HOW THREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS NEGOTIATE THEIR BELIEFS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN THREE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

by

Megan Elizabeth Guise

B.S., Millersville University, 2002

M.Ed., Millersville University, 2004

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

School of Education in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2009

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented

by

Megan Elizabeth Guise

It was defended on

May 19, 2009

and approved by

Dr. Amanda Thein, Assistant Professor, Department of Instruction and Learning

Dr. Lindsay Clare Matsumura, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology in Education

Dr. Scott Kiesling, Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Amanda Godley, Associate Professor, Department of Instruction

and Learning

HOW THREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS NEGOTIATE THEIR BELIEFS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN THREE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Megan Elizabeth Guise, Ph.D.

University of Pittsburgh, 2009

In this study I present data from a six-month qualitative study that examined how three English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students interacted with specific school, curricular, and educational policies to shape their instructional practice. Data drew from extensive interviews, classroom observations, and teaching artifacts. Data analysis focused on alignments and misalignments between teachers' expressed beliefs and their observed teaching practices and on the negotiations that occurred when the teachers were faced with misalignments between their beliefs and the educational contexts in which they worked. Findings from this research study demonstrate that when faced with a tension between their beliefs and school and policy pressures, the three teachers drew upon several different negotiation strategies including isolating themselves from the larger school context or becoming more actively involved in the school context. These negotiation strategies employed were dependent on the level of agency the teacher felt in her particular school context as well as the type of administrative leadership in her school context. However, misalignments between the teachers' beliefs and instructional practices could not be entirely attributed to school or national educational policies, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB); rather, the teachers' limited critical reflection on their instructional practice and the broad, vague nature of many of the teachers' core beliefs about teaching and learning accounted for many of the misalignments found between

their beliefs and instructional practices. These findings suggest that teachers need strongly-guided opportunities to develop and critically reflect on both their beliefs and instructional practices and to strategize how to make productive negotiations between these beliefs, practices, and external pressures (such as NCLB) if they are to maintain positive professional relationships and adapt their instructional practices in the face of new policies and "best practices."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

1.0   CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1   GOAL OF THE STUDY

This research study examines how three secondary English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students interacted with specific school, curricular, and policy educational contexts to shape their instructional practice. Additionally, this research study examines the negotiations that occurred for these three teachers when faced with a misalignment between beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts.

This study seeks to contribute to existing educational research in many ways. Although many studies have focused on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Bednar, 1993; Bryan, 2003; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991), most of these studies have examined the beliefs of preservice teachers rather than inservice teachers (Bednar, 1993; Bryan, 2003; Cooney, Shealy, & Arvold, 1998; Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988; Goodman, 1988; Hollingsworth, 1989; Skamp & Mueller, 2001). Fang (1996) contends that an important next step for future research on teachers' beliefs is to examine the beliefs of inservice teachers, a gap in the research this study seeks to fill.

Secondly, studies on preservice and inservice teachers' beliefs often describe the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice as consistent or inconsistent

(Bednar, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006; Lasky, 2005; Richardson et al., 1991). These descriptions, however, rarely examine the reasons for such consistencies or inconsistencies, such as (a) the level of teacher *consciousness* of the existence of a particular belief, (b) the *connectedness* of the belief to other beliefs in the larger belief system, and mediating factors, such as (c) educational contexts and (d) teacher agency (for exceptions see Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004). Furthermore, few studies examine the belief negotiations that occur when a teacher is aware of a misalignment between his/her beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts (for an exception see Agee, 2004). By examining these negotiations, researchers can begin to understand how teachers change their instructional practice and/or beliefs in order to resolve any tension or dissonance that may emerge as a result of a misalignment between beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts.

Thirdly, few studies on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice carefully conceptualize beliefs or use theories of beliefs as a framework for their research (for an exception see Bryan, 2003). By utilizing a theoretical framework rooted in beliefs and cultural models (Abelson, 1979; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Shore, 1996; Sigel, 1985), this study aims to contribute to existing research by offering a fuller understanding of the relationship among teachers' beliefs, their instructional practice, and the educational contexts by centering this understanding in what theoretical and empirical scholarship has revealed about how beliefs are formed, changed, deepened, and connected.

Qualitative methods were used for this study in order to gain a detailed understanding of three English Language Arts teachers' beliefs and how these beliefs influenced their instructional

practice, examining also how the educational contexts mediated this relationship and the belief negotiations that occurred when these three teachers were faced with a misalignment between beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts. The three major data strands included (a) weekly classroom observations documented through field notes and audio-recorded class discourse, (b) teaching artifacts, and (c) interviews with the three teacher participants, administrators, and students. What was unique about the interviews was that the teacher participants were presented with teaching episodes that revealed misalignments between their stated beliefs, their instructional practice, and/or educational contexts. Teacher participants were asked to reflect on these misalignments and offer insight into the reasons behind their existence. Presenting teachers with these conflicts between their beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts has not been used as a methodology in teacher belief research studies, thus making this study unique and potentially informative to the field. Three secondary English Language Arts teachers from three different school buildings, their students, and building administrators served as research participants. In summary, this study contributes to current research on teacher beliefs by extending this research to include inservice teachers, by utilizing a rich theoretical framework for beliefs and belief systems, and by using an innovative interview methodology to explore the negotiations that occurred when a misalignment existed between beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, I use the term *beliefs* to refer to a conceptual framework that shapes how a person makes sense of and interprets particular contexts and situations (Abelson, 1979; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Beliefs are constructed in experience and are highly personal and therefore are deeply ingrained in individuals, making them difficult to change (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Beliefs also guide behavior and decisions by providing a lens for interpreting situations and providing reasoning behind certain behaviors, even if the individual is not conscious of this influence on behavior (Enyedy et al., 2006; Ernest, 1989; Fang, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992).

Scholarship on beliefs (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985) suggests that there are four salient characteristics of beliefs – existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading, and episodic structure. I used these characteristics to help me identify the beliefs of the three teacher participants in my study as expressed in individual interviews and classroom instruction. In my data collection and analysis, I drew heavily on theories of the episodic structure of beliefs and their roots in experience by asking the three teacher participants to remember and reflect upon specific moments in their experiences as students and as teachers.

Furthermore, I recognize that beliefs influence instructional practice and that this influence can result in the alignment or misalignment of beliefs and instructional practice. Belief theorists (Ernest, 1989; Rokeach, 1968) argue that there are three factors mediating the relationship between beliefs and practice – level of consciousness, level of connectedness, and context – with researchers in the field of teacher beliefs proposing a fourth factor – teacher agency (Agee, 2004; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004). I used these explanations of

alignment and misalignment to explore the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice and to test out these explanations of alignment and misalignment while also looking for additional factors that might mediate this relationship.

I also draw upon cultural model theory (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Shore, 1996) in order to acknowledge the educational contexts that mediate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice. I used cultural model theory to explore the agreed upon models of teaching, learning, and students evident in the school culture to investigate how these cultural models mediated the beliefs and instructional practice of the three teacher participants (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Shore, 1996).

My study bridges theories of beliefs and cultural models by recognizing the personal aspect of beliefs while simultaneously recognizing the situated and social/cultural aspect of cultural models. Where belief and cultural model theories seem to converge is that both theories account for the assumptions and taken-for-granted theories of which individuals may or may not consciously be aware and that influence behavior in complex ways. However, I align myself more with belief theory because this theory accounts for the personal beliefs of individuals based in experience rather than a general model of how one should act and think in a particular community.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study addresses three major research questions, with the third research question serving as the central question of the study. Research Questions One and Two are designed to

support an investigation into the central research question, for before the negotiations of these three teacher participants could be understood, it was important to understand the beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students that these three teachers possessed and how these beliefs influenced their instructional practice. It also was important to gain insight into the three educational contexts (school, curricular, and policy) that this research study sought to better understand before the misalignments and negotiations could be examined. The research questions that guided this research study were:

1. How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students shape their instruction?

a. What beliefs did three secondary English Language Arts teachers have about the teaching of reading and writing?

b. What beliefs did three secondary English Language Arts teachers have about the learning of reading and writing?

c. What beliefs did three secondary English Language Arts teachers have about their students?

2. How did the educational contexts within which these three secondary English Language Arts teachers' worked – including the school, curricular, and policy contexts – shape their instruction?

a. How did the school context in which each of these three secondary English Language Arts teachers worked shape instruction?

b. How did the curriculum that each of these three secondary English Language Arts teachers was expected to teach shape instruction?

c. How did the current policy context (especially No Child Left Behind) shape these three English Language Arts teachers' school contexts?

3. How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers negotiate tensions between their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; the cultural models and tangible pressures of the educational contexts within which they worked; and their instructional practices?

a. What did three secondary English Language Arts teachers do when their conscious beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students did not align with those of the cultural models of the school context?

b. What changes to their beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students and their instructional practice did three secondary English Language Arts teachers make when resolving a tension between their beliefs and their instructional practice? Why?

c. What beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students and their instructional practice did three secondary English Language Arts teachers keep the same when faced with a tension between their beliefs and instructional practice? Why?

1.4   METHODOLOGY

1.4.1   Methodological justification

Qualitative research was used for the mode of inquiry for this research study. The main goal of qualitative research is to examine a specific topic in its context, looking to better understand the behavior of participants from their point of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Erickson, 1986; Erickson & Gutierrez, 2002). Not seeking to make broad generalizations across contexts,

qualitative research includes rich descriptions of people, places, and conversations in order to achieve a complex understanding of what happens in this context and the process of participants' meaning-making (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Methods used in qualitative research include observations, the writing of detailed field notes, and the collection of artifacts that document the experiences of those in the context under investigation. Qualitative research informed the design of this research study in that the study sought to gain a deeper understanding of three English Language Arts teachers' beliefs and instructional practice while situated in their educational contexts. Additionally, qualitative methods were used in order to gain a detailed understanding of the three teacher participants' beliefs and process of belief negotiations.

In addition, life history methodology was used to inform the design of the interview questions because belief theorists describe the episodic structure of beliefs rooted in personal experiences. Life history research allows the researcher to gain insight into the experiences of others in a particular context and asks participants to reflect on their experiences in order to tell the stories of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). According to belief theory, beliefs are often formed in experiences and stored as specific episodes (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985). Drawing from this theory of beliefs, I asked the three teacher participants to reflect on their personal experiences – both life and teaching experiences – in order to learn more about the sources and nature of their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students. Interviews were structured in such a way to allow for the elaboration of teacher participants' life stories to provide windows into their beliefs.

1.4.2 Data collection

The primary tools of data collection in this study included (a) classroom observations documented through field notes and audio-recorded class discourse; (b) examples of teaching artifacts such as lesson plans, handouts, and assessments; and (c) audio-recorded interviews with teachers, administrators, and students. The multiple and variety of data sources were used to triangulate the data (Erickson, 1986; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2002) thus possibly making findings more reliable and valid.

The classroom observations and audio recording of class discourse occurred once a week in one class for each teacher participant for the duration of the research study (six months). Detailed field notes and recorded class discourse helped me to gain an understanding of the teacher participants' instructional practices as well as the school, curricular, and policy contexts. The interviews with teacher participants occurred at five different times during the course of the research study and allowed for the investigation of the teacher participants' beliefs, which were then compared and analyzed with their instructional practice by drawing upon the observation and recorded class discourse data. Additionally, the teacher participants' belief negotiations were examined by looking for challenges and tensions mentioned by the teacher participants during Interviews One, Two, and Four when they were asked to describe their beliefs about teaching and learning, their instructional practice, and their educational contexts. These negotiations were further examined in Interviews Three and Five by presenting the teacher participants with examples of a misalignment between their stated beliefs, their instructional practice, and/or their educational contexts. Negotiations were explored in these interviews by having the teacher participants reflect and explain the misalignment, offering insight into what they did when faced with a misalignment and what they changed and or maintained in regards to their beliefs and

instructional practice. These negotiations were documented further by looking for evidence of subsequent change in instructional practice during observations after the teacher participants had the opportunity to reflect on this misalignment. Interviews with administrators and students also contributed to this research study by gaining an understanding of the educational context – specifically the school, curricular, and policy contexts – helping to determine how these contexts mediated instructional practice. Finally, the teacher participants' teaching artifacts provided further evidence of their instructional practice.

1.4.3   Data analysis

1.4.3.1 How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students shape their instruction?

The interview data served as the primary data source for identifying teacher participants' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students. The interview protocols were created to elicit teacher participants' stories about their own learning, the learning of their students, and specific teaching episodes/moments. In my analysis of the interview data, I first demarcated the interview data into episodes or a series of talk related to a particular topic. Then, I drew upon the work of teacher belief theorists such as Nespor (1987) in order to identify beliefs through the use of the four foundational characteristics of beliefs: (a) existential presumption, (b) alternativity, (c) affective/evaluative loading, and (d) episodic structure. Discourse markers such as "I believe," "I feel," "In an ideal world," "In my first year of teaching," helped to pinpoint examples of the four characteristics of beliefs, thus identifying a belief in the data. I then used questions adapted from Gee (1999, p. 78) (i.e., What must I assume this teacher believes [consciously or unconsciously] in order to make deep sense of what she is saying? What theories must this teacher [consciously

or unconsciously] hold such that she is using just these situated meanings?) to help me articulate the conscious/unconscious belief represented by this episode. I also coded for dimensions of beliefs such as connectedness and external factors such as context and teacher agency to further explore the belief represented in each episode.

Additionally, classroom discourse was analyzed for examples of beliefs. In order to answer how the beliefs impacted instructional practice, a comparison occurred between identified beliefs in the interview data and the description of the teacher participants' instructional practice documented in the field notes and classroom discourse. This comparison allowed for similarities and differences between beliefs and instructional practice to be documented with these results informing the interview protocol of Interviews Three and Five in which teacher participants were asked to reflect on a misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice that was presented to them during these interviews.

1.4.3.2 How did the educational contexts within which these three secondary English Language Arts teachers' worked – including the school, curricular, and policy contexts – shape their instruction?

The data was analyzed for the three teacher participants' talk related to their description of the three different educational contexts and how they saw these contexts mediating their instructional practice. The student and administrator interviews offered different perspectives on the three educational contexts, which created a richer, triangulated picture of the educational contexts. Finally, the field notes and transcribed classroom data were analyzed for the general school culture that was created, looking specifically for references to the culture of the school, the curriculum, and the current place of high-stakes testing.

1.4.3.3 How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers negotiate tensions between their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; the cultural models and tangible pressures of the educational contexts within which they worked; and their instructional practices?

In order to better understand the relationship between these three teacher participants' beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts, the data were analyzed for instances of misalignments that existed between the teacher participants' beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts. Misalignments were found by examining the teacher participants' instructional practice and determining how this disconnected with their stated beliefs and their educational contexts documented through observations and interviews. These misalignments were presented to the teacher participants during Interviews Three and Five in order to provide them with the opportunity to reflect and comment on these disconnections between their beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts. The negotiations were further examined by looking to see if change occurred in the teacher participants' instructional practice after they had the chance to reflect on a misalignment during Interview Three.

