.” Andrea spoke specifically of using the Video/Booktalk assignment as an alternative to book reports. Overall, Andrea stressed that she could use film to teach students analytical skills because they could apply the same skills to film the same skills used for analyzing print texts. She considered it important to use these skills with film because students because “film is an important part of our lives.”

*Chelsea*

*Background.* Chelsea, who graduated from high school in 2006, grew up in a neighboring town and commuted daily to attend the University. Chelsea had two sisters, one younger and one older, with whom she maintained a close relationship. She described her other family relationships as “more complicated.” Financially self-sufficient, Chelsea worked in an after-school program at an area private elementary school.

Chelsea considered her school experiences to have been atypical. She attended a private elementary school and then spent sixth through twelfth grades in a small charter school. She described her elementary school as “a hippie school,” which was less structured than public elementary schools. While this school encouraged creativity and personal exploration, Chelsea believed it to have been far less rigorous than public schools. The charter school she attended for middle and high school was extremely small; Chelsea’s graduating class had only twenty-one members. The school did not have a sports program, and Chelsea was aware of having missed many of the experiences that are commonly associated with high school.

While Chelsea may have had concerns about the academic rigor of her elementary school or the social environment of her middle and high school, she acknowledged that these schools encouraged her creative talents. She enjoyed music and art and looked to both as ways of expressing herself. She was especially pleased whenever her course work allowed her to draw from her creative talents.

Chelsea shared that she had “always known [she] wanted to be a teacher.” Her favorite childhood game was school; she described how she would often “make [her sisters]

sit at the dinner table and copy down what I was saying.” She laughingly recounted a memory from second grade: “I drew this painting of me teaching, and I have an apple in my hand. I was teaching a math class.” Chelsea maintained that image of herself throughout her youth when she “always imagined being in front of the board.”

The Middle Grades Language Arts/Social Studies program had been an enlightening experience for Chelsea. She shared, “When I started teaching, I was like, this isn’t what I thought at all. This is better.” She had abandoned her vision of the teacher at the board in the front of the classroom and replaced it with a new image of teacher and student learning together. She described her new understanding:

I can learn with the students. I can write when the students are writing. I can read when the students are reading, and I should be doing those things to show them that I’m an equal. I can have them do group work. And one of the big things I learned is that nothing is impossible. You can take your students anywhere inside the classroom.

*Prior experiences with film.* Chelsea did not remember film’s being used in her elementary grades. Her first memory of film in school was in sixth grade English language arts. In what she called “a huge deal,” Chelsea and her classmates were required to have permission slips signed so that they could watch *The Color Purple* in class. Chelsea said she was much too young to “handle” the film’s content, and she reported feeling “horrified” and “terrified” as she watched the film. Looking back upon the experience, Chelsea was unsure why her teacher had selected that particular work. She remembered no discussion of the film, its content, or why there were watching it. She said, “I remember the movie, and remember hating it, and remember it was uncomfortable,” but “I don’t remember talking about it all.”

Chelsea's primary memory of film in high school occurred in her Spanish class where her teacher regularly used Spanish translations of popular films. Chelsea thought her teacher used film "so effectively for helping the students learn Spanish. Because they "already had seen the movie and knew what was going on," they were able to focus on the use of language in context. Saying she "learned so much," Chelsea emphasized that her teacher stopped the film regularly to "talk about it" and offer suggestions to "help [them] understand the next part."

In response to being asked about experiences with film at the university level, Chelsea talked about Studies in Fiction, an English course that made extensive use of the recent version of the British television series *Dr. Who* (Davis, 2005). Calling the process "so cool" and "so neat," she explained how the class used the television series: "mainly in class all we did was watch episodes and talk about them as a story as if we were reading the book." She said class discussions focused on "character development and then major events that changed things." She again emphasized that they "talked about [*Dr. Who*] as if it was a book."

*The Video/Booktalk.* For her Video/Booktalk presentation, Chelsea worked with Anna and Lucas. Because there was an uneven number of students in the class, it was necessary to have one group of three students or one person who presented alone. When the assignment was first presented, Chelsea and Anna had quickly agreed to work together and had almost immediately decided they wanted their book to be *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (Brashares, 2001). At this point they recognized that Lucas had been left on his own and "just kind of scooped Lucas up because he didn't want to do it alone." Chelsea

said they welcomed him to join them but on their terms: “You can join us, but we’re doing this book.”

When the three presented to the class, Anna introduced the novel and film (Kwapis, 2005) by delivering a concise summary of the storyline. Lucas then read aloud a passage in which the four main characters discover that the magic pants fit each girl perfectly. They then presented the film clip that showed the corresponding scene. At the conclusion of the film clip, Chelsea took the leading role in the presentation. She discussed the themes of friendship and self esteem that her group had identified as being important in both the book and film and that were relevant to an adolescent audience.

Chelsea then presented a discussion of the film as text. She began by focusing on differences between the film and book. Working with the scene they had presented, she discussed how the basic plot was the same but that the dialogue and setting were different. She then spoke specifically of the film. Saying they “focused on the camera shots,” her group “noticed that in all of the views, the camera has all of the girls in most of the shots.” Chelsea explained that this technique helped convey the theme of friendship “because the movie focuses on the togetherness of the girls.” She also highlighted the film’s use of music and sound. She spoke of how the girls could be heard giggling in the film clip, “which you don’t get in the book.” She then described how the film used “the woo-woo music” when the girls begin to suspect that the pants are magic.

Reflecting on the Video/Booktalk, Chelsea said it was “neat to take a text [book] then see the [film], and then think about them as one.” She believed that the two forms could easily be merged into one overall text, the lasting impression of the story. Chelsea was

unsure that this merging was a positive result because she suspected that it detracted from appreciating the individual texts. Through the Video/Booktalk experiences she had learned that comparing and contrasting how the major themes from the book were presented in the film adaptation helped her to see the two forms as individual texts that told the same story.

*The Outsiders Project.* Saying she “loved that project” and that it was “awesome,” Chelsea described *The Outsiders Project* as a way “to express ourselves through film.” She discussed how the project centered on the book. She said the middle school students “were really interested in the novel.” She described her discussions with the students: “We got to talk about which characters we liked, which ones we relate to, if you have any friends that related to them.” She said they then “pushed it a little bit further” by “talking about the book as if [they] were in it.” She was pleased by how well her students identified major themes and literary elements. She thought this success resulted from the emphasis on making a video. She said, “it is easier to think about those things when you’re seeing them or when you’re acting them out.” She believed her students “[understood] the book so much more after making a simple music video.”

*Student teaching placement.* Chelsea’s student teaching placement was in an eighth grade English language arts class in a nearby middle school. Although her program required that they complete twenty hours of observation in that class, Chelsea reported having spent approximately fifty hours in the classroom. She had immediately begun helping her cooperating teacher grade student work and felt that she was well on her way to knowing her students and their work habits. She expressed concerns that her cooperating teacher “just stands up there and talks” and described the classroom as “a lot of students just sitting in

straight rows and kind of listening.” Chelsea wondered if her cooperating teacher would allow her to practice more student-centered teaching strategies.

*Future uses of film.* At the end of the semester, Chelsea did not immediately mention film when asked how she planned to teach English language arts. In addition to journaling and group work, she spoke of using “the tech tools Dr. Ryan has been introducing” in the English language arts methods course. She elaborated on how technology could be used for online journaling, blogs, and a class website. She saw tech tools as fitting in with her goal to make classroom instruction “hands-on.”

When asked if she thought she might use film in any way, she said, “Yes, definitely. I want them filming all the time. I have to get [camcorders].” Saying “you can film anything,” she talked of giving her students writing assignments and then asking them to film themselves reading. She explained how this use of video would improve student writing:

I think that kids love to talk and they love to hear themselves talk, and they love to be on camera. . . . So I think just writing on paper they know that I’m just going to read it and give it a check, and yeah they did the writing. But I think if they’re filming it and showing it to their peers and it’s going to be actually recorded, I think they’re going to think so much more about what they write. And I also think they’re going to want to do it more. So I think their writing is just going to be better.

Although Chelsea did not verbally connect this idea to her previous education classes, the process she described suggests she may have been relating to her experiences in Writing across the Curriculum, when she worked with a middle school partner to write a poem and then filmed the poetry performance.

In addition to filming students' reading their writing assignments, Chelsea said she would like to use Video/Booktalks because they are "an excellent way to get literature out there and get students' wanting to read." She spoke of how the presentations in her Literature for Adolescents class had motivated her to "read so much this semester," and she thought middle school students would respond in a similar way. Chelsea said she would not limit film use to the Video/Booktalks but would like to include "film or just clips of film after [they've] read a novel." She said film could be used when "you don't have time to read novels" or when a book is not "a good class read." Besides using film adaptations of novels, Chelsea spoke of using "a film that relates, even YouTube videos . . . as little introductions in the lessons"

#### Emergent Themes

Within this study, data analysis included careful examination of the data collected within each case. Interview transcripts, observational data, field notes, and documents associated with each case were coded and analyzed. Results were then compared across cases. Cross-case analysis revealed five themes that emerged across all five cases:

1. Utilizing Film to Create Interest in Print Texts
2. Analyzing Film through Comparison/Contrast
3. Employing Film to Assist Struggling Readers
4. Creating Student Products with Digital Video
5. Evolving Concept of Film as Text

In the following discussion of these themes, all direct quotations resulted from interviews with the participants unless otherwise noted. Other discussions of data emerged from analyzing the data sources.

### *Utilizing Film to Create Interest in Print Texts*

One theme that reappeared across the analytical data was that of using film to create interest in a print text. In this way, the preservice teachers valued film as a pre-reading strategy that could be used to engage students and motivate them to explore a print work. The preservice teachers consistently associated this use of film with presenting film adaptations of novels their students were reading. This theme was closely tied to their discussion of how film was used in the Video/Booktalks. For example, in response to an in-class writing prompt that asked them to reflect on what they had learned about the use of film through the Video/Booktalks, Greg wrote that he had discovered film “can be good to pique the interest of a lot of young adults who are resistant to reading.” He reiterated that idea a week later in his first interview; he reported that he had come to recognize that film could be used for “developing intrigue and piquing the interest of the students” and could, therefore, help them to become “excited about literature.” Explaining that students benefit from experiencing literature in multiple forms, he said that introducing a novel through a film clip was a quick way to engage students with the story presented in both the film and the novel. He believed that capturing their attention with the film clip would offer them a reason to give attention to the print work. In this way, Greg, who had begun the semester with doubts that film could contribute positively to English language arts instruction, now identified it as useful for motivating students to read.

As they discussed film as a motivational tool, Chelsea and Kathy both spoke of how the film clips used in the Video/Booktalks had encouraged them to read the print novels discussed in the presentations. In her final interview, Chelsea spoke of using film as a way to “get students wanting to read.” To illustrate her point further, she added, “I read so much this semester just because I saw people’s Video/Booktalks, and I wanted to see the movie.” Believing that students would have a similar response, she planned to use film as a teaching tool to “get students excited about reading.”

Kathy specifically discussed how Dr. Presley’s use of film in the Video/Booktalk for *Tuck Everlasting* proved to be her own motivation for reading the novel: “I kept reading because of the clip that she used to introduce the book because I wanted to see what was going to happen.” She spoke several times of being “grabbed” by the film clip. By this expression, Kathy meant that the film had captured and held her interest. She emphasized that neither the summary of the story nor that oral reading in the Video/Booktalk enticed her to read the novel; it was the film clip that most attracted her attention:

I think the film was what really grabbed me. [Dr. Presley’s] reading was good. But I think just seeing that visual picture of [the characters] in the woods and the water, and not knowing. . . . That made me want to really get into the book and see what’s going to happen and how it was going to end.

In the December interview, Jillian discussed film as a motivation to read. Just weeks away from her student teaching experience, Jillian often related her ideas about English language arts instruction to the specific methods she planned to use during the student teaching semester. She described the five-week unit she was developing and said that she

since she would be teaching *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt, 1975), she wanted to use film to introduce the novel similarly to the way Dr. Presley had through the Video/Booktalk. She said that film would be used “to get them interested in a book.” Saying that she did not plan “to talk about film as text” on the day that she introduced the book, she again emphasized that her purpose in this activity was to “get them interested in [the novel].” She compared using film in this way to a movie trailer that motivates people to watch a film; she was simply using the film as the advertisement for the print form of the story.

Like the other four case study subjects, Andrea referenced film’s being used to generate interest in reading books, but she emphasized that motivating readers should not be the only use of film in English language arts. Of the Video/Booktalks, for example, she said, “If they [Video/Booktalks] are used well, I think it’s not just an advertisement for the book”; rather students could “use them critically and analyze.” In a class discussion in which several of her classmates mentioned using film to generate interest in reading, Andrea agreed that film could be used to increase interest in a print text, but she encouraged her classmates to recognize how film could be used to “[develop] critical thinking skills.” She explained that when she and her partner prepared for their Video/Booktalk, they examined the film closely and “picked everything apart just like you would pick a person’s paper apart or like you would pick apart a question on an End of Grade test.”

Andrea believed it important that even as teachers were presenting film to draw their students into the print text, they also focus attention on analyzing the film selection they were presenting. As the only case study subject to have received formal instruction in a film

course, Andrea was experienced with analyzing a film for its merits as an individual work and recognized that it could be used as a text for critical analysis.

### *Analyzing Film through Comparison/Contrast*

In addition to using film to create interest in reading a print text, these preservice teachers also gave attention to examining film through comparison and contrast with print. They considered this use of film to be a more involved approach than using film as an interest-grabber or motivational strategy. They believed using film to create interest would be the first step to introducing film into the English language arts classroom; from that point, teachers could advance to using film to encourage students to look for similarities and differences between film and print. Implicit in these preservice teachers' discussions was the idea of presenting film adaptations of books in conjunction with the print form.

Addressing a comparison/contrast approach to using film in an in-class discussion after the final Video/Booktalk presentation, Greg described this approach to using film as a situation in which "you lead the class through that act" of comparison and contrast and "dissect and analyze" the filmmaker's choices by asking, "Why did [the filmmaker] do this?" Continuing to focus on the filmmaker's choices, Greg advocated comparing and contrasting the film to the book in order to "find what aspects of the text are highlighted by the filmmaker and what aspects are neglected."

Greg believed that comparing and contrasting the film and print versions of a text would help students build critical thinking skills. In his October interview, Greg said that that the process of comparison "can help students find the meaning in the language or the language art that encompasses both the written piece and the film." The film's usefulness is

in helping students discover “some of the meaning that they wouldn’t have otherwise found” in the print text. Greg explicitly suggested that the purpose of using film in this way was to enhance the understanding of the print text; he did not consider that the film conveyed meaning that was not in the print text. If the film in some way enhanced the understanding of the story that was presented in both forms, Greg believed it was because the film revealed “hidden meaning . . . that was written in the book.”