1.5   IMPLICATIONS

1.5.1   Implications for teacher education

Researchers in the field of teacher education have encouraged a closer investigation of the influence of teachers' beliefs on instructional practice (Bryan, 2003; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). These studies recognize that the beliefs teachers bring to their teacher education

programs are one of the strongest influences on their instructional practice. This research study helps to inform teacher education by providing a better conceptualization of teacher beliefs and the types of belief negotiations that occur. In addition, this research study suggests that one focus of teacher education programs should be on helping preservice and inservice teachers develop their general and discipline-specific beliefs about teaching and their ability to critically reflect on these beliefs and their instructional practice, seeking to build better alignment between their beliefs and instructional practice.

1.5.2   Implications for English Language Arts research

By focusing on the relationship among beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts as well as examining the belief negotiations that occurred, this study contributes to current research on the influence of teachers' beliefs on their instructional practice (Muchmore, 2001; Richardson et al., 1991; Zancanella, 1992). Such research describes the contradictions that exist between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice, but offers few studies that thoroughly examine the complexities and nuances of this relationship. For example, by presenting the teacher participants with examples of their teaching partnered with belief statements made during open-ended interviews, teacher participants were asked to reflect on their instructional practice and beliefs and explain misalignments between beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts. The teacher participants' explanations of these misalignments helped to build a better understanding of the various contextual and emotional factors that mediate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. Additionally, by investigating context as a factor that mediates instructional practice, this study moves beyond just studying the relationship

between beliefs and instructional practice and adds an understanding of the complex relationship among beliefs, instructional practice, and context.

1.5.3   Implications for future research on beliefs

One challenge researchers face when studying beliefs is how to determine the depth of any given belief and how to identify those beliefs that may be less conscious. Although several data collection instruments and analysis techniques were employed in this research study in order to determine the depth and level of consciousness of the different beliefs of the three teacher participants, there were certain limitations to these data instruments and analyses. This research study provides insight into the types of data collection instruments and analysis methods that could be used in future research studies on beliefs in order to account for the less conscious beliefs individuals may hold.

2.0   CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges currently facing all K-12 educators is negotiating conflicts between their personal beliefs about teaching and learning, the constraints of current educational contexts, and the practice of teaching. In this chapter, I examine (a) current research on how teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning influence their instructional practice, and (b) how the educational contexts in which teachers work – contexts that are based in school culture, available curriculum, and educational policy – mediate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. I begin with an overview of current, cross-disciplinary scholarship on theories of beliefs and cultural models, drawing from this body of work to articulate the theory of beliefs and their characteristics that grounds this research study. I then present a historical overview of studies that have examined how teachers' beliefs influence their instructional practice, arguing that such research is limited by its focus on preservice teachers, rather than inservice teachers, and its undertheorizing of *beliefs.* Next, I review the empirical research in English Language Arts and other content areas that has examined the interrelation of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, their instructional practice, and the educational contexts in which they work. Within this review, I articulate the three types of educational contexts that have been shown to be most salient in mediating the relationship between teachers' beliefs about

teaching and learning and their instructional practice: school culture, available curriculum, and educational policy. I conclude by explaining how my study will add to these bodies of research and what kinds of research methods are implied by them.

2.2   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON BELIEFS

The construct *belief* has been studied in many different disciplines and fields of research, such as psychology, philosophy, and anthropology, and has been called by many different names, such as *personal construct*, *personal theories*, *personal epistemologies*, *beliefs*, *perspectives*, *cultural models*, and others (Cole, 1996; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Shore, 1996). Not only are there different terms for referring to what seemingly is the same construct, but as will be summarized later in this chapter, numerous research studies that have investigated teacher beliefs have loosely used the construct of beliefs and have often failed to even define *beliefs*, assuming that it is an agreed upon concept (Black, 1973; Eisenhart et al., 1988; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Sigel, 1985). Although calls for research on teacher beliefs have called for the careful conceptualization of beliefs (Fang, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992), the construct *beliefs* still seems to have multiple meanings in existing educational research. Some of these belief definitions focus on the individual nature and episodic structure of beliefs, such as (a) an individual's representation of reality that has enough validity, truth, or credibility to guide thought and behavior (Harvey, 1986) and (b) "mental constructions of experience – often condensed and integrated into schemata or concepts" (Sigel, 1985, p. 351). Beliefs have also been defined as constructs used to make sense of the world,

broadening the scope of the belief definition beyond the individual. These definitions include (a) taken-for-granted assumptions about how the world works (Holland & Quinn, 1987) and (b) "reasonably explicit 'propositions' about the characteristics of objects and object classes" (Nisbett & Ross, 1980, p. 28).

For the purposes of this research study on teacher beliefs, I draw from theories of beliefs and cultural models and utilize the four salient characteristics of beliefs – existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading, and episodic structure – to identify teacher beliefs. I also draw upon Gee's understanding of cultural models in order to acknowledge the educational contexts that mediate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice. In the paragraphs that follow, I first define and describe belief theory as explained by key theorists (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Then, I define and describe cultural models, making comparisons between the theories of beliefs and cultural models (Abelson, 1979; Cole, 1996; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland et al., 1998; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Shore, 1996). Finally, I present the theory of beliefs that informs my research study.

2.2.1   Belief theory

Scholarship in the study of beliefs took off in the 1960s and 1970s with the work of Rokeach (1968) and Abelson (1979). These belief theorists began the foundational work of making the distinction between the constructs *knowledge* and *beliefs* in order to highlight the significant characteristics of beliefs. These theorists stressed that it is a *distinction* because they recognize that beliefs have much in common with knowledge, such as both knowledge and belief systems

are a "network of interrelated concepts and propositions at varying levels of generality" (Abelson, 1979, p. 356). However, beliefs differ from knowledge in that an individual can simultaneously hold two conflicting beliefs. The theoretical work of Abelson (1979) in the field of cognitive science, specifically artificial intelligence, described seven characteristics of beliefs (nonconsensuality, existence beliefs, alternative worlds, evaluative components, episodic material, unboundedness, and variable credences) in order to further the distinction between knowledge and beliefs. Abelson's theory explains how an individual can possess two contradictory beliefs at the same time. Abelson posited that beliefs in one content domain can influence beliefs in another content domain, making it difficult to draw the line between one belief system and another belief system. He also posited that beliefs can be held with varying degrees of certitude. Finally, he viewed the distinguishing characteristics of beliefs as (a) existential presumption, (b) alternativity, (c) affective/evaluative loading, and (d) episodic structure.

Additionally, these theorists examined the connect/disconnect between beliefs and practice, positing that beliefs impact practice. Rokeach (1968), focusing on the relationship between a belief and a belief system, contributed a nuanced understanding of beliefs by recognizing *depth*, *centrality*, and *consciousness* of beliefs as important factors to consider when examining the level of alignment between beliefs and practice. The term *belief system* is used by belief theorists and researchers to refer to a group or cluster of individual beliefs (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Rokeach (1968) defines a belief system "as having represented within it, in some organized psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and every one of a person's countless beliefs about physical and social reality" (p. 2).

Abelson's (1979) work in the field of artificial intelligence was extended to the scholarship on teacher beliefs by Nespor (1987) who adapted Abelson's framework. This adapted framework pinpointed four characteristics of beliefs rather than seven (existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading, episodic structure) and used Abelson's three other characteristics as a way to explain the organization of beliefs into individual beliefs and larger belief systems. Since Nespor's work in the late 1980s, a recent focus of cross-disciplinary empirical studies in education has been on the alignment or misalignment of teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice. Findings from many of these studies provide empirical evidence to support the existence and saliency of the four characteristics of beliefs posited by Nespor (1987) with episodic storage being the most important characteristic of beliefs (Bryan, 2003; Cooney, Shealy, & Arvold, 1998; Eisenhart et al., 1988; Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006; Goodman, 1988; Hollingsworth, 1989; Muchmore, 2001). The past ten years have seen a closer examination of school and educational policy contexts as factors shaping/mediating teachers' instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004). Additionally, researchers have begun to examine particular domains of beliefs, specifically examining beliefs about teaching and learning in a specific disciplinary content, such as science or art (Bryan, 2003; Ernest, 1989).

Both theoretical (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985) and empirical scholars (Bryan, 2003; Cooney et al., 1998; Eisenhart et al., 1988; Enyedy et al., 2006; Hollingsworth, 1989; Muchmore, 2001) in the field of beliefs and teacher beliefs have described significant characteristics of beliefs. Nespor, drawing upon Abelson (1979) and applying Abelson's conceptualization of beliefs to teacher beliefs, delineates four features of beliefs – the existential presumption, alternativity, affective

and evaluative loading, and episodic structure – that distinguish beliefs from knowledge. The existential presumption refers to the notion that beliefs frequently presuppose the existence or nonexistence of entities (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968). Applying this characteristic of a belief to teaching, an English Language Arts teacher could hold a strong belief about student ability, believing that all students are able to succeed, thus situating success as a potential existing in all students. Nespor (1987) describes the importance of the existential presumption: "The reification of transitory, ambiguous, conditional or abstract characteristics into stable, well-defined, absolute and concrete entities is important because such entities tend to be seen as immutable – as beyond the teacher's control and influence" (p. 318). Nespor's theory of the existential characteristic of beliefs is useful because it highlights how individuals possess taken-for-granted assumptions about different domains of beliefs, such as intelligence, learning, and teaching, and recognizes the idea of a larger belief system. What is problematic about Nespor's depiction of the existential presumption is that since these beliefs are often taken-for-granted and tend to be viewed as "immutable," this removes individual agency from the beliefs. This is problematic because it does not provide the opportunity to see beliefs as changeable. The three characteristics of beliefs that follow allow for beliefs to be viewed more from the perspective of individual agency.

Scholars also suggest that a second characteristic of a belief is that an individual belief often represents alternative worlds or realities (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Sigel, 1985). For example, a teacher may envision an alternative reality where testing does not drive instructional practice and may make it his/her goal to create this alternative reality in his/her classroom. Thus, Nespor (1987) posits alternativity as the conceptualization of ideal situations, which differ from present realities, which are used to define goals and tasks for the

20

teacher. What is useful about the aspect of beliefs as representing alternative worlds or realities is that this description of beliefs is connected to goals and motivation. This echoes D'Andrade and Strauss's (1992) work on cultural models, a point I will return to later. It also begins to make beliefs identifiable for empirical studies in the sense that when an individual talks in "what ifs" or is asked "what if" questions in an interview, these statements and responses to interview questions could be evidence of a belief.

The third characteristic of beliefs, according to belief theorists and empirical researchers, is their affective and evaluative aspects where feelings, moods, and subjective evaluations operate (Abelson, 1979; Bryan, 2003; Eisenhart et al., 1988; Ernest, 1989; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). The affective and evaluative nature of beliefs could influence a teacher's instructional choices by determining how much time a teacher will spend on a specific activity. For example, Bryan (2003) conducted a case study of a prospective elementary teacher named Barbara that focused on Barbara's beliefs about teaching and learning as she developed during her elementary teacher education program. Barbara held positive beliefs about the discipline of science and described how she valued science and enjoyed learning science. These positive beliefs about science prompted her to decide to spend her time trying to improve her science teaching. Therefore, her science teaching became a priority, revealing how subjective evaluations operate in a belief and can guide instructional choices.

Finally, episodic structure, the fourth characteristic of beliefs, consists of personal experiences, episodes, or events that serve as the foundation for a specific belief (Abelson, 1979; Brown & Borko, 1992; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Cooney et al., 1998; Eick & Reed, 2002; Enyedy et al., 2006; Goodman, 1988; Hollingsworth, 1989; Kagan, 1992; Muchmore, 2001; Nespor, 1987; Sigel, 1985). This characteristic of a belief is connected to the power, authority,

and legitimacy of a particular belief (Nespor, 1987). Eick and Reed (2001) specifically investigated the episodic quality of beliefs as one focus of their study that sought to understand the role that personal histories played in shaping the inquiry-oriented practices of twelve secondary science student teachers. Their study revealed that science teacher education alone did not create an inquiry-oriented teacher, but that the past experiences of preservice teachers greatly influenced their disposition to inquiry-oriented teaching. Describing beliefs as episodic structure is particularly valuable to this research study because it stresses beliefs rooted in experience and provides a way to investigate beliefs by looking at the personal narratives of individuals as windows into their beliefs.

The episodic structure of beliefs is a characteristic that numerous researchers in the field agree upon as a significant aspect of teacher beliefs. The other three characteristics (existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading), while also significant in distinguishing between beliefs and knowledge but less widely used by teacher belief researchers, informs this research study by helping to identify teacher beliefs in discourse. Details about how these four characteristics of beliefs inform the methodology of this study, specifically the interview protocols, will be discussed in Chapter III.

2.2.2 Relationships between beliefs and practices

Scholars have also theorized about the connection between beliefs and behavior, specifically when investigating teacher instructional practice, and have posited that a strong relationship exists between beliefs and behavior, and that an individual's beliefs often help to determine an individual's behavior, while simultaneously acknowledging instances where a misalignment emerges between beliefs and behavior (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares,

1992; Sigel, 1985; Rokeach, 1968). This has led scholars to theorize why a misalignment occurs, making the distinction between a *belief* and a *belief system* in order to discuss elements such as *depth*, *connectedness, consciousness,* and *context* in explaining this misalignment.

The term *belief system* is used by belief theorists and researchers to refer to a group or cluster of individual beliefs (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Rokeach (1968) defines a belief system "as having represented within it, in some organized psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and every one of a person's countless beliefs about physical and social reality" (p. 2). It is possible for a belief system to contain inconsistent beliefs, but as long as these individual beliefs are not examined against each other, these inconsistencies can continue to exist without causing tension for the individual (Green, 1971). Additionally, inconsistencies between individual beliefs and the entire belief system are able to coexist because of differences in intensity and power of individual beliefs (i.e., *depth*) as well as the variation between the central-peripheral dimension (i.e., *connectedness*) (Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968).

Ernest (1989), a key belief theorist in the field of math education, describes three factors that can lead to a misalignment of espoused and enacted teacher beliefs: (a) the shallowness of the espoused belief, (b) the lack of consciousness on the part of the teacher of the beliefs, and (c) a hostile social context as a mitigating factor. When referring to the shallowness of an espoused belief, Ernest (1989) refers to both *depth* and *centrality* and draws upon Rokeach's (1968) definition of *connectedness*: "the more a given belief is functionally connected or in communication with other beliefs, the more implications and consequences it has for other beliefs and, therefore, the more central the belief" (p. 5). When looking specifically at teachers' beliefs, a misalignment between espoused and enacted beliefs occurs when there is a weak

connection between an individual espoused belief and other beliefs, thus providing for a limited enactment of that individual belief to exist. Ernest's explanation of lack of connectedness as an explanation for a misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice has also been cited in empirical studies such as Cooney et al. (1998) who investigated the depth and centrality of four preservice secondary mathematics teachers as they progressed through a sequence of mathematics education classes and student teaching.