For Chelsea, film’s purpose as an instruction tool in the classroom would be “to enrich literature in the classroom.” She spoke of the “many young adult literature books that have been made into movies,” and recommended using those films along with the original books in order to enhance the reading of these books. Chelsea identified comparison and contrast as an easy first step for students. Envisioning how such an approach might be used in the classroom, she suggested that the teacher could “have the students read a text and then think about it and then see a movie.” From that point, the teacher could ask students “to think about how [the film and print texts] are the same and different.” Describing this approach as “the main surface level,” she said that any student could answer the question, “What’s better?” Chelsea believed that judging the works against each other offered an accessible way for student to think critically about the book. Like Greg, she emphasized that the goal of this exercise was to gain greater insight into the print work.

Similarly, Kathy saw presenting film in comparison with print works as a useful strategy for enhancing literature study. In an interview after classes had ended, she explained that she thought film should be presented in conjunction with a print text:

You could [use film without print text],but at the same time, I think you need both to really get that higher level of thinking and analyzing because there is some stuff in [print] text that's not in the film and they need to see that. They need to question why [a concept from the book] wasn't put in there. Is this important? . . . They need to have everything that was written along with what they've seen to make it really good. Kathy thought teaching film helped "to teach students about the difference that comes out in film." She believed those differences led the students toward a more thoughtful examination of the print text. For Kathy, the ultimate objective in comparing and contrasting the film and print versions was to deepen students' understandings of the print from.

As she discussed the value of a comparison/contrast approach to using film in English language arts instruction, Jillian spoke of how her perception of film had changed as she had learned that comparing and contrasting was more than simply judging one work to be better than the other. Jillian, a voracious reader, revealed that prior to the Video/Booktalk experience, she had regarded film adaptations as "the opposite" of the book. Her enjoyment of books was so strong that she had avoided seeing film versions because she "didn't think the movies would be as good." However, Jillian said that "looking at [film] through the film as text light," had enabled her to see film "as a correspondent to literature." Instead of focusing her attention on the fact that the two forms differed, she had learned to examine what those difference meant and how those differences worked to convey the same central meaning. Jillian's approach to film centered on comparison, but she described it as "making connections." Jillian said that "it's nice to be able to make a connection" by approaching the film "from a comparative point of view," and she credited the use of film in the

Video/Booktalks with helping her “to make connections between film and literature.” As Jillian discussed the ways in which books use words to convey the story and the ways in which films show the story, she said she had come to understand that a film could “[bring] out the characters” differently from the book without that difference being a weakness of the film. In this way, she was developing an appreciation for film as a textual form distinct from print.

As in the theme of utilizing film to create interest in reading print texts, Andrea demonstrated a variation in her attention to using film for comparison/contrast. Like the other four subjects, she spoke of film as a device for comparison/contrast with print texts and referred to presenting film as a complement to the book. However, she gave this use far less attention than the other four subjects. Of film’s purpose in English language arts, she wrote, “I think film most definitely has a place in ELA instruction. It could be used as a visual complement to a text. Students could compare and contrast the similarities/differences from a text and a movie.” While Andrea was interested in exploring the relationship between the two versions of a story, she wrote in a September freewrite that she saw film as complementing the books in that film could present the same story in a different way. In the October interview, Andrea explained that she could “feel the connection of the two” forms. She thought comparing and contrasting the two works that told the same story enhanced the understanding of each text; she did not see the objective as being only to enhance the understanding of the print form. In fact, she emphasized the value of the film text. She spoke of her appreciation for film adaptations of novels and expressed admiration that a filmmaker “can take someone’s written idea and make a bigger masterpiece out of it.” Andrea clarified

that she did not think the film version was necessarily better than the print form, but she did believe that it was not always an inferior form.

### *Employing Film to Assist Struggling Readers*

Four of the five case study subjects saw film as useful in the English language arts for helping struggling readers. They understood that many students who experience reading difficulties need a strategy or tool to make the print text more accessible; the preservice teachers discussed how film can be used as such a tool. Referencing her brother's experiences with a learning disability, Andrea related that "English can be so tedious for some students." She believed he could have benefitted from instruction that encouraged him to "tap into his creative side instead of just reading [information] in a textbook." She hypothesized that using film might have given him such an opportunity. She believed that seeing film versions of novels presented along with the print forms might have helped give him a purpose for reading because he would have been able to see how print can be represented in multiple forms. She also suggested that he would have enjoyed working with digital video to create responses to novels and other reading assignments; Andrea thought her brother's interest in such an activity would have helped him focus as he read, or he would have been looking for ideas he could portray on camera; that increased focus could have aided his reading comprehension.

Kathy and Chelsea focused on film's providing a visual reference for struggling readers. They both spoke of the difficulty some readers have with the visualization of print text and offered film as a solution to this challenge. Building on concepts Dr. Presley had introduced in class discussion, Kathy explained that "good readers can already visualize what

they see on the paper” while weaker readers need help “making that connection.” She said film “can help them start to see.” The film could create a touchstone that students could use to assist them in creating subsequent images of the print material. Further expanding her position about the value of film to help develop reading skills, she said film could also be used to help English language learners who were learning to read English. She explained that film’s visual representation of information could be used to help English language learners “interpret nonverbal cues.” In this process, students could see the relationship between the print words and the scenes they saw represented through film.

Also touting the value of film for struggling readers, Chelsea shared in the December interview that she had first-hand knowledge of the daily challenges facing a student who has difficulty reading

I had a learning disability growing up, and I always had a hard time reading. I didn’t learn how to read until third grade. It was awful. And I feel like if my teacher incorporated things like mini clips to get my mind jogging or showing me a film after we read – even now that works for me. Yeah, like I’ll watch a movie after I read and then things that I didn’t think about while I was reading, that I completely skipped over, are more clear to me.

Chelsea also referenced using film to help struggling readers in the Literature for Adolescents class in October. As they discussed their use of film in the Video/Booktalks, Chelsea explained to her classmates, “Reading literature and speaking about literature come so naturally for some, but for others, not so much; film can be the key to bridging that gap.” She said that the problem for some readers is that they “can’t paint pictures in their own

minds.” Film could be used to address that problem because “film is visual” and “if you see it, and then you read it, you’re going to see the image.”

Like Chelsea, Greg considered film from the perspective of someone with reading difficulties, but his perspective on how film could be used to help readers differed slightly from that of Chelsea. Of his personal struggles with reading, Greg said in his first interview, “When I’m reading . . . I sound out every word, so I read probably a little bit slower than [other people].” Acknowledging that his reading skills had improved, he spoke of his middle school experiences: “I know for me at that age, and I still struggle with this a little bit, a little weak in my comprehension. I remember we would do readings, and other students would point out things that I had never even noticed before.” Greg suggested that using film could “give [students] something to work with.” Relating to his experience with reading, he said weak readers “get so caught up in decoding the characters over the written text that they won’t do as well with remembering characters’ names or following the story as it goes along.” He believed that weak readers were often distracted by the work of reading; the effort of decoding sometimes left them too tired to process the story. He thought that film could be used to introduce them to the story and enable them to enter the text with a foundational understanding of the plot. For these students, film can help to “develop a schema” that would enable them to “approach their reading . . . with a basic understanding.” Having that initial understanding could aid students throughout the reading process because they will not “be so caught up and distracted by trying to remember that person and that person.” Thus students would “not be slowed down by their weakness.”

Although not all of the preservice teachers specifically discussed film as helping struggling readers visualize print text, the concept was one that Dr. Presley introduced in class. In exploring the value of film as a part of the Video/Booktalks, she explained to all of the Literature for Adolescents class members that one of the problems facing students “who have real difficulty reading or comprehending” is that “they are not drawing those pictures in their mind, which good readers do.” She explained that film can help those readers because “it offers an image” and “offers something that brings [the print text] alive.” This discussion opened the door to class members’ exploring further the value of film in reading instruction. However, Chelsea was the only class member ever to reintroduce this concept in class, and she and Kathy were the only case study subjects specifically to discuss the connection between film’s visual representation and its ability to assist struggling readers.

#### *Creating Student Products with Digital Video*

While this study was primarily concerned with film narratives and distinguished those commercially prepared products from personal use of digital video, the preservice teachers did not make such a distinction. They used the term *film* to refer to any film product, whether commercially produced or individually created, and to the act of recording with a digital device. Therefore, an unexpected theme that emerged from analysis of the data was the preservice teachers’ interest in the use of digital video in the classroom. This interest in digital video originated in their experiences in their teacher education program. All of the students in the Literature for Adolescents class had been involved in education courses that used portable digital video cameras in learning activities. The semester prior to this study, these preservice teachers had been enrolled in a writing course also taught by Dr. Presley. In

this course, the students worked individually with sixth grade students to write an original poem and published their work by using portable digital cameras to record each other as they performed their poems. During the current semester, they had used digital video to create their music video for *The Outsiders* Project. The preservice teachers also reported that they had used digital video in other education classes to record and publish writing and research projects.

All five of the case study subjects expressed their intent to use digital video in English language arts instruction. Chelsea emphasized that the portable digital video camera would be an essential tool in her classroom and laughingly said she planned to use it so much that her students were “going to get sick of [digital video].” Also addressing the use of video cameras, Andrea discussed how the advances in the portable digital video camera had facilitated bringing this technology into the classroom and made it possible to put that technology into students’ hands. She was eager to give her students experience with this technology and believed that they would enjoy using digital video as a publishing tool. Jillian, frequently concerned about her student teaching placement, worried that her cooperating teacher might be resistant to her using portable digital video recorders during student teaching. Despite her worries, she said her plans for student teaching included publishing student presentations through digital video. Kathy, who would be student teaching on the same team as Jillian, also planned to use digital video to get students “more excited about learning because it’s not just sitting behind a desk.” She explained that students would be interested in creating digital video products because they would enjoy working with the technology and they would have a finished product they could share with their peers.

Continuing in their perceptions that digital video was a way of using film, several preservice teachers expressed that digital video could be used to provide students with authentic experiences in English language arts. Andrea, who had emphasized the importance of using film to develop critical thinking skills, said that both writing and responding activities could be “enhanced by film.” In an interview at the end of the semester, she spoke of educator Ron Clark, a recipient of Disney’s American Teacher of the Year award in 2000, as her inspiration for using digital video as a writing opportunity for students. She said he and his students “come up with these amazing rap songs and music videos” that “are based on their experiences.” Andrea believed these activities were authentic experiences because the students drew from their personal experiences as a source for their writings and then published this writing in a form that was uniquely suited to the type of writing they had generated. Andrea thought that for many students, a rap song or a music video was a more relevant text than an essay.

Andrea also spoke of using digital video as a way for students to respond to print texts they had read; through this type of activity, students could benefit from “an authentic experience of creating their own film.” She said this opportunity allowed them to “play director and use concepts they’ve discovered in their video booktalks and apply them to a new, exciting text.” Andrea believed that responding to literature through digital video required students to “take the book and . . . internalize it and make it into something of their own.” She emphasized that this process “cements concepts through its creation.”

Just as Andrea focused on digital video for creating student products, Greg also gave attention to the importance of students’ creating products through digital video. At the end of

the semester, he saw a relationship between using film narratives in instruction and creating digital video. In his December interview, he explained,

It kind of reminds me of Bloom's taxonomy where first they identify what it is we try to help them understand. We can show them commercial film or part of a film to show them what it is we want them to do. . . . And then we take them all the way to the point where they can do it themselves.

Greg continued to characterize such an approach as "being intentional about using film." He also spoke of creating digital videos as a way to improve reading comprehension. He said creating a video would give students a "reason and motivation to investigate further and work harder at understanding what's going on in that scene in that book." He described this process of interpretation as "that clothing of the meaning"; he believed that creating a digital video that portrayed their interpretations, the students would be putting their understanding into a physical form. Greg considered such an experience to be valuable in that it could take a student from "struggling to understand a novel" to being "able to communicate their understanding to others."

Like her colleagues, Chelsea found it important that digital video would allow students to create products for an authentic audience of their peers. Focusing on using digital video as a way of publishing student writing, she believed that knowing they could share their work with their classmates could help students see a purpose in their writing and motivate them to give more attention to their writing process. She explained, "If they're filming it and showing it to their peers and it's actually going to be recorded, I think they're going to think so much more about what they write."

Jillian went beyond digital video for individual development and identified the importance of students' working together on digital video projects. In a September freewrite assignment, she wrote, "Another idea is to have the students DO the filming/be the directors, rather than the teacher directing and filming." She emphasized that these products would be created by the students, not the teacher; therefore, students would have to work together to accomplish a common goal. She also addressed the need for students to work together on these projects: "I think this a great opportunity for teamwork as well as leadership." Such an idea aligned with the philosophy of her middle grades teacher education program, which emphasized the importance of a collaborative approach to education and the developmental needs of early adolescents.

Kathy also saw digital video creation as an opportunity for students to be involved in the process, but she emphasized the value of personal engagement. She believed that students would want "to get into it, being on camera." In addition to being engaged by the performance aspect, she thought they would want "to use the technology to make their own movie." In such a project, students would use digital video as a means of going beyond personal response to literature to "use their interpretation" of the work. As suggested by her classmate Greg, this process would push students to apply higher order thinking skills.

#### *Evolving Concept of Film as Text*

Throughout the semester, Dr. Presley used the phrase *film as text* when speaking of the way teachers can use film in the classroom. She introduced the Video/Booktalk to the students by saying, "This is the area where we're thinking about film as text and looking at it as literature." To help the students prepare for the Video/Booktalk presentations, she

distributed copies of “Film as Film: Using Movies to Help Students Visualize Literary Theory” (Muller, 2006), an article that directly addresses teaching film as text and gives an overview of basic cinematic techniques. Dr. Presley encouraged students to study this article so that they could “use the language of film” when discussing the video portion of their booktalks.

Dr. Presley consistently spoke of film as text and responded to each Video/Booktalk by addressing cinematic elements within the film. When Jillian shared in class that she was disappointed by the differences in the print and film versions of *The Devil’s Arithmetic*, Dr. Presley encouraged her to “focus on film as text” and to take it away from just comparing it to the print text.” Later in the semester, she led the class through a “synthesis discussion” in which they responded to the use of film in the Video/Booktalks and discussed what they had learned from this process. In this discussion, she encouraged them to look at film as text and to remember that they “can study film itself” without having to present it in unison with a print text.