Numerous scholars and empirical researchers posit that the individual's level of consciousness of a belief is an important factor when determining the relationship between a belief and behavior (Ernest, 1989; Irvin, 1999; Kagan, 1992; Muchmore, 2001; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Ernest (1989), when looking at the relationship between an espoused and enacted belief of a teacher, also pinpoints a teacher's level of consciousness as a prominent factor in determining a misalignment between a belief and instructional practice. For example, the extent to which a teacher is conscious of an individual belief and the extent to which the teacher reflects on his/her instructional practice influences the extent of synthesis of beliefs and instructional practice. Additionally, the teacher's awareness of holding certain beliefs and the ability to justify these beliefs while integrating these beliefs into his/her instructional practice helps to define level of consciousness.

Finally, Ernest (1989) views social context as a powerful influence on the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice: "The teacher's mental or espoused model of teaching and learning mathematics, subject to the constraints and contingencies of the school context, are transformed into classroom practices" (p. 27). Ernest explains that the power of the social context results from the expectations of others, curriculum, texts, and the system of assessments. The teacher is left to make sense of constraints that affect the enactment of his/her espoused

beliefs about teaching and learning. Other scholars have also recognized the powerful role of context in influencing the relationship between a belief and practice (Agee, 2004; Bednar, 1993; Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988; Bunting, 1984; Calderhead, 1981; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Cooney et al., 1998; Ernest, 1989; Fang, 1996; Irvin, 1999; Lasky, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Rokeach, 1968; Schraw & Olafson, 2002; Sigel, 1985). Context as a factor shaping beliefs and instructional practice will be further explored later in this chapter.

Although the work of Ernest helps to explain how dissonance or tension can exist between a teacher's different beliefs and brings into focus the importance of investigating context as a mediating factor on beliefs, Ernest's distinction between espoused and enacted beliefs is somewhat problematic. For example, according to Ernest, an espoused belief is a belief that is stated while an enacted belief is a belief seen in action and discourse. However, how can one make the distinction between an espoused and enacted belief when looking at teacher discourse? Is what the teacher says in the classroom an espoused belief or could it also be an enacted belief? Therefore, for the purposes of this research study, I make the distinction between beliefs and instructional practice rather than a distinction between espoused and enacted beliefs. I also utilize *connectedness* (combining notions of *depth* and *centrality*), *consciousness*, and *context* as factors that mediate the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice and give insight into why a misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice exists.

2.2.3   Cultural models

The term cultural models, as defined by Holland and Quinn (1987), are "presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their

understanding of that world and their behavior in it" (p.4). Holland and Quinn also acknowledge (like belief theorists such as Ernest, Nespor, Pajares, Rokeach, Sigel) that while cultural models influence behavior, cultural models do not always translate simply and directly into behavior. Holland and Quinn contend that cultural models relate to behavior in complex ways, noting how researchers are only beginning to understand this complex relationship. As will be described in the review of the empirical research on teacher beliefs, one limitation of this research is that the studies often simply situate beliefs as either influencing or not influencing practice. Cultural models, on the other hand, allow for a bidirectional exploration of beliefs and practice, thus complicating the relationship between these constructs and recognizing the need to investigate such complexity.

Cultural model theorists recognize variation among cultural models with some cultural models possessing more connectedness to a larger system of cultural models. Shore (1996), building upon the work of Holland and Quinn (1987) and D'Andrade and Strauss (1992), describes the organization and function of cultural models as consisting of "special-purpose models" that have limited application and "foundational schemas" that have a larger range of application. Other cultural model theorists similarly make the distinction between different levels of cultural models but use terms such as *espoused models*, *evaluative models*, *models-in-(inter)action*, *general models* (Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987). Belief theorists make a similar distinction when discussing the organization of beliefs in a belief system and see *core beliefs* that cross situations and domains while there are more *specific beliefs* that may be discipline specific. Although different terminologies are used, both belief and cultural model theorists stress the need to recognize individual beliefs/cultural models that compose a larger system of beliefs/cultural models and how these beliefs/cultural models may function in different

ways and influence behavior to different extents depending on their connectedness to other beliefs/cultural models.

Another important aspect of cultural models is the notion that cultural models are "shared" presumptions about the world that are models for a particular community (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Shore, 1996). Shore (1996) also raises the question about the "intersubjective sharing" of cultural models within specific communities or the extent to which a belief is shared among members of the community compared to the extent to which the belief is a personal construct. For example, a community of teachers may have a shared understanding about the nature of an effective teacher. Similarly, parents may have a shared understanding of the socialization of children. Shore contends that D'Andrade's conceptualization of cultural models does not recognize the complexity of the sharing of cultural models in a community. Shore questions how shared a cultural model must be in order for it to be considered a true cultural model and not a personal construct. Applying Shore's conceptualization of cultural models to the community of teachers, what happens when a particular cultural model is agreed upon by the community but a teacher does not agree with or conform to this model?

What Gee (1999) adds to my understanding of cultural models is how to analyze, locate, and operationalize cultural models. Gee explains that one way to locate people's cultural models is to ask the following questions:

"1. What must I assume this person (consciously or unconsciously) believes in

order to make deep sense of what they are saying?

2. What theories must the person (consciously or unconsciously) hold such that they are

using just these situated meanings?" (p. 72)

Gee explains that when presented with talk, writing, action, or interactions, the researcher should think of the following questions in order to gain a better understanding of the cultural models at work:

"1. What cultural models are relevant? What must I, as an analyst, assume people feel, value, and believe, consciously or not, in order to talk, act, and/or interact this way?

2. How consistent are the relevant cultural models here? Are there competing or conflicting cultural models at play? Whose interests are the cultural models representing?

3. What other cultural models are related to the ones most active here?" (p. 78)

What is valuable about Gee's explanation of cultural models is that it seems to be a combination of both belief and cultural model theory. For example, Gee recognizes beliefs as the foundation of a cultural model, arguing that such beliefs may be conscious or unconscious, connecting back to the idea that both beliefs and cultural models are taken-for-granted assumptions (Abelson, 1979; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Ernest, 1989; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Second, Gee locates beliefs by examining talk, writing, actions, and interactions, which acknowledges the different contexts and experiences in which beliefs and cultural models operate. Third, Gee stresses that in order to understand actions, a researcher needs to first understand beliefs and cultural models. Finally, Gee acknowledges the conflicts and inconsistencies that can emerge between different beliefs and cultural models, recognizing the individual beliefs/cultural models and a larger system of beliefs/cultural models.

Where belief and cultural model theories seem to converge is that both theories account for the assumptions and taken-for-granted theories that individuals may or may not consciously be aware of and that influence behavior in complex ways. Where beliefs and cultural models

diverge is that cultural models determine what are appropriate, typical, and normal beliefs and behavior in a particular community. Beliefs, on the other hand, move beyond what is accepted in a particular community and acknowledge that individuals hold beliefs that may or may not coincide with a more general cultural model. Instead, individuals hold beliefs that are personal and based on their personal experiences, motivated by a personal need before a need to conform to a community or group. This is not to say that there cannot be conflicting cultural models, but the construct of cultural models forefronts community rather than individual cultural models.

My research study bridges theories of beliefs and cultural models by recognizing the personal aspect of beliefs while simultaneously recognizing the situated and social/cultural aspect of cultural models. I draw upon key belief theorists (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985), who argue that beliefs are derived from experiences in multiple contexts and influence the meaning-making that occurs in these different contexts, with beliefs serving as a lens for making interpretations in these contexts. This understanding of beliefs is particularly applicable to the study of teacher beliefs because teachers have had different experiences in school settings, first as students and then as teachers. As Pajares (1992) explains, the career of a teacher is unique because teachers already have an understanding of the community of a teacher because of their experience as a student in this system. If beliefs develop in and are highly influenced by experiences, and beliefs are organized in episodes, it makes sense to explore the life histories and life narratives of teacher participants as a means of extrapolating beliefs.

Second, it is important to recognize that experience takes place in different contexts in different times. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between a belief (rooted in experience) and the context of the experience. For example, individuals participate in multiple

contexts and communities at different times, and these contexts help to define/identify individuals and their beliefs. Not only are there multiple contexts, but there are also multiple domains of beliefs, such as beliefs about learning, students, intelligence, discipline content, and others. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge that although a particular belief can influence a context, the context can also influence a particular belief. This is particularly true when investigating the beliefs of teachers, specifically in the current policy context of high-stakes testing. Teachers hold beliefs about the context of high-stakes testing (e.g., some may find testing valuable and helpful to improving students learning while other teachers may find testing taking away from authentic learning experiences) but the context may also cause teachers to revise their beliefs in order to conform to this policy context.

Third, beliefs strongly influence *behavior*/*action* and the relationship between beliefs and practice cannot be simplified to enacted and espoused because the relationship is much more complex because factors such as *connectedness*, *consciousness*, and *context* shape beliefs. My justification for not making the distinction between espoused and enacted beliefs is that this presents these two constructs as dichotomous and does not afford an exploration into the relationship among beliefs, practice, and context. Additionally, making the distinction between espoused and enacted beliefs creates some methodological concerns, such as whether an espoused belief is only stated or can simultaneously represent an enacted belief when thinking about the context of teaching.

2.3   THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER BELIEFS AND

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

2.3.1   History of research on teacher beliefs

Scholarship in the study of teacher beliefs took off in the 1980s and 1990s with the work of Nespor (1987), who extended the work of belief theorists (Abelson, 1979; Rokeach, 1968) to the domain of education and teachers. Nespor's work contributed to a theoretical understanding of teacher beliefs and also provided data from an empirical study of teachers' beliefs to further demonstrate the saliency of belief characteristics, such as existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading, and episodic structure.

In the past twenty plus years of educational research on teachers, researchers have begun to investigate the beliefs of teachers in hopes of better understanding teachers' instructional practice. Before the 1980s when research began to focus on teachers' beliefs, educational research developed a strong body of studies that demonstrated that teachers' instructional practice affected student learning (Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981; Eick & Reed, 2001; Fang, 1996). Now researchers are becoming more interested in what shapes teachers' instructional practice, viewing beliefs as an important factor shaping this instructional practice (Borko et al., 1981; Eick & Reed, 2001; Fang, 1996). More specifically, this recent research on teacher beliefs has focused on the origins of beliefs, their resistance to change, and understanding more completely the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice (Richardson, 1996).

Studies on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice have been conducted in numerous disciplines and with different participant populations of teachers (e.g., preservice, inservice) including empirical studies that focus on preservice teachers (Bednar,

31

1993; Bryan, 2003; Cooney et al., 1998; Eisenhart et al., 1988; Goodman, 1988; Hollingsworth, 1989; Skamp & Mueller, 2001) and those that focus on specific discipline content, such as reading (Borko et al., 1981; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991), science (Enyedy et al., 2006), math (Ernest, 1989), and English Language Arts instruction (Agee, 2004; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004). It is apparent from a review of these empirical studies on beliefs that many of these studies focus on the beliefs of preservice rather than inservice teachers.

2.3.2 Research on preservice teacher beliefs

Most studies investigating the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice focus on preservice teachers and whether a teacher education program is able to change the beliefs of preservice teachers for the better (Bednar, 1993; Bryan, 2003; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Cooney et al., 1998; Goodman, 1988; Hollingsworth, 1989; Skamp & Mueller, 2001). For example, a study conducted by Bednar (1993) followed preservice teachers during their junior and senior years of their teacher education program into their first year of teaching, focusing on the reading beliefs of these preservice teachers when entering and leaving the program. The objective of the study was to determine if the preservice teachers were guided by the theory presented to them in the preservice program, specifically if this theory differed from the beliefs they held about reading instruction when they entered the program. The data revealed that five of the seven preservice teachers' reading instruction practice matched that endorsed by the program. The two teachers who did not seem to use this theory in their teaching the researchers concluded were relying more heavily on their previously held beliefs about reading instruction and also felt contextual constraints (a factor that will be furthered explored later in this chapter) were causing a misalignment to exist between their beliefs and instructional

practice. Bednar's (1993) study illustrates how belief studies focusing on preservice teachers are mainly interested in understanding the beliefs the students bring into their program, whether belief change occurs, and the relationship between the preservice teachers' beliefs during student teaching and during their first year or two of teaching.

Although the research on preservice teachers' beliefs can provide suggestions on how to improve teacher education programs, little focus has been paid to inservice teachers' beliefs, which Fang (1996) argues is an important direction for future research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their instructional practice. Studies of English Language Arts teachers' beliefs such as Muchmore (2001), Rex and Nelson (2004), and Agee (2004), however, are examples of empirical studies that have attempted to fill the gap in the current research on teachers' beliefs by focusing on inservice teachers rather than preservice teachers. These studies also move beyond a simplistic understanding of the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice by recognizing educational context as a mediating factor.

2.3.3   Consistencies between teacher beliefs and instructional practice

Numerous studies on teacher beliefs, regardless of their participant populations (e.g., preservice vs. inservice), have shown that teachers' beliefs about learning, teaching, and their discipline influence their instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Cooney et al., 1998; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Enyedy et al., 2006; Fang, 1996; Goodman, 1988; Lasky, 2005; Pajares, 1992; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Richardson, 1996). For example, Richardson et al. (1991) examined whether instructional practice could be predicted based on the teachers' stated belief, for if beliefs do influence instructional practice, there should be consistency between stated beliefs and instructional practice. For purposes of testing this understanding of beliefs and

instructional practice, the research team investigated the relationship between teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading comprehension and their instructional practice. By interviewing 39 elementary school teachers and making predictions about instructional practices based on these interviews and then observing the instructional practices of these teachers, the researchers found that they could in fact predict the instructional practice of teachers because there was consistency between stated beliefs and observed instructional practice.

2.3.4 Inconsistencies between beliefs and instructional practice

Although numerous studies have shown that teachers' beliefs influence their practice (Agee, 2004; Cooney et al., 1998; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Enyedy et al., 2006; Fang, 1996; Goodman, 1988; Lasky, 2005; Pajares, 1992; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Richardson, 1996), studies have also uncovered interesting cases in which teachers' beliefs and instructional practice are not completely aligned (Agee, 2004; Bryan, 2003; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004). For example, Muchmore (2001), drawing upon observational and interview data, revealed the complex nature of "consistency" of teachers' beliefs by depicting how Anna, an English teacher, showed consistency between her stated beliefs and instructional practice when she was observed. However, on further examination, Muchmore recognized the existence of inconsistencies, not between *beliefs* and *instructional practice* but between Anna's *temporary* beliefs as a new teacher and her *long-standing* beliefs rooted in her life experiences. As Anna gained more experience as a teacher, her temporary beliefs no longer influenced her instructional practice, and she drew on her long-standing beliefs to inform her instructional practice. This shows that although consistency may be evident between a teacher's stated beliefs and instructional practice, it is important for researchers to be aware of the individual beliefs that

inform instructional practice as well as those beliefs that may be silenced in order to avoid any contradictions emerging between a teacher's beliefs and instructional practice.