To some extent, students in the class adopted the *film as text* terminology when they spoke of film. This shift was most evident in the handouts they prepared for their Video/Booktalks. All seven groups included “Film as Text” as a heading on their handouts. The assignment guide outlined the requirements for the handout and did not mention this section. Responding to Dr. Presley’s emphasis of film as text, students chose to add this category. The students used this section to speak specifically about cinematic elements. For example, Kathy’s group wrote of the film’s use of music and close-up shots and Jillian’s groups provided a detailed description of how camera angles were used in their scene.

Among all five preservice teachers, the common theme was that considering film as text meant analyzing the film's content and/or structure. Greg, who had initially been dubious of film as an instructional tool, spoke in December of film as "another form of meaning being made" and "a message being conveyed through language." Greg described thinking of film as text as being "able to look at different aspects" of the film including the "creation of that message or the creation of that meaning that's being made." Greg added that film was "not just language" but "another form of communicating." He said thinking of film as text meant also considering the "how music was used to contribute to the meaning" and how "the message is being conveyed in film or camera angles, or all types of aspects of film."

Both Chelsea and Andrea associated the concept of film as text with a focus analyzing how meaning is created in a film. Chelsea defined film as text as "using a film in the same way you would text." For her, thinking of film as text meant "reading a film" She described it as doing "the same thing you would with a novel" and said it meant "looking at it as if it were this novel you're holding in your hand." She further emphasized the point that analysis is involved in reading film. In her view, analysis required asking questions like "What's the climax, and who are the main characters? What are the themes?" In this series of questions, Chelsea applied typical ways of analyzing print text to the examination of a nonprint text.

Andrea's position reflected a similar stance. In an interview at the end of the semester, she stated, "When I think of film as text, I'm picturing being able to do what I need to do to text, to do it to a film." She further explained, "I can look at film and read it the

same way as I'm reading whatever words are in front of me." Andrea said that reading a book involved creating meaning "through words and descriptions." She said that with "film as text, you don't need the words because you're seeing the text in a different way." She referred to film angles, camera shots and music as elements that help with reading the film. Thus Andrea recognized that the cinematic elements of film are used to create and convey the meaning of the text.

Jillian also understood that cinematic elements were important to her understanding of film. Asserting that she had "learned a lot about film as text," Jillian said, "I didn't think anything about it before I took the [Literature for Adolescents] class." She associated film as text with assuming a "comparative view" between film and print text. However, her concept of film as text also included "the stuff in the movie that was not in the book." When encouraged to specify this "stuff in the movie," Jillian responded by differentiating, "In the film you can hear music, and you can see colors, and you can see actions, and you can see angles of the camera. I viewed that as text instead of reading [the words]." She explained that she responded to these cinematic elements to comprehend the meaning of the film in the same way she drew meaning from words when reading a print text.

Although she was beginning to consider the importance of cinematic elements, Kathy primarily associated film as text with a teaching approach that focused on analysis. At the end of the semester, she said, "Film as text is another way to teach students how to critically analyze information, all types of information." She directly tied this analysis to a comparison with print text. She said students can "see [meaning] in film and then go back to the text and interpret." She spoke of this process as building a skill that would help students understand

print text. However, while she immediately defined film as text within the context of comparison to print, she began to speak of the cinematic techniques she and her classmates had discussed in the Literature for Adolescents class. Describing how her personal approach to watching movies had changed, Kathy said, “Now when I see them only showing the face shot, I’m thinking, ‘Okay. They want to show that seriousness. How important is this?’” In this conversation, Kathy revealed how her concept of film as text was evolving. With the context of English language arts instruction, she focused on film as text in its relationship to print work. Yet Kathy was beginning to recognize that her personal understanding of film was changing, and that this change was related to her understanding of the characteristics of film as a distinctive textual form.

As these preservice teachers began to regard film as text, they realized that their overall concept of text had expanded. All revealed that they had entered the program thinking of text only as print forms that could be read in traditional ways. Greg said, “At the beginning of the semester, I would have only kept to written words on page” to define text. Andrea began the teacher education program by thinking “straight out text would be like a standard paragraph or maybe text out of a newspaper or in an article.” She had so closely “associated it with textbooks” and school, that “it was more like a negative connotation” because it reminded her of completing school assignments in these textbooks. Chelsea has also associated text with print text used in school. She said, “Before I had my education classes, text was books, and that’s all you did in class was books.” For Kathy, thinking of text had implied the act of “reading a work of literature and interpreting that.”

Jillian differed from the other four in that she was less clear about how her understanding of text was changing. At the end of the semester, she still tended to think of text as print. She said, “The first thing I think of is a textbook when you say ‘text.’ And then I think of anything that you would read, like sitting at a table, maybe sitting at a computer.” However, later in the interview, Jillian said, “I’ve been learning other stuff that can be viewed as text.” She credited this change to her Methods in Teaching Language Art class because they had “been doing a lot with technology.” When asked what other “stuff” might be text, she offered an example that was still closely linked to print: “We’ve been making videos of ourselves reading text. So technically, we’re reading the text, so I guess that can be viewed as text.”

While these preservice teachers were beginning to recognize that film and other nonprint forms could be considered text, they frequently reverted to using the term *text* as a synonym for print. This tendency is evidenced in the Video/Booktalk Handouts. In comparing the book and film versions, Jillian, Andrea, and Chelsea’s groups referred to the print version as the text. Jillian and her partner labeled a section of their handout as “Differences Shown in Movie and Text.” Similarly, Andrea and her partner used the heading “Differences between movie and text.” Chelsea’s group presented their discussion of the differences between the book and film under the heading of “Film vs. Text.”

Kathy and her partner also used the “Film vs. Text” heading, and throughout their handout they use text as a synonym for the print work. In fact, even in discussing the film as text, they refer to the book as “the overall text.” Their use of the term is so prevalent that at times it is difficult to distinguish if they are referring to the book, the film, or the general

story. In their suggestions for classroom uses, they offer ideas for using “this text” without specifying which form. However, all of these ideas are directly related to the print text characteristics that they described in their presentation. For example, in their presentation Kathy’s partner, Danielle, explained that the book used Spanish words and then provided the English translation. She said it was the first book she had read that paired two languages in that way. On their handout, Kathy and Danielle suggested that teachers “could use this text to teach language diversity and the effectiveness of language pairing in a text.” Another suggestion offered on the handout was to use “this text to teach writing dialogue by means of imitation.” While it could easily be assumed that writing dialogue could be associated with either of the textual forms, Kathy and Danielle presented dialogue as a strength of the book. In her October interview, Kathy also spoke of the dialogue in the book and said, “I was really impressed with all the dialogue that was in the book because I was thinking this [would be] a great way to teach students to write dialogue with this book.” This information strongly implied that on their handout Kathy and Danielle were using the term *text* as a synonym for book.

Even as these preservice teachers struggled to overcome completely the notion of text as only print forms, they did, in fact, change their perceptions of film and came to regard it as a text. They directly attributed this change in perception to their experience of integrating film with instruction in the Literature for Adolescents class.

### Conclusion

This chapter presented the data that resulted from this study of the preservice teachers’ perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. It included portraits of the

five case study subjects: Greg, Kathy, Jillian, Andrea, and Chelsea. It also presented five themes that emerged across cases from the analysis of interviews, participant observation, and documents. The following chapter will provide a discussion of these findings and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore preservice teachers' perceptions of film in English language arts instruction. Using a qualitative methodology, this multiple case study focused on five preservice teachers within the setting of Literature for Adolescents, an English education course that directly integrated film texts with the study of young adult literature. All five of these preservice teachers were enrolled in the course during the semester prior to their student teaching internships. They were also enrolled in other courses to meet programmatic requirements and completing field observations in the classroom of their student teaching placement.

This study was guided by the research question: what are preservice teachers' perceptions of film in English language arts instruction? This chapter presents a discussion of this study's major findings as they relate to this research question. This discussion is followed by a description of the study's contributions to the field of teacher preparation in English language arts, a discussion of the implications for teacher educators and recommendations for future research.

### Discussion of Findings

Within the field of English language arts, there is much interest in embracing a new literacies pedagogy in which instruction addresses "both print-based and multimodal literacies and their accompanying social practices" (Swenson, Young, McGrail, Rozema, & Whitin, 2006, p. 357). In this study, I have focused specifically on film as a non-print, multimodal text. Film is not a new form for the English classroom; since the 1930s, English educators have debated its value in classroom instruction (Hatfield, 1935). Although film has

widely been regarded as a supplement to literature instruction, it has often been used in ways that are inconsistent with sound instructional practices (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Hobbs, 2006). Yet an increased emphasis on nonprint texts may influence the ways in which film is used in the classroom.

Examining preservice teachers' perceptions of film allowed me to look at English language arts instruction through the eyes of educators who were at a critical point in forming their teaching philosophy. After many years of being students of English, they were now learning to teach English language arts. Research has shown that preservice teachers' perceptions of school and teaching can be greatly influenced by the ways in which they were taught as students (Graham & Hudson-Ross, 1999; Stockinger, 2007). If the teaching practices advocated by their teacher education program differ from those they have experienced as students, they face the challenge of sorting through the differing philosophies and forming their own personal philosophies of teaching.

By studying these preservice teachers in the context of a literature course that addressed film as text, I was able to gain insights into their evolving philosophies about teaching with film. As presented in the previous chapter, five major themes emerged from the data: utilizing film to create interest in print texts, analyzing film through comparison/contrast, employing film to assist struggling readers, creating student products with digital video, and an evolving concept of film as text.

#### *Film as a Complement to Print Text*

From this research, it was evident that these five preservice teachers regarded film as a complement to literature instruction. Across cases and throughout the data, the preservice

teachers consistently viewed film as a form that should be used in unison with a print text. Indeed, the themes of utilizing film to create interest in print texts, analyzing film through comparison/contrast, and employing film to assist struggling readers were all predicated on the assumption that film would be presented with an accompanying print text. When considering film in the English language arts class, these preservice teachers measured its value by how well it advanced the reading of print texts.

The preservice teachers did not believe that a print text necessarily required the use of a film text, but that the film could provide something extra to enrich the reading of the book. This pattern can be seen through their emphasis on using a film adaptation of a story to motivate students to read the print text. All five of the subjects identified film as being useful in this way – as a key that can be used for opening the door to a print text.

In discussing film as a means for creating interest in reading print texts, these preservice teachers did not question why film would be successful in motivating students to read. They accepted that students might need motivation to read, and they accepted that film might provide that motivation; they did not explore *why* film would prove to be that motivation. Several of them specifically spoke of how the film clips shown in the Video/Booktalks had inspired them to read. Chelsea, who said viewing film clips helped her reading process, said that she had read books during the semester because she had seen film clip presented in Video/Booktalk and then “wanted to see the movie.” Kathy shared that she had not enjoyed the opening chapters of *Tuck Everlasting* but that she had continued reading because she wanted to find the scene shown in class “to see what was going to happen” and was motivated to read beyond that point to discover “what [was] going to happen after that.”

Neither Chelsea nor Kathy expressed surprise that films capture her interest, but neither delved more deeply to explore thoroughly the causes of her response to film.

Only Kathy connected film's ability to create interest in a story to its visual representation. She was clear that it was the film clip and not the oral reading of the passage from the book that motivated her to read. She said that "seeing that visual picture" of the characters and setting made her "want to get into the book and see what's going to happen and how it was going to end." Even as Kathy identified the visual as her motivation for reading, she did not seek to explore that connection or question why that might be. Her emphasis was that she returned to the book. Film had provided the entrance to the story, but she would continue into that story through the book.

In addition to viewing film as a means of generating interest in reading print texts, four of the five preservice teachers identified it as a tool for helping struggling readers. They spoke of the difficulties many readers have visualizing what they read and how film could be used to create that visual for them, a fact consistent with reading research (Block and Pressley, 2003; Block & Duffy, 2008). Film could also provide an introduction to the story and, therefore, allow the reader to enter the print text with a basic understanding that would make it easier to negotiate the print text.

The principle of using film to help readers visualize print text was introduced by Dr. Presley in the Literature for Adolescents class; therefore, it is logical that these preservice teachers identified that potential use. However, it is noteworthy that they also related to this idea from personal experience. Both Chelsea and Greg shared that they had difficulties with reading and that they had found the films to be helpful for understanding the print texts. At

the beginning of the semester, neither of these students identified film as an aid for struggling readers but both gave considerable attention to this use after having worked with film through the Video/Booktalks. This fact points to the influence of their having experienced film as a student; these preservice teachers based their decision about the validity of an instructional practice on the success they experienced with assignments that integrated film. In this way, the finding of this study align with Lortie's (1975) idea of an apprenticeship of observation, in which he suggests teachers value the instructional methods they experienced students and often employ those same methods.

While using film to help struggling readers become more competent with a print text is unquestionably a worthy goal, this theme again emphasized film's role as a supporting print text. In this context, the preservice teachers judged it useful because it would make readers more competent at reading a designated print text. They did not discuss analyzing the skills used for making meaning from film and then transferring those skills to print. They focused solely on film as providing the background knowledge or the visual image that students may need to help them engage in a particular print work – the same skills that were emphasized in the Literature for Adolescents class. Instruction in that course did not explore ways in which film could be used to improve overall reading skills or the ways in which comprehension strategies used with film could be applied to print texts, and the preservice teachers did not consider these possibilities for further uses. This fact is consistent with research that suggests prior experience is a powerful influence over preservice teachers' perceptions and intended practices and again supports research that finds teachers often use the same teaching methods in which they were taught (Stockinger, 2007; Lortie, 1975).

The preservice teachers in this study were strongly focused on the importance of comparing the film texts to the print texts. Interestingly, this act of comparison/contrast was often evaluative. More specifically, these preservice teachers were concerned with assessing how closely the film mirrored the print text. For example, Jillian expressed in class her frustration that the film she and her partner selected varied too much from the print text. During their presentation, both she and her partner spoke of their disappointment with ways in which the film varied from the book. Likewise, Andrea and her partner praised their film for its ability to capture the mood created in the print text.

This interest in measuring the film against the book reveals a concern with the film's fidelity to the print text. Judging film adaptations, films that have been created or adapted from original print texts, by how well they align with the print work is common among literary scholars and English educators (Hutcheon, 2006). However, it may also hinder their ability to see objectively the merits of the film or to recognize the film as a distinct text separate from the print text (Dick, 1990; Stam, 2005). Although the preservice teachers in this study began to regard film as a textual form, their focus on measuring a film against its print form limited their ability to see the film as an independent text. Even when they considered the cinematic elements of the film and how they conveyed the meaning of the film, they continued to return to the print source so that they could evaluate how well the film had conveyed the message in the book. Because of their attention to the ways in which the film "was not the book" (Dick, 1990), they failed to see that the film was never intended to be the book, but was instead a separate work that could stand apart from the print text.