My study makes a distinction between *influence* and *align* in order to illustrate how consistencies and inconsistencies between beliefs and instructional practice can simultaneously exist. What I mean by *influence* is the ability of a belief and/or educational context to shape the instructional practice of teachers. For example, if a teacher held a belief that equated large group discussions with effective teaching, I would expect to see a large percentage of class time devoted to large group discussions. Therefore, when I use the term *influence*, this means that the instructional practice is shaped in such a way that an alignment or misalignment between beliefs/and or educational context and instructional practice will occur. Ultimately, *influence* shows how that instructional practice does not exist in a bubble and that it is constantly acted upon by other factors, such as other beliefs and the educational context.

The term *align*, on the other hand, reveals the extent to which the instructional practice matches the beliefs and/or educational context. This alignment can be described as one of consistencies (strong alignment between the instructional practice and the factors influencing it) or one of inconsistencies (weak alignment between the instructional practice and the factors influencing it).

2.3.5   Explanations for inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice

Belief theorists and empirical researchers cite four possible reasons for inconsistencies between beliefs and practice: (a) consciousness, (b) connectedness, (c) context, and (d) a study's methodology. Consciousness can explain the misalignment between beliefs and practice because

if an individual is not aware of a particular belief, there is a chance that this belief may not influence his/her practice (Ernest, 1989; Rokeach, 1968).

Connectedness accounts for an inconsistency between beliefs and practice because individual beliefs may be more deeply and centrally held than other beliefs (Ernest, 1989; Green, 1971; Rokeach, 1968). An example of the factor of connectedness as a cause of an inconsistency between beliefs and instructional practice is evident in Muchmore's (2001) study of Anna when he makes the distinction between Anna's temporary and long-standing beliefs. Interestingly, in Anna's early career, inconsistencies between her long-standing beliefs and her instructional practice were evident. However, this finding seems counterintuitive in that her temporary, less connected beliefs aligned with her instructional practice while her long-standing, more connected beliefs were temporarily silenced. Why this is interesting is because it brings to the foreground the need to recognize that inconsistencies between a belief and instructional practice, even if the belief is connected deeply to life experiences and other beliefs in the belief system, can be caused by mediating factors such as educational context.

Belief theorists (Ernest, 1989; Sigel, 1985) recognize context as one of the most influential factors affecting practice. Sigel (1985), drawing upon his work on parenting, posits that when a misalignment exists between parents' beliefs about parenting and their actual parenting, the context or environment usually provides insight into this misalignment. Similarly, recent studies that focus on the beliefs of teachers and their instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Rex & Nelson, 2004), reveal that the school context, often significantly influenced by the policy context of high-stakes testing, mediates the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice, with teachers often modifying their instructional practice in a way that contradicts their beliefs about teaching and learning in order to comply with the mandates of the school and

policy contexts. The mediation of institutional and cultural contexts on teachers' beliefs and instructional practice is also discussed in Forman and Ansell's (2001) study of Mrs. Porter, an elementary math teacher. In this study, Mrs. Porter struggles to reconcile her teaching beliefs that stress the need to focus on the individual child's learning trajectory with the school-based cultural models regarding teaching standard computational algorithms. Building upon the belief theories that explain misalignments between beliefs and practice and those empirical studies that have investigated these misalignments, it is apparent that the context is an important factor to consider when trying to understand the dynamics of how beliefs influence instructional practice.

Researchers in the field, trying to make sense of inconsistencies between beliefs and instructional practice, also suggest that a lack of correlation between beliefs and instructional practice can be assumed to be the result of poor data collection instruments, specifically the reliance often of researchers conducting studies on beliefs to use paper and pencil questionnaires as a method of data collection (Duffy, 1982; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Munby, 1984; Richardson et al., 1991). These researchers contend that since beliefs are difficult to identify and sometimes are unconscious to the believer, it is necessary to rely on interview data, specifically rooted in life history methodology, that allow for the investigation of beliefs in which a paper and pencil questionnaire is inadequate.

Much can be learned about beliefs by presenting teachers with examples of misalignments between their (a) stated beliefs and their instructional practice, (b) their stated beliefs and the cultural models of the school context, and (c) their instructional practice and the cultural models of the school context. This provides teachers with the opportunity to become conscious of the misalignment and to analyze and explain this disconnect from their perspective while simultaneously also providing insight into the connectedness and consciousness of beliefs

and the educational contexts that may account for this misalignment. Previous studies on teacher beliefs have relied on interviews as a crucial component of their data sources with these interviews varying from the use of life history methods to the use of methods borrowed from laboratory psychology (Bryan, 2003; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Muchmore, 2001, Munby, 1984). One such example from laboratory psychology is policy capturing, which presents teachers with vignettes of students, curriculum materials, or teaching episodes in order to examine teachers' judgment processes (Fang, 1996). The episodes used in these interviews, however, are not necessarily examples of the specific participant's teaching and usually entail having the researcher, using a Likert scale, rank the teacher participant's judgments about these episodes (Fang, 1996). This interview protocol does not provide teacher participants with the opportunity to reflect on their instructional practice and does not ask the participants to examine how the instructional practice evident in the episodes misaligns with their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; their instructional practice; and/or their educational contexts. Though few studies of teacher beliefs have presented teachers with examples of misalignments between their beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts, this methodology has been employed in belief studies that examine the relationship between parents' beliefs about parenting and their parenting behavior (Holland & Quinn, 1987). Quinn (1987), in her study of cultural models of wives about marriage, proposed this methodological approach in which general cultural models were located through interviews, conflicts were identified, and participants were presented with these conflicts in hopes of better understanding what cultural models were motivating behavior. I find this interview methodology to be useful for my research study because it allows the teacher participants to reflect on their own beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts and asks them to describe their understanding of the

relationship among their beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts. This interviewing approach that I utilized in this study is described in more detail in Chapter III.

2.3.6   The undertheorizing of beliefs

Although the above studies look at the influence of teachers' beliefs on instructional practice, few studies carefully theorize beliefs or belief systems and apply this theoretical framework to their studies. I contend that in order to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of teachers' beliefs on instructional practice, it is necessary to carefully theorize beliefs and belief systems, drawing upon belief theory (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968) and cultural model theory (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Shore, 1996). In the section that follows, I articulate the three educational contexts that have been shown to be most salient in mediating the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their instructional practice. I also review empirical research in English Language Arts to highlight this mediation.

2.4   HOW CONTEXT MEDIATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

Scholars in the field of belief research and in the field of education research, specifically examining the instructional practice of teachers, recognize that context can mediate instructional practice and/or an individual's beliefs (Agee, 2004; Bednar, 1993; Brousseau et al., 1988; Bunting, 1984; Calderhead, 1981; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Cooney et al., 1998; Ernest, 1989;

Fang, 1996; Irvin, 1999; Lasky, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Rokeach, 1968; Schraw & Olafson, 2002; Sigel, 1985). For example, Sigel (1985), a belief theorist, posits that practice may be influenced by factors that are independent of beliefs such as contextual factors. Focusing on the relationship parents have with their children, Sigel determined that while the parents' beliefs about raising their children influenced their parenting practice, the environment also served as an influence that shaped parenting. Calderhead (1981), describing the educational contexts of teachers, illustrates how the school and classroom environment places teachers in a difficult position to process a large volume of information while simultaneously managing conflicting and competing interests. Calderhead (1981), when describing the relationship between beliefs and educational context, posits that teachers must use their beliefs to cope with the complex situations they encounter every day in their educational contexts. Furthermore, Clark and Peterson (1986) recognize the connection between beliefs and instructional practice and posit that teachers' actions are often constrained by the physical setting or by external influences, such as the school, the principal, the community, and/or the curriculum. However, Clark and Peterson (1986) recognize that some teachers are able to better negotiate these educational contexts that may influence their instructional practice. Because context influences beliefs and instructional practice so prominently, this research study examines the relationship among beliefs, instructional practice, and educational context. Specifically, this research study examines the school, curricular, and policy contexts of the three English Language Arts teacher participants.

2.4.1 Policy context

Recent studies have shown that policy shapes the beliefs and/or instructional practice of teachers (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Rex & Nelson, 2004). The influence of policy on teachers' beliefs and

instructional practice has become increasingly clear in recent years with the No Child Left Behind Act, which is one of the most far-reaching United States' educational policies. This influence of the policy context on teachers' instructional practice shows that no matter what teachers believe about teaching, learning, and their students, the policy context of No Child Left Behind also contributes to the shaping of instructional practice. In the paragraphs that follow, I provide a brief description of The No Child Left Behind Act and discuss the major effects the policy context has on instructional practice, looking specifically at how this testing context mediates the relationship between teacher beliefs and instructional practice.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, furthers the standards reform movement by focusing on standards, assessments, and consequences connected to test scores (Goertz & Duffy, 2003; Hamilton, 2003). Hamilton (2003) describes the current accountability system as a test-based accountability system composed of goals (in the form of standards), measures (in the form of tests), targets (in the form of Annual Yearly Progress), and consequences (in the form of sanctions and rewards). What makes this Act unique is that all schools are required to demonstrate progress for all students, even those students who have been traditionally underserved. Additionally, consequences are attached for schools failing to achieve Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) status in these different subgroups of students (Koretz & Hamilton, 2003). While the severity of sanctions varies across states and schools, sanctions for failing to meet AYP can include the prohibiting of schools from obtaining federal money or the government taking over the schools (Koretz & Hamilton, 2003; Linn, 2000).

By looking at studies in the field of education that investigate the effects of high-stakes testing on teacher instructional practice, it is apparent that there are some major findings

concerning these effects that cut across contexts. Although most studies show that high-stakes testing does influence instructional practice, a few researchers (Grant, 2001; Loveless, 2005) have documented that variety exists in the degree to which testing influences instructional practice and that this is dependent on the particular context. The majority of studies, however, document several ways in which this policy context mediates the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice.

Although studies examining teacher beliefs have shown that teachers have certain beliefs about how much time to spend on specific content, related to the affective and evaluative nature of their beliefs about learning, teaching, and their students (Bryan, 2003; Nespor, 1987), it is necessary to acknowledge the research in the field of educational policy that posits that the policy context can determine time spent on content. A predominate effect mentioned in current educational policy research studies (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Clarke et al., 2003; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Grant, 2001; Hamilton & Berends, 2006; Jennings & Rentner, 2006; Stecher, 2002; Stecher, Barron, Kaganoff, & Goodwin, 1998) is the greater attention teachers pay to tested content. Although this can be seen as a positive effect – teachers preparing students for the exam they will take – it can lead to the narrowing of the curriculum with less time spent on non-tested subjects (Clarke et al., 2003; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Jennings & Renter, 2006). For example, through the use of survey data from state officials in education and from a national sample of educators from school districts, combined with case studies of individual school districts and schools, Jennings and Renter (2006) report on the ten big effects of NCLB including schools spending more time on math and reading and spending less time on non-tested subjects. Their findings reveal that 71% of districts reduced the time spent on other subjects, with Social Studies being the most affected. With more of a focus on tested subjects, this

emphasis can also lead to reallocation (Koretz & Hamilton, 2003; Le & Klein, 2002; Stecher, 2002) as defined by Koretz & Hamilton (2003) as "shifts in resources among substantive elements of performance" (p. 548). An example of reallocation would be teachers shifting their instructional practice in order to spend more time on content emphasized by the test. This shows how curriculum can become restricted by the test.

Although these studies take into account the focus on tested subjects, they do not take into account the narrowing of the curriculum and a greater focus on tested content *within* the tested subject such as English Language Arts. For example, Anagnostopoulos (2003) illustrates in her study of two secondary English Language Arts teachers, situated in a school on probation for failing to achieve AYP, how the test itself mediated the teachers' instructional practice and how these teachers revised their teaching objectives to include a strong focus on the exam. For example, when Ms. Chey was asked about her objectives for teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ms. Chey responded, "I tried to anticipate the CASE essay questions" (p. 192). This response illustrates how powerfully the test itself influenced Ms. Chey's instructional practice, providing an example of how educational context may also shape instructional practice and mediate the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice.

Another way that the No Child Left Behind Act shapes instructional practice is the "dumbing down" of the curriculum (Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998) and focusing on memorization and lower-level thinking skills (Anagnostopoulos, 2003). Anagnostopoulos (2003) claimed that in Colson High School, high-stakes tests positioned students as minimally-skilled readers and encouraged teachers to emphasize and enact instructional practice that focuses on memorization and passive learning rather than on higher-level thinking skills and active learning. Anagnostopoulos supported this finding by showing that the district's documents related to

curricular standards supported a definition of reading as "text reproduction" (p. 189). In addition, Anagnostopoulos observed two classrooms for the duration of one school year and found the teachers focused on memorization and on preparing students for the test. When she coded classroom transcripts by episodes (which were determined by instructional objectives and materials used during the period), she and another researcher coded for the total number of minutes for each episode and the type of instructional activity. This coding allowed her to demonstrate in her results that the majority of the instructional activities consisted of recitation, seatwork, and the showing of the movie of the text while discussion did not occur. In this particular study, "the test exerted power over the teachers," which allowed for the test to dictate their curriculum (p. 206). Therefore, when studying the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice, one must consider the policy context as a possible mediating factor.

A third effect of The No Child Left Behind Act is that more class time is devoted to test preparation (Abrams et al., 2003; Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Clarke et al., 2003; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Grant, 2001; Hamilton & Berends, 2003; Herman & Golan, 1993; Parke & Lane, 2007; Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, & Miao, 2003; Vogler, 2002). For example, Jones et al. (1999) found that of 470 elementary teachers surveyed in North Carolina, 80% indicated that they spent time preparing for the end-of-the year test with this 80% indicating that test preparation composed at least 20% of their instructional time (cited in Abrams et al., 2003). Diamond and Spillane (2004) offered a more detailed analysis of this effect by showing that although more test preparation is evident in most research studies on the effects of high-stakes testing, variation does occur depending on the particular school context. For example, by examining data collected in four school sites, which consisted of observations and interviews, Diamond and Spillane (2004) found that although each of the school sites engaged in explicit test

preparation, at one site this preparation consisted of students being tested every Thursday while at another school site test preparation activities were more sporadic and increased in use prior to the test. Some researchers in the field (Madaus, 1988) see test preparation as possibly inflating test scores and in some instances can be seen as cheating.

Although the above studies show the main effects of The No Child Left Behind Act on instructional practice, few of these studies examine teacher beliefs about testing and NCLB, specifically, factors that may influence teacher instructional practice. For example, a few researchers (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Linn 2003; Loveless, 2005) have discussed the importance of examining teachers' thoughts and beliefs about the test itself, especially instances of opposition to the test, but these researchers make this more of a personal claim rather than drawing upon empirical research that has carefully investigated teachers' beliefs about testing. Zancanella (1992), in an empirical study that examines teachers' beliefs about testing and their influence on instructional practice, examined three case studies of English Language Arts teachers in two different middle schools in Missouri. Zancanella examined the fit between the three different teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and the approach to teaching the state test endorsed, finding different ranges of misalignment dependent on the degree of teacher agency and the teacher's particular school context. What Zancanella's study did not investigate were the belief negotiations that occurred when a misalignment existed. Therefore, this research study sought to extend Zancanella's research on teachers' beliefs and high-stakes testing by examining the negotiations that occurred and the strategies three teacher participants used to make such negotiations.