The perception of film as a useful supplement to written texts was consistent with research on the practices of in-service teachers. This literature shows that the dominant approach to teaching film is to present it as supplementary text, most often in comparison to the written text from which it was adapted (Teasley & Wilder, 1997; Phillips & Teasley, 2008). When used in this way, the purpose of the film is to “enrich and support a printed text” (Kist, 2000, p. 711), and the book remains the central subject of study.

That these preservice teachers would appropriate a view of film as a complement to literature instruction is logical. Their main engagement with film was through the Video/Booktalk, an assignment designed to look at the relationship between a print and nonprint text. It required pairing a young adult book with its film adaptation. Dr. Presley explicitly explained the assignment as an opportunity to “to draw the connection between film and print text.” She also explained to the students that the assignment integrated film “as a complement to print texts.” While she mentioned other ways of using film in the classroom and specifically stated that film could be used as a standalone text, the students in this course experienced film through its relationship to a print text.

#### *The Authority of the Print Text*

During this study, the five preservice teachers exhibited a shift in their perceptions of film as text. All five began the semester defining text only in term of print, or in Greg’s words, “written words on page.” As the semester progressed, they began to adopt Dr. Presley’s language and referred to film as text. They appropriated this term for their Video/Booktalk handouts, and they used it when they discussed the cinematic elements of the film narratives they presented in class. This focused attention to film as a textual form

resulted in a change in their perception of film. By the end of the semester, all five subjects still defined text within the context of print or words, but all five also said that film could be a form of text. For example, Chelsea considered film to be text because it could be read in a process much like the reading of print; she explained that the viewer draws meaning from the cinematic elements in film just as the reader of a print text draws meaning from the printed words. Similarly Jillian said that looking for how the film could represent a story through music and color helped her to realize she could read or process that information just as she read words and understood their meanings.

However, it is important to recognize that while these preservice teachers were willing to accept film as text, this study revealed that they did not regard film as equal to print text. From their perspective, print text remained the authoritative form, and film's purpose in English language arts instruction was limited to how it supported the study of print forms, most often literature. When these five case study subjects identified potential instructional uses for film in English language arts, these applications all depended on film's being paired with a print text. None of the preservice teachers considered using film as an independent text, thus suggesting they did not believe it merited the same degree of attention as they would give a print text.

In the identified roles of motivating students to read and assisting struggling readers, these preservice teachers saw film functioning to help students enter the print text. Even at the end of the semester, for these preservice teachers, the print form was the text of primary interest. In comparing books to their film adaptations, the preservice teachers were principally concerned with how the film remained faithful to the print text. The assumption

supporting all of these perceptions is that the print text is the authoritative form. This stance is not unique to these preservice teachers, for it is the position most commonly assumed by English educators (Phillips & Teasley, 2008).

This fact was strikingly evident in Kathy and her partner's treatment of film in their Video/Booktalk of *Stand and Deliver* (Edwards, Menendez, & Musca, 1989). After reading aloud a passage and showing the corresponding film clip, they led a discussion of the differences between the two forms. They were insistent that the film left out information; both partners said "the movie assumes you know" certain information about the story. Their continued attention to what they considered omissions in the film implied that the print form was the more accurate text. However, in this situation, the film was the original text; the book was written as an adaptation of the film. Therefore, it could not be that the film was omitting information; rather the book was adding information. Yet while they knew that the book was the original version of the story, Kathy and her partner still assumed that the book was the authority. Just as important as their position on the book's authority is the fact that none of their classmates questioned or challenged this perspective.

#### *Digital Video and Publication*

A key finding in this study was that the subjects directly associated film in English language arts instruction with using digital video to publish student writing and to create student responses to print texts. In its conception, this study intended to address film narratives and distinguished those commercially prepared products as separate from digital video created by students. However, the students in the Literature for Adolescents class did not make that distinction. In their use, the term *film* referred to the product, either commercial

or personally created, or to the act of recording digital video. As a qualitative researcher, I was careful not to manipulate or exert influence over their setting or context; therefore, I did not impose my definition of film and instead focused on how they saw digital video fitting in with film narrative and with English language arts instruction.

The preservice teachers were eager to use digital video to enhance their instruction. They spoke of the importance of “filming” their students with portable digital video cameras, the digital devices they used to record the music videos for *The Outsiders* Project and the previous semester. They also reported using digital video in other teacher education courses. As Andrea pointed out, this technology made it possible to create student products in the classroom and allowed the students to be the ones to use the technology. Similarly to their ideas about using film to create interest in print texts, the preservice teachers thought digital video could be used to motivate students to engage with writing activities. In all cases their use of digital video involved the sharing of these products; they spoke of digital video as having an authentic purpose or providing an authentic experience because the students knew that their peers would be viewing the final product. Thus the value they placed on digital video was closely associated with its use as a publishing tool.

#### *The Influence of the Teacher Education Program*

The findings of this study point strongly to the influence of the teacher education program. All five of the preservice teachers began the semester with the perception that they would not use film in English language arts instruction. Even Andrea, who had taken a high school film course and who said she wanted to use film, expressed that she did not know how

to justify including it in classroom instruction. By the end of the semester, all five of the subjects planned to use film in their future instruction.

Notably, they planned to use film in the ways they had experienced during the semester. They wanted to use film through the Video/Booktalk assignment to create interest in print texts or to offer an alternative to traditional book reports, and they spoke frequently of using film for comparison/contrast activities with the texts they would be reading with their students. They planned to use digital video to present student performances, to create responses to reading, and to publish student writing – all ways in which they had used digital video during their teacher education program, either in Literature for Adolescents or in other education courses. Yet again, the findings of the study align with research that supports the principle of teachers teaching in the ways they have been taught (Lortie, 1975; Graham & Hudson-Ross, 1999).

While their perceptions of film were directly affected by the integration of film in the Literature for Adolescents class, an important distinction is that the assignments that addressed film were experiential. Dr. Presley presented information on other uses of film, but the students did not internalize those messages as they did the goals of the Video/Booktalk and the use of film in *The Outsiders* Project. In these two projects, the students actively participated in using film. The students identified these uses of film as valuable to instruction because they had found them valuable to their learning, but through these projects, they also employed film as in instructional tool. In the Video/Booktalks, they had to apply the concepts that Dr. Presley had explained about film as text and put those ideas into practice to teach their classmates about the film used in their presentation. In *The Outsiders* Project, the

preservice teachers were responsible for teaching the middle school students; by guiding the seventh graders through the process of making a music video, they employed digital video as a tool for responding to literature and helped their students to create and publish a product that presented that response.

Research has suggested that teacher education programs can successfully influence preservice teachers' beliefs about instructional practices if they provide sequenced, ongoing exposure and involvement with new teaching philosophies (Bai & Ertmer, 2008; Hollingsworth, 1989). In this study, the preservice teachers worked with film, either film narrative or digital video, over the course of the entire semester. The Video/Booktalks were spaced over ten weeks, so that in each of those classes, they were experiencing film either through presentation or discussion of how film had been used in those presentations. In a similar manner, *The Outsiders Project* extended over five weeks. Additionally, these preservice teachers had been exposed to using digital video to publish students' poetry in their writing class the previous semester and reported they were using digital video as a publishing tool in other education class. This extended exposure to film over the course of the semester – and to digital video throughout their teacher education program – facilitated their evolving concept of film as text.

#### Contributions to the Field of English Language Arts

This study indicates that preservice teachers' experiences in their teacher education programs exert considerable influence in shaping their perceptions of English language arts instruction. These preservice teachers began the semester with doubts about using film for classroom instruction. Over the course of the semester, they exhibited an interesting change

in that perception; all ended the semester saying that film had a purpose in English language arts instruction and that they planned to use it in their instructional practices. They directly attributed this change to their experiences with film in the Video/Booktalk assignment and their use of digital video in *The Outsiders* Project and in other education classes.

These results suggest that preservice teachers are receptive to an expanding view of literacy that recognizes the value of nonprint text. However, it also reveals that in order for them to accept the value of nonprint texts, they must have meaningful experiences with these texts. While these teachers demonstrated a change in their perception of film as text, that shift did not extend to their recognizing other nonprint forms as text. They came to see film as text because it was directly integrated as such. If English educators want preservice teachers to adopt a new literacies approach that values both print and nonprint texts in instruction as is advocated by the *Standards for English Language Arts* (NCTE, 1996), then they must provide their students with meaningful experiences in which they approach nonprint forms as a text.

#### Implications for Teacher Educators

Just as the preservice teachers' changing concept of film as text demonstrates that they can be receptive to an expanding view of literacy, it also reveals that their beliefs about teaching can be influenced by their teacher education programs. However, that change is more pronounced when they are involved in experiential learning opportunities. They benefit both from experiencing the innovative instructional methods as a student and from employing these methods in a teaching role. Furthermore, this study revealed that preservice

teachers begin to adopt the philosophies of their teacher education program when they are consistently exposed to these philosophies over an extended period of time.

Through instruction that specifically addressed film, the preservice teachers in this study expanded this concept of literacy to include the importance of film as a nonprint text. Yet their understanding of film was limited to the ways in which they used it in their teacher education program. They expressed the belief that commercially produced film narratives are valuable complements to print texts, and they displayed much interest in using digital video to create and publish student products in the classroom. In their intended uses of film, the preservice teachers reveal a gap in their approach to film as a text. They are interested in using film to address print texts, and they are interested in using digital video to create student texts; they are not interested in presenting film as an independent text to be read and analyzed for its own merits. However, their teacher education program did not directly address such a use of film. This information indicates a need for instruction in cinematic literacy. Preservice teachers cannot fully appreciate the merits of film until they study it as a separate genre that draws upon specific techniques to communicate a message. Just as students learn to appreciate different genres of writing by studying the specific rhetorical skills that are used in each form, they also need to learn the cinematic techniques that are used to create a film. Such a need requires that teacher education programs expand their requirements to integrate film instruction. Similarly, if teacher education programs are going to be successful in promoting an expanding view of literacy, they will need to provide students with substantive experiences in which they study a variety of nonprint forms; this

need points to the value of a balanced comprehensive program that includes coursework in music and arts appreciation.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

While this research revealed that preservice teachers valued film and planned to use it in English language arts instruction, more research is needed to determine if they actually put these beliefs into practice. All of these preservice teachers were assigned to spend the next semester in other teachers' classrooms where they would be restricted to using teaching strategies and texts that were approved by their cooperating teachers. Research has shown that the cooperating teachers exert great influence on beginning teachers' practices (Hollingsworth, 1989). More research would show whether cooperating teachers' teaching philosophies are consistent with those of the teacher education program; if not, research may reveal how these two competing influences affect preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching – in this situation specifically their beliefs about teaching with film. Similarly, it would be helpful to study first-year teachers to determine if they put into practice their expressed intentions for using film in English language arts instruction. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed to determine if preservice teachers' perceptions of film remain consistent throughout the early stages of their teaching careers.

This study focused specifically on one nonprint text, film. The results indicated that preservice teachers' perceptions of film were influenced by their experiences in their teacher education program. More research is needed to determine if results would be similar with the integration of other nonprint forms such as music and visual art.

While this research was focused on preservice teachers' perceptions of film, this study was conducted within the context of a course whose primary purpose was to examine the teaching of adolescent literature. Therefore, this course addressed film only in its relationship to adolescent literature. The results of this study showed that the course's focused attention to film led to the preservice teachers' expanding their concept of text to include film as a text useful to English language arts instruction. However, results also revealed that they believed that film text should be paired with a print text, a philosophy that was consistent with the use of film in the Literature for Adolescents course. Future research could explore whether preservice teachers continue to regard film as complement to print texts when they are exposed to academic courses that address film as an independent text.

This study was also limited to analysis of preservice teachers within one semester of their teacher education program. The study's findings suggested that the preservice teachers benefitted from extended exposure from film over the entire semester and that they responded to the use of digital video which they reported also using in other teacher education courses. Future research could explore more fully the influence of the teacher education program by studying students within the context of the entire program rather than only one course during one specific semester.

A potential extension of this study would be to examine how using digital video for composing and creating products affects preservice teachers' perceptions and/or use of film narratives in English language arts instruction. This study revealed that preservice teachers were eager to use digital video as a publication tool and that they closely associated digital

video with film. Further research could explore if preservice teachers' increased use of digital video to create texts influences their perceptions of film narrative.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview Guide One

1. In your own words, how do you define literacy and English language arts?
2. Please tell me about your experience with the Video Book Talk in the Literature for Adolescents class.
3. Why did you choose your book and film for your presentation?
4. What connections can you see between the way you have used film in the Literature for Adolescents class and the topics you are discussing in your other university courses?
5. Considering your experience in the Literature for Adolescents class, how do you see film as fitting into English language arts instruction?
6. What do you think is the relationship between film and literature?
7. Please share with me some of your other experiences with film in the classroom.
  - a. Considering all of your experiences in English language arts classes, elementary through college, describe the class in which film was used most effectively.
    - i. Why was this use effective?
  - b. How has film been used in your college courses? (Both education & English)
  - c. When you were a high school student, how was film used in your English classes?
  - d. How was film used in your middle school classes?
8. Please tell me a little about your background.
  - a. In what year did you graduate from high school?
  - b. Describe your high school.
    - i. Public or private?
    - ii. Rural or urban?

9. Describe your middle school.
10. Have you attended any other colleges or universities?
  - a. If so, which one(s)?
  - b. In what program were you enrolled?

## Appendix B: Interview Two

1. In your own words, how would you define *text*?
2. Has your understanding of text changed during your teacher education program?
  - If so, how?
3. What does it mean to you when we talk about *film as text*?
4. Please tell me about your experience working with the middle school students on *The Outsiders* Project.
5. What connections can you see between the use of digital video in *The Outsiders* Project and the use of film in the Video Book Talks?
6. Now that you have almost completed the fall semester and are making plans for student teaching, how would describe your understanding of middle school English language arts instruction?
7. When you have observed in your cooperating teacher's classroom, have you seen film being used?
  - If so: How?
  - If not: Why do you think that might be?
8. Have you observed any situations in which you thought film could have been used?
  - If so, please elaborate.
9. How do you plan to use film when you are teaching your middle school students?
10. What do you see as the role of film in English language arts instruction?