2.4.2   School context

Another context that scholars in educational research posit influences teachers' instructional practice is the particular school context in which the teachers are employed (Agee, 2004; Bednar, 1993; Calderhead, 1981; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Cooney et al., 1998; Ernest, 1989; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Schraw & Olafson, 2002). As mentioned in the previous section describing the current policy context under the No Child Left Behind Act, the school context also is an important context when not only looking at the effects of high-stakes testing on instructional practice (since NCLB may have a different influence on individual schools depending on their ability or inability to achieve AYP) but also when looking at teachers' ability to implement instructional practice that aligns with their beliefs about learning and teaching. Studies in the field of English Language Arts that have documented inconsistencies between beliefs and instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Rex & Nelson, 2004) reveal how these inconsistencies emerge when teachers are faced with negotiating their beliefs and instructional practice in a context that does not support such beliefs. The following paragraphs summarize two significant studies of English Language Arts teachers that have examined how school context mediates teachers' beliefs and therefore may shape their instructional practice.

One such example, a study conducted by Agee (2004), examines the teaching of Tina, who was forced to reexamine her beliefs about the use of multicultural literature in her classroom in a school context that valued standardized testing and the teaching of canonical texts. Tina expressed a desire to teach multicultural literature and to utilize constructivist approaches to teaching while simultaneously broadening students' views on racial and cultural differences. Situated in a school context during her first two years of teaching in which school policies mandated high-stakes assessments in an environment characterized by White, mainstream

ideologies, Tina recognized a tension between her beliefs and instructional practice, for she felt that her beliefs about and goals for teaching did not correspond with what was possible to achieve in her context. At first she challenged herself to be a change maker and created and implemented a unit that was consistent with her beliefs about the teaching of multicultural literature. Although at first she allowed her beliefs to inform her instructional practice, allowing for consistency between beliefs and instructional practice, she felt forced to change her instructional practice to conform to the demands of the school context. Therefore, although she still maintained her beliefs about the best way to teach literature and the importance of multicultural literature and listening to the opinions of students, her instructional practice modeled that of the school context in which she prepared students for standardized tests. Agee concluded that Tina made the decision to change her instructional practice in order to comply with the education context of school policies related to standardized testing while she harbored beliefs about teaching that did not correspond with her instructional practice.

Agee's study highlights the compartmentalizing of beliefs, a possible result of a school context mediating the relationship between beliefs about teaching and learning and instructional practice. For example, Tina's instructional practice changed in order to align with the expectations of the school context that emphasized preparing students for high-stakes testing. Therefore, she compartmentalized her beliefs, not requiring a comparison between her beliefs and instructional practice because the instructional practice of preparing students for high-stakes testing was so far removed from her beliefs about teaching and learning. This is similar to teacher belief theorists when they discuss connectedness as an explanation for a misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice and that the context mediates this relationship, as seen in Agee's study (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985).

Similarly, Rex and Nelson (2004) showed how teacher experience and higher levels of agency allow for different negotiations to be made when beliefs conflict with the school context and instructional practice. In contrast to Agee's participant, who had been teaching for only two years, Rex and Nelson's teacher participants had numerous life experiences and teaching experiences prior to teaching at the site of this particular study. Stan, one of these teacher participants, believed that he wanted to teach students to seek out personal growth and provide authentic reading and writing experiences for his students. Marita, the second teacher participant, believed that her role as a teacher was to prepare students for the real world. Although Rex and Nelson concluded (based on observation and interview data) that both teachers' instructional practices aligned with their stated beliefs, the context of mandated high-stakes accountability complicated their teaching and created inconsistencies in the relationship between their beliefs and instructional practice when they would use mandated test preparation in their lessons. These teachers, however, were able to resolve these inconsistencies to a certain degree by placing testing at a subordinate level to their beliefs. These teachers often existed in a state of conflict because of differing teaching beliefs when compared to school policies regarding testing. Rex and Nelson concluded that these teachers "believed they were making their own decisions, taking initiative, and acting as they thought best in their own classrooms" (p. 1316-1317). This quote represents how the teachers in this particular study interpreted their school context in such a way that would allow them to view themselves as having teacher agency, even if this was not the reality of the school context. Perhaps this was a strategy used to reconcile the contradictions that existed between their beliefs and their school context.

Rex and Nelson's study suggests that teacher agency plays an important role in the belief and instructional practice negotiations teachers make when faced with a school context that

conflicts with these beliefs and practices. Although Rex and Nelson's (2004) participants reported a feeling that they were able to make their own decisions regarding their instructional practice, Anagnostopoulos' (2003) study offers another perspective on teacher agency and posits that regardless of years of experience teaching or their status in the English Language Arts department, the two teachers in her study responded to the constraints of the school context in the same way by allowing this context to greatly shape their instructional practice. Therefore, when examining the negotiations teachers make when a tension exists among their beliefs, instructional practice, and/or the school context, teacher agency may factor into the ability to make these negotiations, but at the same time, it must be acknowledged that the years of experience teaching in a particular school context does not necessarily mean that the school context will not shape the teacher's instructional practice.

Additionally, the cultural models found within the school context about English Language Arts teaching, learning, and students may also mediate the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice. The cultural models of a school context could include the agreed upon assumptions of teachers and administrators about effective teaching, what constitutes learning, and the abilities of students. These cultural models create a school culture of expectations pertaining to teachers' instructional practice. However, an individual teacher may disagree with these cultural models but may feel the need to comply with such cultural models for fear of being ostracized from the community.

2.4.3 Curriculum context

Researchers in the field of teacher belief research have shown the curriculum context, including the school's curriculum, state standards, and textbooks, as serving as an important context that

can shape teachers' instructional practice (Applebee, Burroughs, & Stevens, 1994; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Enyedy et al., 2006; Irvin, 1999; Muchmore, 2001). The curriculum itself can influence the teachers' instructional practice with some teachers deciding to comply with this curriculum and others choosing to ignore the curriculum mandates. Additionally, in the high-stakes testing context, more and more curricula are being developed regarding how to best prepare students for success on the high-stakes testing exam.

In a study by Applebee et al. (1994), investigating how different teachers in two different teaching contexts made sense of curricula mandates, the researchers highlighted how curricula can have different effects on teachers' instructional practice. For example, Tony, a 22-year veteran of teaching, both in public and private schools, when faced with Emily, the curriculum director, changing the curriculum to recognize multicultural literature in all English courses, attended a seminar that was one of the greatest forces that drove him to change his instructional practice to comply with the new curriculum. Tony taught multicultural texts, moving away from "the classics" and modeled his practice after the curriculum of the school. Claudia, a teacher in the same school, did not change her instructional practice as much to comply with the curriculum that required the teaching of multicultural texts but instead allowed her philosophy of teaching and her beliefs about teaching and learning to be more prominent in shaping her instructional practice and she continued to teach classic texts, which positioned her as going against the curriculum. The differences between how Tony and Claudia responded to the new curriculum illustrates that the extent to which the curriculum shapes teachers' instructional practice is dependent on other factors including the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning as well as the particular school contexts and teaching experiences that may allow for more teacher agency and the ability to go against curriculum mandates.

Muchmore (2001), in his study of Anna, also revealed how a teacher's instructional practice can be constrained by the mandated curriculum. When describing Anna's struggles as a teacher, Muchmore states, "Anna felt trapped by the official English curriculum at Franklin Junior High, which consisted primarily of the *Robert's English* textbook with a heavy emphasis on transformational grammar. On one hand, she felt obligated to follow this curriculum, while on the other hand, she knew it was not working (p. 15). Muchmore's description of Anna's tension reveals the dissonance a teacher can feel between the mandated curriculum and his/her beliefs about teaching and learning.

These two studies reveal that the influence of the curriculum on teachers' instructional practice can vary widely depending on other factors, such as school context, the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and the teachers' personal experiences.

2.5   SUMMARY

My study bridges theories of beliefs and cultural models by recognizing the personal aspect of beliefs while simultaneously recognizing the situated and social/cultural aspect of cultural models. I argue that beliefs are rooted in the personal and the individual – beliefs are derived from experiences – and influence the meaning making and instructional practice of teachers in their multiple educational contexts.

I understand the relationship between beliefs, instructional practice, and context to be complex in that each aspect of this relationship can influence each other. For example, beliefs can shape instructional practice but instructional practice can also shape beliefs. Context can influence instructional practice and in some cases, the teachers' instructional practice can shape

the school context in which they work. Although I recognize this complex relationship, for the purposes of this research study, I position instructional practice at the center of my investigations with beliefs and context feeding into and mediating/shaping this instructional practice.

As a means of investigating the relationship among beliefs, instructional practice, and context, this research study specifically examines the episodic structure of beliefs as not only a method for identifying beliefs but also as a method for allowing teacher participants to talk about their beliefs and uncover some less conscious beliefs as told in these personal experiences. Additionally, I focus on the connectedness of beliefs by examining both the depth and centrality of an individual belief.

I anticipate that factors such as teacher agency and the cultural models of the school context will be additional factors that mediate the relationship among beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts. By acknowledging and exploring these factors, this research study seeks to understand how these factors shape the belief negotiations that occur when a misalignment exists between beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational context. These negotiations could entail teacher participants changing or modifying their beliefs or compartmentalizing their beliefs or practice which allows for the existence of inconsistencies between beliefs and instructional practice without causing a tension for the individual teacher.

3.0   CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This research study addresses the following major research questions with the third research question serving as the central research question:

1. How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students shape their instruction?

   a. What beliefs did three secondary English Language Arts teachers have about the teaching of reading and writing?

   b. What beliefs did three secondary English Language Arts teachers have about the learning of reading and writing?

   c. What beliefs did three secondary English Language Arts teachers have about their students?

2. How did the educational contexts within which these three secondary English Language Arts teachers worked – including the school, curricular, and policy contexts – shape their instruction?

   a. How did the school context in which each of these three secondary English Language Arts teachers worked shape instruction?

b. How did the curriculum that each of these three secondary English Language Arts teachers was expected to teach shape instruction?

c. How did the current policy context (especially No Child Left Behind) shape these three English Language Arts teachers' school contexts?

3. How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers negotiate tensions between their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; the cultural models and tangible pressures of the educational contexts within which they worked; and their instructional practices?

a. What did three secondary English Language Arts teachers do when their conscious beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students did not align with those of the cultural models of the school context?

b. What changes to their beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students and their instructional practice did three secondary English Language Arts teachers make when resolving a tension between their beliefs and their instructional practice? Why?

c. What beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students and their instructional practice did three secondary English Language Arts teachers keep the same when faced with a tension between their beliefs and instructional practice? Why?

3.1.1 Rationale for methodologies

This research study utilized qualitative methods as a mode of inquiry. Qualitative research can be characterized as rich descriptions of people, places, and conversations that may not be easily handled by statistical procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Qualitative research questions seek to investigate topics in their complexity in a specific context, seeking to understand behavior from a participant's frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Erickson, 1986; Erickson &

Gutierrez, 2002). These research questions usually are descriptive questions (what) and process questions (how). Methods used for the purposes of qualitative research include observations, interviews, and the collection of artifacts. Additionally, the qualitative researcher has sustained contact with people in these settings, spending time with participants in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' interactions and how they construct meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Drawing upon the above description of qualitative research, this logic of inquiry is appropriate for this particular research study because the study seeks to gain a better understanding of particular informants (teachers) in their educational contexts (school, curricular, policy). Since the primary focus of this research study was on how three English Language Arts teachers drew upon their beliefs about teaching and learning in order to make sense of their instructional practice in contexts that were based in school culture, available curriculum, and educational policy, it was natural that qualitative methods would be used to explore this sense-making because the study examines the process of how teachers construct meaning. Additionally, the study's research questions support qualitative research as a logic of inquiry, for in order to come to a full understanding of the beliefs about teaching, learning, and students held by these three teacher participants, rich detailed descriptions were needed to help in this meaning-making (Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, researchers of beliefs (Duffy, 1982; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Munby, 1984; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991) have criticized studies of beliefs that have widely used paper and pencil questionnaires as a means of identifying and understanding the beliefs of individuals. These researchers posit that qualitative methods are more suited for investigating complex phenomenon such as beliefs.

In addition, the design of this research study draws from case study research in that the study includes detailed case studies of three teacher participants in three different school contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Yin, 1993, 2006). Case study methodology is appropriate when a study seeks to (a) define topics broadly and not narrowly, (b) cover contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of the study, and (c) rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence (Yin, 1993). In particular, this research study examines the relationship among teacher beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts, therefore requiring that the phenomenon of beliefs be explored in relation to the educational contexts of the three teacher participants. I position these case studies as descriptive in that this research study presents a complete description of the phenomenon of beliefs within its multiple educational contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Yin, 1993, 2006).

A life history orientation to research also informs this research study by providing an approach to the structure and types of questions asked of the three teacher participants during the interviews as well as creating an opportunity for me to reflect on my own beliefs about teaching and how this influences the research study. Life history research allows for the gaining of insight into the experiences of others in a particular context, learning how individuals walk, talk, live, and work in this context (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Life history research asks participants to reflect on their experiences and to tell the story of their lives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). This type of research is also concerned with how the lives of participants are represented in writing (Cole & Knowles, 2001). I draw on life history methodology for this research study by seeking to examine the personal experiences of the three teacher participants in order to understand the episodic characteristic of their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students. These personal

experiences were shared throughout the interviews in which the three teacher participants were encouraged to tell the stories of their lives and experiences as a way of understanding and extrapolating their beliefs about teaching and learning.

3.2   THE SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

3.2.1   The setting

Two different school contexts were chosen for the purposes of this research study in order to investigate the influence of context on instructional practice. The two different school districts were located in a metropolitan area in western Pennsylvania and were chosen on the basis of the districts' abilities to meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), with the first district being chosen because it currently was on the warning list for not making AYP and the second district being chosen because it continued to make AYP. These two different districts were purposefully chosen in order to investigate how high-stakes testing might shape the teacher participants' beliefs and instructional practice in these two different contexts, since the current policy context is one context this research study sought to better understand. Additionally, the two districts represented two different student populations, consisting of an urban and rural school context. The limited number of participants and sites lent itself to qualitative research methods in that these case studies allowed for a detailed investigation into building an understanding of the beliefs and instructional practices of these three teacher participants, trying to better understand their school contexts. Below is a brief description of each of the two school districts, the communities that the districts served, and the specific demographics for each school building.

West Highland Area School District[1], the school district that had not met AYP, had a district enrollment of approximately 4,500 students, consisting of five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The district had been in existence since 1884. The mission of the school was to provide a quality education through forward-looking planning and a strong commitment to excellence. For this particular study, Liberty Middle School and West Highland Area High School were the two school sites for this district.

West Highland Area School District served five different communities. West Highland, the community in which the middle and high school buildings were located, was located at the meeting of two major rivers and was part of a metropolitan area. West Highland was the second largest city in the county and had a population of approximately 24,040, with a median income of $31,597. Once a coal-mining city in the 1830s, the community saw a decline in its population when there was an economic decline and industries moved elsewhere.

Liberty Middle School was a school of approximately 732 students, 52% of whom were White, 47% of whom were African-American, and less than 2% of whom were Asian or Hispanic. On a recently administered standardized state assessment, 49% of eighth-grade students were proficient in reading and 43% of eighth-grade students were proficient in math.

West Highland Area High School was a school of 1,536 students, 61% of whom were White, 38% of whom were African-American, and less than 2% of whom were Asian or Hispanic. Fifty-four percent of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. On a recently administered standardized state assessment, 36% of eleventh-grade students were proficient in reading and 19% of eleventh-grade students were proficient in math. The high school offered academic and vocational/technical curricula under one roof.

---

[1] All names and places are pseudonyms.

Covington Area School District, the second district for this research study, continued to meet AYP and had a district enrollment of approximately 1,420 students, composed of one elementary school and one junior/senior high school. Covington Area School District was a rural school district located approximately 50 miles north of a metropolitan area in western Pennsylvania. The mission of the district was to provide a learning environment that enabled students to acquire the skills and the knowledge to be productive citizens and lifelong learners.

Covington Area Junior/Senior High School was a school that served approximately 683 students, 98% of whom were White, 2% of whom were African-American, and .5% of whom were Hispanic or Asian. Sixteen percent of students qualified for free or reduced lunch, and the district did not qualify for Title I funds. On a recently administered standardized state assessment, 78% of eleventh-grade students were proficient in reading and 77% of eleventh-grade students were proficient in math.

3.2.2   Selection of participants

An important component of any research design is the selection of participants and the gaining of access to sites in order to conduct the research. In order to address this study's research questions, it was necessary for the unit of analysis and the primary participants to be secondary English Language Arts teachers who currently were faced with changing policy initiatives and high-stakes testing, one of the educational contexts under investigation. For this particular study, the number of participants was limited to three in order to be able to provide an in-depth analysis and description of the beliefs, instructional practices, and educational contexts of these three teachers (Carspecken, 1996; Denzin, 1997; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Erickson, 1986). Qualitative studies usually rely on a small number of participants in order to be able to gain a

depth of understanding of each participant. Three teacher participants were chosen partially because of convenience but also because of the organization of the two different districts in which the study took place. Two teacher participants were chosen from the West Highland Area School District since English Language Arts instruction occurred in both the middle and high school. Additionally, since this district currently was on the warning list for not making AYP, it was important to be able to document the district initiatives that occurred at the middle school level to improve English Language Arts instruction as well as the continuation of these middle school initiatives that occurred in the high school in order to gain a full sense of the school context in a time of intense reform. The administration for this school also was innovative in the fact that the administrators (e.g., principals, assistant principals) had recently switched buildings with the high school administrators now at the middle school and the middle school administrators now at the high school. Instead of choosing two teacher participants from the second school district, Covington Area School District, I chose only one since this particular teacher participant was situated in a joint middle and high school and also taught both middle and high school classes. Therefore, this teacher participant gave insight into the school context from the perspective of both a middle and high school teacher.

Participants were selected on the following basis. First, recommended teachers for the study (based on university professors' recommendations of effective teachers) were observed to determine their eligibility for the study. The teachers were chosen because they were creative and enthusiastic teachers who were committed and interested in participating in the study. After observing these teachers, letters were sent out to possible teacher participants clearly describing the research study's purposes, the procedures, and the steps used to maximize confidentiality and to minimize risk (Erickson, 1986). Interested teachers notified me of their interest, and additional

observations of all of the teachers' class periods occurred in order for me to purposefully select the one class per teacher participant to be observed for the study.

Class selection was determined based on the group of students and the content of the class that was best suited for answering the study's research questions. Initial observations of all classes occurred in order to determine whether class context was an educational context that was influencing the instructional practice of the three teacher participants. As described later in this chapter, all three teachers taught multiple classes of the same grade and level, with two of the teacher participants teaching one additional twelfth grade class. After observing all of the teacher participants' classes, I saw few differences in the instructional practices of the teacher participants across classes, and it appeared that the same content was presented to students in the same instructional way. Therefore, I determined that observing one class per teacher participant would provide me with the opportunity to gain a detailed understanding of the teacher participant and her students in one particular class that would be consistent with her instructional practice across classes. In order to choose the one class to be observed per teacher participant, I decided to choose a class that (a) had a wide variety of student ability levels, (b) had students who were willing to participate in the study, and (c) contained content related to preparing students for high-stakes testing. Additionally, twelfth grade English Language Arts classes were eliminated from possible classes to observe since students in this grade had already taken the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in eleventh grade, thus resulting in teachers not focusing their attention on test preparation for this grade.

Along with teacher participants, students within the classes of these three teacher participants served as informants. Students possess insight into the happenings of the classroom since they experience it every day. Students also are aware of the school context in which they

attend and can offer a different perspective on this context than teachers and administrators. By utilizing students as participants, greater insight into the instructional practice and personality of the teacher can be attained as well as greater insight into the school context.

3.2.3 Background information on participating teachers

Jan, a female participant in her late 40s, taught reading at the middle school of West Highland Area School District. Before teaching, Jan held a position in the CIA and then made a career change and became a reading teacher, responsible for teaching seventh grade, including students from lower- and upper-achievement levels. She had taught for the past fifteen years at the same district. Her philosophy of teaching can be described as teaching that was student-centered and strived to make learning fun. Besides her responsibilities as a classroom teacher, teaching five classes a day, Jan also was the literacy coach for her building and also served as the coordinator of the 4Sight Testing[2].

Jessica, a high school English Language Arts teacher in West Highland Area School District, taught at West Highland High School for five years. Jessica attended as a student the school district in which she worked and decided she wanted to teach in this district once she received her degree and teaching certification. Jessica also married her high school boyfriend, who also taught at the same high school but in the Social Studies department. Jessica taught both ninth and twelfth grade English Language Arts classes and served as the twelfth grade class advisor. Her philosophy of teaching can be described as a focus on helping disadvantaged students achieve success. Currently, Jessica was taking graduate-level classes in order to pursue

---

[2]The 4Sight test is an additional standardized assessment implemented by some school districts to determine student progress in preparation for the standardized state assessment.

a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a certificate in administration. She also had been a cooperating teacher for numerous student teachers over her five years of teaching at the high school.

Rebecca, a middle and high school English Language Arts teacher, taught grades eighth and twelfth and had been teaching at Covington Area Junior/Senior High School for the past four years. Originally not from the Covington Area, Rebecca decided to teach at this school district because it was close to where she had attended college. Rebecca's philosophy of teaching English Language Arts centered on her love for learning, and she tried to share this love with her students, focusing all class sessions on learning. Rebecca was currently taking master's level classes in an Instruction and Learning program at a local university.

3.3   DATA COLLECTION

In order to ensure a deliberate, systematic, and verifiable study of how the three teacher participants' beliefs about teaching and learning shaped their instructional practice, data for this study included classroom observations; field notes; audio-recorded class discourse; teaching artifacts; and teacher, student, and administrator interviews. The multiple and variety of data sources could triangulate the data (Erickson, 1986; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2002), possibly making it more reliable and valid. Below is a detailed description of each of the data sources denoting how each source was collected and used to inform the research study.

3.3.1 Classroom observations

Classroom observations are key to understanding teachers' instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004). Since the unit of analysis was to better understand the beliefs and instructional practices of classroom *teachers*, it was necessary to observe these teachers in their authentic work environments – the classroom. Previous studies (Dyson, 2003; Heath, 1983; Lewis, 2001) in English Language Arts classrooms describe the importance of observations and the writing of detailed field notes in order to gain a deep understanding of the particular setting and subjects in that setting. Observations for my study occurred once a week for one class period per teacher participant. Observations continued for the course of the research study (January 2008-June 2008) and consisted of approximately 24 observations per teacher participant. By observing the classroom once a week, I was able to gain insight into the instructional choices of the teacher participants, the students' reactions to these choices, and a broad perspective on the variety of teaching that occurred each week. My positioning in the classroom was that of a participant observer (Emerson et al., 1995). I was an observer on the sidelines, not actively participating in class discussions or activities.

Weekly observations focused on the teacher participants' instructional practice and stated beliefs during instruction, using Nespor's (1987) four characteristics of beliefs (existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading, and episodic structure) as a guide for observations. For example, when looking for a stated belief when observing, I paid careful attention for statements by the teacher participants such as "I believe" and "I feel." During an observation, a teacher participant might say, "I believe that too much focus has been placed on high-stakes testing. I feel that teachers should focus on authentic learning assignments and not on a standardized test." This statement reveals a belief that represents the existential characteristic

of a belief. Additionally, as an observer I looked for evidence in instructional practice of this stated belief by looking for instances of authentic classroom assessments that were not test preparation assessments.

3.3.1.1 Field notes

Classroom observations were documented through detailed field notes, which consisted of initial impressions, key events, sensitivity to the experiences of participants, description, dialogue, and characterization (Emerson et al., 1995). When first entering the field sites, I wrote field notes broadly and revisited these field notes in order to gain more focused observations later in the research (Emerson et al., 1995). Additionally, field notes were typed immediately after leaving the field sites in order to ensure the accuracy of these field notes (Emerson et al., 1995; Lewis, 2001).

3.3.1.2 Audio-recorded classroom discourse

Classroom observations were also documented through the recording of class discourse. By audio-recording class discourse, I could then conduct a careful analysis of the discourse after transcription that looked at discourse markers for evidence of the four different characteristics of beliefs, examined interactions between the four characteristics of beliefs in these transcripts, and investigated students' reactions to the teacher participant's instructional practice and stated beliefs. The observations and recorded class discourse provided me with the opportunity to better understand the actions and discourse of the three teacher participants. When investigating teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their instructional practice, it is important for the researcher to look at both actions and talk, looking for discrepancies. In addition, it is important to have audio-recorded classroom discourse in addition to field notes because audio

recordings of classroom discourse provide direct quotes that show the inflection, emphasis, and pauses of speech.

3.3.2   Researcher reflexive journal

In addition to my field notes, I also maintained a researcher reflexive journal that served the main purpose of documenting my positioning as a researcher and explained how this positioning might influence my data collection and analysis (Fine, 1994; Salzman, 2002). The researcher reflexive journal differed from weekly field notes in several key ways. First, the researcher reflexive journal cut across observations and data sources whereas the field notes focused on one particular classroom observation. Second, the researcher reflexive journal allowed me to focus my attention on personal assumptions and my stance as a researcher that influenced and shaped the study and findings (Salzman, 2002). The main purpose of this writing was to recognize my positioning and influence on the research process. Although this type of writing also appeared in the field notes, the researcher reflexive journal provided me with a forum specifically allocated to this type of reflection. Additionally, the researcher reflexive journal provided me with the opportunity to investigate my own beliefs about teaching and learning and how these beliefs might influence my interpretations of the teacher participants' beliefs.

3.3.3   Teaching artifacts

An additional data source was the collection of teaching artifacts, such as lesson plans, assignments, assessments, and handouts (see Appendix D) that represented the three teacher participants' instructional practices. For example, one artifact that I collected from Rebecca, one

66

of the three teacher participants in this research study, was a question packet she distributed to her students when reading the novel *A Northern Light*. By looking at this teacher-created artifact, I could then determine how Rebecca's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students were evident or not evident in this artifact. The artifacts were collected once a month for the duration of the research study and served as a conversation starter for informal conversations and formal interviews. During these interviews, the three teacher participants had the chance to comment on why they believed a particular artifact represented their instructional practice, and more specifically, whether they believed their instructional practice represented their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students.

3.3.4   Interviews with teacher participants, students, and administrators

Although observations documented through field notes and recorded class discourse provided me with a better understanding of the three teacher participants' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students and how these beliefs influenced their instructional practice, it was important to interview the teacher participants in order to gain insight into their thoughts and experiences. Interviews are one qualitative method that help the researcher understand the informants in their own words (Spradley, 1979). Interviews with the three teacher participants were conducted at five different stages of the study: the first month of the study after a few observations had been conducted and then one interview per month of the study after numerous weekly observations had occurred and teaching artifacts had been collected. Interviews were open-ended in nature and relied on the methodology used by life history methods and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Life history and narrative inquiry lends itself to the investigation and understanding of teacher beliefs, for it relies on the

stories of the informants – "from *their* perspective – from the perspective of an *insider* looking around, and not from that of an *outsider* looking in" (Muchmore, 2001).

In order to discover answers to the three main research questions for this research study, I designed the interview protocols in such a way as to elicit personal stories from the three teacher participants about their beliefs concerning teaching, learning, and their students while simultaneously asking questions about the teacher participants' educational contexts and the belief negotiations that occurred. The first two interviews focused on learning more about the teacher participants' personal experiences as students and as teachers. The first research question (How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students shape their instruction?) focused on the need to understand teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students in their specific discipline. In order to collect data to answer the first research question, the questions for Interview One focused primarily on gaining a sense of the teacher participants' educational and professional background (Tell me about your early experiences with learning about reading and writing; Tell me about your teaching career) as well as their beliefs about teaching and learning (What guides how and what you teach? What particular approach do you take when you teach and why?). The specific questions for Interview Two were determined after listening to the responses to the first interview with the main goal of further exploring the responses in Interview One. The answers to the first two interviews served as background on the life experiences of the three teacher participants and guided future observations and interviews. Building upon the beliefs identified in the first two interviews and the several months of weekly observations of the teacher participants' instructional practice, Interview Three explored the teacher participants' own sense-making when presented with a misalignment between their stated beliefs and their instructional practice. During this interview,

the three teacher participants were presented with a misalignment between their stated beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students and with a teaching episode of their instructional practice. The three teacher participants were asked to explain what they saw in the teaching episode and interview transcript. This allowed the teacher participants to talk through how they think through this misalignment and provided insight into the type of negotiations they make that may impact their instructional practice. Interview Four helped to answer the second research question (How did the educational contexts within which these three secondary English Language Arts teachers worked – including the school, curricular, and policy contexts – shape their instruction?). The interview questions for Interview Four were designed in such a way as to elicit information from the three teacher participants about their educational contexts, specifically asking them to reflect on the shared cultural models of their school context. Interview Five, contributing to data used to answer the third research question (How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers negotiate tensions between their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; the cultural models and tangible pressures of the educational contexts within which they worked; and their instructional practices?), allowed for the investigation into the negotiations that the three teacher participants were consciously aware of that they made between their beliefs and instructional practice. Furthermore, by presenting the three teacher participants with misalignments between their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students and their instructional practice during two different times during this research study, I was able to examine if these times of reflection encouraged them to make any changes in their instructional practice and what these changes looked like.

Additionally, voluntary student interviews occurred that focused on students' reactions to their teacher's instructional practices as well as their thoughts on the school context and high-

stakes testing. For example, the following question, "Describe how you see high-stakes testing affecting your teacher's instruction," asked for the student's perspective on the influence of high-stakes testing on instructional practice. Finally, interviews with the individual building administrators for the three different school buildings occurred in order to gain a better understanding of the specific school context and school policies.

3.4   DATA ANALYSIS

3.4.1   Open and focused coding

With qualitative research, coding and analyzing occurs throughout the data collection phase of the research and can influence the research questions (Emerson et al., 1995; Lewis, 2001). In an explanation of her research methods when investigating literary practices and social acts of elementary students, Lewis (2001) described her process of data analysis: "During data collection, I made repeated passes through interview transcripts to help me plan future interactions with participants in follow-up conversations….Field notes, typed and expanded weekly, were a source of ongoing analysis, with an eye toward recurrent patterns" (p. 191). Building on Lewis' approach, field notes for this study were coded using open coding.

Emerson et al. (1995) describe open coding as the researcher reading field notes line-by-line and determining main themes, ideas, and issues that emerge from the field notes. An open coding approach to coding field notes allows the researcher to enter the coding process without pre-established categories. Open coding was used for this research study by first looking at the field notes that had been typed immediately after each observation. These initial findings then

influenced future observations. For example, when using open coding to code the field notes pertaining to the first observation of Jan's teaching, one of the three teacher participants in this study, a theme that emerged was Jan's negative discourse regarding the administrators at the building in which she taught. This major theme that emerged in the first observation then provided a focus for future observations. This shows the iterative process of qualitative research.

After the open coding of field notes, focused coding can occur later in the research process once more observations have occurred. Emerson et al. (1995) describe focused coding as a fine-grained analysis of field notes based on basic topics that help the researcher try to find patterns in the field notes and try to connect these emerging patterns to theory and previous research. Focused coding allows for a more detailed analysis of the field notes looking to create subcategories for the major themes, ideas, and/or issues that emerged during open coding. For example, during the open coding process, negative discourse regarding the administrators at Jan's school building emerged. This initial theme then served as the focus for future observations. Fine-grained analysis then allowed me to identify subcategories of negative discourse regarding administrators that divided this negativity into discourse related to the principal's lack of enforcement of school rules, the evolving school curriculum, and the lack of teacher agency under the leadership of the building principal.

Throughout the process of conducting observations, writing field notes, and coding, theoretical memos were used to relate pieces of data and to make connections between analytic themes and coding categories (Emerson et al., 1995). These theoretical memos differed from the researcher reflexive journal by consisting of memos pertaining to preliminary analysis, hunches, initial interpretations, and foci for future observations.

Besides field notes, classroom discourse and interview transcripts were coded using a similar approach. After completing open coding, more specific coding occurred that consisted of categories and subcategories. Analytic memos were made in which I noted the patterns that I noticed across data sources and that linked to existing theory and research (Emerson et al., 1995; Lewis, 2001). Coding categories emerged out of the data set and helped me to understand the beliefs of the three teacher participants and how these beliefs shaped their instructional practice as well as the negotiations that occurred.

3.4.2   Coding categories

A significant aspect of this research study's methodology was finding tensions between the teacher participants' beliefs, instructional practice, and/or educational contexts and presenting these teacher participants with these tensions. Therefore, data analysis was ongoing and guided interview protocols and observations in order to identify these tensions, present them to the teacher participants, and document any change in instructional practice after the teacher participants had the opportunity to reflect and talk about these tensions. This data analysis proceeded in three stages: (a) demarcate instances of beliefs into episodes, (b) identify evidence of a belief about teaching, learning, and/or students, and (c) articulate the dimensions of beliefs (consciousness/unconsciousness, connectedness, context, teacher agency) represented by each episode. Although emerging themes in the data drove open coding and focused coding throughout data collection, I also use pre-established codes rooted in the theory of beliefs and belief systems (Abelson, 1969; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992) in order to establish the *existence* of particular beliefs and to code for dimensions of beliefs such as consciousness/unconsciousness and connectedness.

The first stage of data analysis consisted of demarcating episodes – what Lewis and Ketter (2004) define as "a series of turns that all related to the same topic or theme" (p. 123) – in which the teacher participants' beliefs about teaching, learning, and/or their students were evident. Belief and cultural model theorists explain that beliefs and cultural models are sometimes consciously stated and sometimes consciously or unconsciously used to guide one's actions (Abelson, 1979; D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Gee, 1996, 1999, 2004; Holland & Quinn, 1987; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968; Shore, 1996; Sigel, 1985). With this in mind, I was concerned with identifying the beliefs of the three teacher participants that were consciously and overtly expressed but also those beliefs that were less conscious.

After demarcating episodes, I began stage two of data analysis, which consisted of using the four foundational characteristics of beliefs (existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative loading, and episodic structure) to identify beliefs in the interview and classroom discourse transcripts. These pre-established coding categories and the potential discourse markers that indicated evidence of these categories included the following:

Table 1: Belief Characteristics Discourse Markers

Belief Characteristics	Examples of Discourse Markers
Existential Presumption	"I believe," "I feel"
Alternativity	"In an ideal world," "If I had my say"
Affective/Evaluative Loading	"I *hate* how testing is taking over our classrooms"
Episodic Structure	"Once when I was a student," "In my first year of teaching," "I will never forget when," "One year"

After identifying the beliefs within each episode, I began stage three of data analysis by coding the episodes for the four significant factors that have been shown to mediate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices: (a) consciousness of beliefs, (b) connectedness of beliefs, (c) educational context, and (d) teacher agency (Agee, 2004;

Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Bryan, 2003; Ernest, 1989; Kagan, 1992; Muchmore, 2001; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Richardson et al., 1991). The first two factors are dimensions of beliefs, but the second two factors are external to beliefs.

The conscious and unconscious factors of an identified belief were analyzed using Gee's (1999) methodology to help me synthesize and interpret the core beliefs that were being expressed through the teacher participants' discourse about teaching, learning, and their students across data sources.

1. What must I, as an analyst, assume these teachers (consciously or unconsciously) believe in order to make deep sense of what they are saying?

2. What "theories" must these teachers (consciously or unconsciously) hold such that they are using just these situated meanings?

Asking these questions when analyzing the data helped me to understand more fully and specifically the three teacher participants' beliefs because it required me to articulate the beliefs and assumptions underpinning the teacher participants' statements rather than merely interpreting them literally. Additionally, Gee's questions required me to investigate what was consciously *and* unconsciously believed by these three teacher participants.

The connectedness factor of an identified belief includes the *depth* and *centrality* of a belief (Rokeach, 1968). Coding for connectedness included coding for the frequency of a belief present in an episode and across episodes. I also coded for the context in which this belief was mentioned in each episode. For example, Jessica, one of the teacher participants, believed that all students can be successful. This belief about student ability occurred in episodes in which Jessica also discussed a belief that teachers who have high expectations will see greater student

achievement. Therefore, these two separate beliefs were connected to each other and formed a more central belief.

The two external factors (educational context and teacher agency) also were coded within episodes. Educational context was coded for references to the type of context – school, curricular, and policy contexts. These contexts were also coded for positive and negative comments regarding these contexts. Furthermore, talk related to an educational context was coded thematically within each episode. For example, when talking about the current policy context, an emerging theme was Jessica's discussion of timed testing that characterized high-stakes testing. This theme then connected back to the belief about teaching and learning found within this episode that the teacher held regarding assessment.

Finally, teacher agency was coded thematically in order to identify instances in which the three teacher participants felt they had agency to make changes within their educational contexts and instances in which they felt that the educational contexts dictated what they were able to do in their classrooms. Teacher agency was also coded for explanations of such agency such as years of teaching experience, organization of the English Language Arts department and school, and roles within the department and school.

3.4.3   Analyzing data sources to answer research questions

This section of the chapter is divided into the three main research questions for this study with an explanation as to how each of the three research questions were answered by analyzing the multiple data sources.

75

3.4.3.1 How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students shape their instruction?

Interviews. The interview data was analyzed for examples of beliefs. Discourse was considered to be a belief when there was evidence of an existential presumption, alternativity, affective/evaluative language, and/or the description of a personal experience from which the belief originated. Additionally, the interview data was analyzed for talk about specific beliefs that the teacher participants believed influenced their planning and instruction. The interview questions, created to ignite a conversation about beliefs, were coded thematically, looking for similar and dissimilar themes across the interviews. Themes that emerged during this coding were then traced across interviews in order to examine how this belief differed across interviews. The following interview questions elicited talk related to the first research question:

1. Tell me about your early experiences learning to read and write.

2. What guides how and what you teach?

3. What particular approach do you take when you teach and why?

4. Describe a particularly successful classroom occasion when you knew teaching and learning were going well.

5. How would you describe your goals for your students in the class I will be observing?

Classroom observations. The transcripts of the classroom discourse and the field notes were analyzed primarily for evidence of the teacher participants' instructional practice. The field notes were analyzed for the following: (a) types of writing and reading instruction implemented in the teacher participant's classroom including activities and curricular materials used, (b) examples of the teacher participant's instruction as teacher-centered and/or student-centered, (c) the teacher participant's approach to test preparation materials, and (d) the teacher participant's

interactions with her students. Additionally, each teacher participant's instructional practice was analyzed for her central beliefs. Additionally, beliefs stated during the class period were coded to document similarities between those beliefs mentioned in classroom discourse and those beliefs mentioned in the interviews.

Teaching artifacts. The artifacts were analyzed for evidence of how each teacher participant's beliefs were or were not aligned with her instructional practice. For example, Rebecca stated during Interview One that she valued the importance of variety in assessments and student choice. I then examined the teaching artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, assessments) for evidence of variety in assessment and student choice to determine whether the belief stated during the interview also shaped Rebecca's instructional practice.

3.4.3.2 How did the educational contexts within which these three secondary English Language Arts teachers' worked – including the school, curricular, and policy contexts – shape their instruction?

Interviews. Interview data were analyzed for instances of talk related to the teacher participants' description of the three educational contexts (school, curricular, policy) and how they saw these contexts shaping their instructional practice. The following interview questions elicited talk related to the second research question:

1. Tell a story about your school that helps to describe your school.

2. What do you enjoy about teaching at your school?

3. What do you dislike about teaching at your school?

4. What different roles do you serve at your school? Describe each role. What are the benefits of this role? What are the challenges of this role?

5. Describe the type of relationships you have at this school with other teachers. Administrators. Staff.

6. Describe your curriculum for this class.

7. Describe how the curriculum was developed.

8. In what ways has The No Child Left Behind Act affected the way in which your school spends its time and money?

9. What do you see as the effects of The No Child Left Behind Act on the teaching profession?

10. Describe how your beliefs on learning and teaching compare to the thoughts endorsed by your school building. Curriculum. No Child Left Behind.

The additional student and administrator interviews allowed for the analysis of different perspectives on the three educational contexts (school, curricular, policy). For example, asking students to describe their school culture, the students who attended this school, and the teachers, offered their unique perspective on the school context. Additionally, students were asked questions about the curriculum for their English Language Arts class as well as questions about how they perceived the policy context influencing students and their school context. The administrator interviews offered further insight into the school culture, development of curricula, and the role of high-stakes testing preparation in his/her school context. By interviewing the teacher participants, students, and administrators in each school context, I was able to create a richer, triangulated picture of each school context.

Classroom observations. Classroom observations, documented through audio-recorded classroom discourse and detailed field notes, provided insight into the three educational contexts by documenting patterns in student practices and the general culture of the school. Additionally,

details about the enacted curriculum were learned by observing the three teacher participants' instructional practice. Finally, observations provided for an understanding of the observed influence of the policy context in this particular classroom.

3.4.3.3 How did three secondary English Language Arts teachers negotiate tensions between their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; the cultural models and tangible pressures of the educational contexts within which they worked; and their instructional practices?

Interviews. Data from Interviews One, Two, and Four were analyzed for negotiations by looking for challenges and tensions mentioned by the three teacher participants when they were asked to describe their beliefs about teaching and learning, their instructional practice, and their educational contexts. These negotiations were coded for the *location* of the negotiation, whether it was between (a) two different beliefs, (b) a belief and instructional practice, and/or (c) the educational context and instructional practice. The negotiations were also coded for the *content* of the negotiation – what was the negotiation about. Additionally, in order to have the three teacher participants think aloud and talk explicitly about how they negotiated misalignments between their beliefs about teaching and learning and their instructional practice, during Interviews Three and Five the teacher participants were presented with examples of misalignments that I had located in the interview and classroom observation data and were asked to reflect upon and explain how they negotiated these misalignments. I also presented the teacher participants with examples of where their instructional practice did not align with the cultural models prevalent in their educational context (e.g., school, curricular, and policy contexts) in order to investigate the influence of these educational contexts on instructional practice and beliefs and how these three teacher participants resisted such pressures. Such data were

79

examined for strategies the teacher participants used to make these negotiations, how teacher beliefs were involved in such negotiations, as well as the educational context in which the negotiations took place. Based on previous research, I anticipated factors such as consciousness/unconsciousness of a belief, connectedness of a belief, context, and teacher agency to influence these negotiations.

Classroom observations. The three teacher participants' reflections on misalignments between their beliefs/instructional practice/context (elicited in Interview Three) guided future classroom observations. After Interview Three, in observations I looked for examples of change in instructional practice that might have occurred as a result of teacher participants' conscious reflections on misalignments between their beliefs, practice, and/or educational contexts. The purpose of this design was to examine how presenting the teacher participants with a misalignment, that they may not be conscious of, may shape their subsequent instructional practice and thus may be evidence of belief/instructional practice negotiation. Audio-recorded classroom discourse and field notes were analyzed for evidence of negotiations made in the teacher participants' instructional practice after these three teacher participants had the opportunity to reflect on misalignments between their beliefs, instructional practice, and/or the cultural models of their educational contexts. For example, one of the teacher participants was presented with an example of her instructional practice in which she taught vocabulary by having students copy down the words and memorize the definitions for a test at the end of the week. This same teacher in an interview verbalized the belief that vocabulary was best taught in the context of a text and by studying a few words at a time rather than a list of words. After presenting this misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice, the teacher participant, having had the opportunity to reflect on this misalignment, decided to maintain her instructional

practice surrounding vocabulary. Therefore, future observations in the case of this teacher participant revealed no evidence of change, noting that a negotiation may not just represent instructional change but may also include the decision to maintain the instructional practice or to compartmentalize beliefs and practice.

3.4.4   Establishing reliability and validity

Those researchers from the hard sciences who oppose qualitative methods as a research methodology do so on the grounds that qualitative research relies heavily on interpretation and does not create a reliable and valid data set such as is the case with experimental design. Researchers writing about qualitative research, and more specifically, ethnographic methods (Carspecken, 1996; Dyson, 2003; Emerson et al., 1995) have offered detailed advice to researchers on how to make qualitative research more reliable and valid. These approaches to increasing reliability and validity were used in this research study in the following ways.

Triangulation, the collection and comparison of data from three or more sources, was used in order to make this particular study more reliable and valid. Green et al. (2002) explain, "Central to the idea of triangulation is the notion that in juxtaposing different perspectives, data, methods, and theories, the ethnographer will be able to make visible the often invisible principles of practice that guide members' actions, interactions, production of artifacts, and construction of events and activity of everyday life" (p. 208). By collecting multiple and varied data sources, I was able to see agreements and discrepancies and further investigate and report on these discrepancies. For example, in this particular study, the teacher participants' beliefs differed from their instructional practice. An investigation into these discrepancies allowed for an understanding as to why these discrepancies existed.

81

Another strategy used to ensure reliability and validity was the use of member checking to validate the accuracy of interpretations and findings. After the preliminary analysis of field notes, interviews, and other data sources, I met with the teacher participants and discussed the preliminary findings and interpretations and offered the teacher participants a chance to respond to these preliminary findings. For example, opportunities for the teacher participants to respond to my preliminary interpretations occurred during informal conversations and formal interviews. Member checking used by researchers in the field (Athanases & Heath, 1995; Carspecken, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995; Spradley, 1979) were used in this study on teachers' beliefs and instructional practice in order to determine whether the teachers' beliefs were accurately captured. Student participants were used in order to verify that my interpretations of the teacher participants were consistent or inconsistent with the interpretations of the students. For example, in an interview, a student participant was asked, "What is your impression of your English Language Arts teacher's opinions/thoughts about high-stakes testing? Explain." By asking this question, I was able to receive another opinion about the teacher participant's beliefs about high-stakes testing from a student's perspective.

Finally, sharing my research (during the different phases of the research process) with fellow research colleagues – those outside of the study – allowed me to gain insight into the accuracy of my conclusions as well as receive recommendations on how to proceed with the study. Sharing research with those outside of the study allowed for different perspectives to enter into the conversation and guided the research, lending legitimacy to the findings (Carspecken, 1996).

3.5   SUMMARY

The above data sources allowed for a detailed investigation from numerous angles into how three teacher participants' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students shaped their instructional practice and how their educational contexts mediated this relationship. Drawing on the methodology employed in previous research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practice and, more specifically, on the effects of high-stakes testing on instructional practice (Agee, 2004; Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006; Lasky, 2005; Muchmore, 2001; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Richardson et al., 1991; Sloan, 2006), this research study sought to combine several different data sources in order to gain a deep understanding of teachers' beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students and the belief negotiations they made. By obtaining observations of instructional practice and comparing these with teaching artifacts and teacher participant interviews, I was able to focus on the individual teacher participant as well as on the mediating educational contexts.

4.0   CHAPTER IV: JAN

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of Jan, a reading teacher with more than fifteen years of teaching experience at Liberty Middle School. First, I describe Jan's childhood experiences and her core life beliefs, rooted in the philosophy of Ayn Rand. I then describe Jan's journey to becoming a teacher and the class that I observed for the duration of this six-month study. Then, I outline Jan's beliefs about teaching – both general and discipline specific – as well as her beliefs about learning and her students, showing the connectedness of these beliefs within and across belief systems. Next, I present my analysis of Jan's instructional practice, showing the alignments and misalignments between her core beliefs and her instructional practice, noting that not all of these misalignments were a result of school- or policy-based pressures. Finally, I outline the tensions Jan faced between her core beliefs and those endorsed by the school context, and I describe three strategies Jan used to negotiate her evolving school context in order to be able to maintain her core beliefs.

4.2   DESCRIPTION OF JAN

4.2.1   Jan's childhood and family

Throughout my interviews and conversations with Jan and my weekly observations of Jan's teaching, it became apparent that Jan's family and childhood were vital contributors to whom she was today as a person and as a teacher. Jan revealed during the first interview that she was adopted at birth. Her biological mother, Catherine (a friend of her cousin), became pregnant at a young age with Jan. She decided that she was in no position to raise a child, and Jan was taken care of by her adopted parents three days after she was born. Three years later, Catherine visited Jan and Jan's adopted parents with thoughts of possibly taking her daughter back. During Interview One, Jan described this moment: "And then when I was three years old, Catherine came to the house, and she was with her husband-to-be. And she had thought about taking me back. And it was because of this man [her husband to be] that she didn't…. He told her you can't take her out of this house. This is her home. And it wasn't until then that my parents were able to really adopt me." On numerous occasions, Jan expressed a deep appreciation for her adopted parents, and she explained how the learning that took place at home served to augment her school learning. In Interview One, Jan described her parents: "I had good parents, wonderful parents, smart parents….They were individualist and rational thinkers, and they expected us to do the same thing."

During the interviews, Jan also shared numerous stories about growing up with her sister who was ten years older than she was. Jan recalled how her sister had said prayers that she would have a baby sister. And then Jan was adopted. Jan described her relationship with her sister: "So she said all of these prayers and she got her little baby sister. And I was her baby doll. She used

to dress me up. She took me everywhere. She pushed me in the buggy. Of course she tortured me as well" (Interview Two). Jan also enjoyed growing up with an older sister because when her sister was sixteen, Jan was six, and her sister still took her everywhere with her, so her sister's friends became her friends.

Even though at the time of this study Jan's parents had passed away, they still played an important role in her life, and she regarded them highly. Jan shared that she lived in the house that her father and uncle built and that now that her parents had died, she felt that she would never be able to sell that house. During Interview One she stated, "My father built that house. My father and my uncle, so I can never get rid of that house. It means too much to me. I may move but I'll never get rid of that house." This quote helps to illustrate the strong connection Jan had with her parents even after death. As the interviews progressed over the course of this research study, it was apparent that Jan not only enjoyed reminiscing about her family life and childhood, but she also made connections between who she was today as a person and as a teacher to her strong family influence.

4.2.2   Jan's life beliefs rooted in the philosophy of Ayn Rand

It is important to note that Jan's childhood upbringing, her life, and her teaching were strongly guided by a set of life beliefs that were rooted in the philosophy of Ayn Rand. Jan not only voiced these life beliefs during the five different interviews, but she also shared these beliefs with her students during class. As the observer of this class for six months, I noticed numerous references to Ayn Rand in the physical aspects of Jan's classroom. For example, Jan had on display an Ayn Rand poster in the hallway, which was a quote from *The Fountainhead* spoken by Howard Roark in court when he was on trial for blowing up a housing project, which he

designed and the bureaucrats changed. The quote on the poster read, "Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps down new roads armed with nothing but their own vision." In addition, the opening line of *Atlas Shrugged*, "Who is John Galt?" scrolled across Jan's computer screen and also surrounded the license plate of her car. During my observation of class on May 16th, two students, John and Timothy, commented on Jan's car:

John: Hey, Miss Adams.

Jan: What?

John: I noticed that one of your license plates says, "Who is John Galt?" on it.

Jan: Yes, it does. Thank you.

Timothy: Really?

John: Yeah.

Jan: Yes, it does. Also it says on my front window the John Galt line "Producers not looters."

Timothy: Cool.

In all five of the interviews, Jan made reference to Ayn Rand and books by Ayn Rand in order to explain her childhood and her teaching. After Interview Four, Jan gave me a folder that contained a 42-page summary of John Galt's speech from *Atlas Shrugged*, and she explained that this summary would give me a better understanding of where she was coming from and her philosophy on life and teaching. In sum, Jan was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Ayn Rand, a philosophy her parents exposed her to when she was a young child, and Jan openly shared this philosophy with her students, her fellow teachers, and me.

Since Ayn Rand's philosophy played and continues to play such a pivotal role in Jan's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students, I would like to take a moment to outline the main tenants of this philosophy. The major underpinning of the Ayn Rand philosophy is

objectivism, with followers believing that individuals should choose their values and actions solely by reason. In a 1962 speech Rand stated, the individual "must exist for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor sacrificing others to himself. The pursuit of his own rational self-interest and of his own happiness is the highest moral purpose of life" (1989, p. 3). When describing objectivism in the Appendix of *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), Rand wrote, "My philosophy in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."

Noticing after Interview One the strong influence of Ayn Rand's philosophy on Jan's life, I decided to ask her to describe the major tenants (in her own words) of Ayn Rand's philosophy.

> Megan: And in the interview last time too you said basically that Ayn Rand's philosophy is sort of your philosophy. So I was wondering if you could maybe explain like what pieces of her philosophy you believe in?

> Jan: Sure that's easy. I believe there are three values, and they're her values and that's what I try to bring to my classroom as well. Just I mean- in my life but there too. It's reason, purpose, and self-esteem. And maybe branches off of that would be rationality, productiveness, and pride. So when I present whatever I present in my classroom or in my life I always try to use reason and logic. I have self-esteem and don't allow anyone to you know change that, and I try very hard to be productive. I mean I don't believe that anybody owes me anything, so I believe that I have to make my way and when I screw up it's my responsibility to say I screwed up and fix whatever it is that I screwed up. So that's pretty much the way I live my life.

> Megan: So it's this philosophy that you have for life but that you also try to bring into the classroom as well.

> Jan: Uh huh.

Through my analysis of the interview data, Jan's cultural model, a taken-for-granted model of the world, emerged from her core life beliefs. I constructed the following narrative to represent this cultural model:

Jan believed that first and foremost, all individuals should take responsibility for their decisions and actions and that they should use logic and reason to guide their decision making. If all individuals are responsible and think logically and rationally, then they will be able to take pride in their abilities and accomplishments. This approach to living life will result in individuals being productive.

When examining the life beliefs that Jan expressed during the five interviews, I wanted to determine Jan's most central life beliefs in order to determine those that might be most influential to her instructional practice. In order to determine her core/foundational beliefs, I looked at both *frequency* and *connectedness*. First, I demarcated the interview data into episodes with each episode representing a conversational turn related to an overriding theme or topic (Lewis & Ketter, 2004). After locating the episodes, I then identified the beliefs expressed, either consciously or unconsciously, in these episodes. In order to locate these beliefs in the interview discourse, I drew upon the four salient characteristics of beliefs – existential presumption, alternativity, affective and evaluative loading, and episodic structure – described by both theoretical (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; Sigel, 1985) and empirical scholars (Bryan, 2003; Cooney, Shealy, & Arvold, 1998; Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988; Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006; Hollingsworth, 1989; Muchmore, 2001) in the field of beliefs and teacher beliefs. I also used Gee's (1999) questions for locating cultural models (What must I believe this person believes in order to make deep sense of what they are saying? What theories must the person hold such that they are using just these situated meanings?) to help me locate the less conscious beliefs Jan held about life. I then ran frequency counts to determine how many times the belief occurred during all five interviews, the percent of life beliefs that were coded as this individual belief, and the number of interviews in which this belief occurred.

After determining the frequency of these life beliefs, I then looked for connectedness within this belief system to see which beliefs were most central. Belief scholars (Ernest, 1989; Rokeach, 1969) posit that foundational or core beliefs are those beliefs that not only are frequently stated but also those that connect to other individual beliefs. Therefore, I hypothesized that those beliefs with both a high frequency count, that stretched across several interviews, and that co-occurred with other less frequent beliefs would be Jan's core life beliefs. As will be discussed later in this chapter, I then applied this same analysis process to determining the frequency and connectedness of Jan's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students.

In the table that follows, I outline Jan's life beliefs – those life beliefs that were overtly and tacitly expressed during the five interviews – and the frequency of these beliefs across the five interviews. Those beliefs marked with an asterisk (*) are directly connected to the major tenants of the Ayn Rand philosophy.

Table 2: Jan's Life Beliefs

Life Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of Life Beliefs	Number of Interviews
*Take responsibility	15	42%	3
*Believe in yourself and your abilities (Self-esteem)	6	17%	5
*Think rationally and logically	6	17%	2
*Be productive	3	8%	3
*People are not owed anything	3	8%	1
*Take charge of your life	2	6%	2
*Education is important	1	3%	1

What is significant about the findings shown in Table 2 is that Jan discussed her life beliefs during all five interviews, even during Interviews Three and Four when she was asked questions

that focused more on her instructional practice and her teaching context. This shows that Jan wanted to share and talk about her life beliefs across all interviews, therefore hinting at the significance of these beliefs.

Table 3 shows the co-occurrences within Jan's life belief system.

Table 3: Co-Occurrences Within the Life Belief System

Episode Number	Responsibility	Self-esteem	Rational & logical	Productive	Not owed anything	Education
1.1[3]	X[4]		X			
1.2		X		X		
1.3	X		X			
2.5	X	X	X			
3.9		X				X
4.2		X			X	

What is significant about the co-occurrences of Jan's life beliefs is that all six beliefs co-occurred with one or more of her other individual life beliefs. There was one instance during Interview Two when Jan discussed three of the six beliefs in one episode. This is significant because it shows how deeply connected all six of her individual life beliefs were to the larger belief system. This deep connection can be partially attributed to the fact that her life beliefs were rooted in the philosophy of Ayn Rand and therefore formed a more cohesive whole.

Not only did Jan's life beliefs co-occur within this belief system, but as I will describe later in this chapter, Jan's life beliefs also directly mapped on to her teaching beliefs, and in a sense her teaching beliefs were the restatement/refinement of her life beliefs. For example, in class discussions Jan encouraged her students to think logically and rationally when discussing

---

[3] This number represents the interview in which the episode occurred followed by the episode number contained within that interview. For example, 1.1 means that it was the first episode in Interview One.

[4] An X means that the belief was expressed once during the particular episode and that there was a co-occurrence with one or more other beliefs within that episode.

literature in order to create a sound interpretation. Jan also encouraged her students to take responsibility for their actions and their grades. Jan also seemed to model these beliefs in her own life and took responsibility when she made a mistake, used logic and reason to make decisions, had high self-esteem and was happy to share her talents with others. In sum, Jan's life beliefs were directly connected to her beliefs about teaching because her teaching beliefs were the modification of her life beliefs. These life beliefs appeared to stem primarily from her parents, for Jan recalled during several interviews the place of Ayn Rand's philosophy in her parents' life and how she was taught this philosophy and was expected to follow it.

4.2.3   Jan's journey to becoming a teacher

Listening to Jan's stories during interviews, I quickly learned that Jan enjoyed telling stories and that her life and journey to becoming a teacher were unique and exciting. With over fifteen years of teaching experience as both an elementary and secondary teacher, Jan's path to becoming a teacher was not always a straight road. Instead, Jan did not always know that she wanted to become a teacher and held job after job until she finally found the right fit as a reading teacher. In Interview One, when asked to describe how teaching came about for her as a profession, Jan explained, "I never wanted to be a teacher….When I was a kid I wanted to be a cowboy….When I was in high school I wanted to be a clown…I had no idea what I wanted to do." Through some conversations with her parents about her interests and talents, Jan decided to go into the field of social work and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in social work. She quickly realized that this was not the field for her because as she stated:

> I was horrid at social work. I worked for the county investigating abuse. And the reason I
> was horrid at social work wasn't because I wasn't empathetic, it was- I believe that people

are responsible for their lives. And for me to continue to be a social worker and tell you that it was okay not to be responsible for your life was a real dilemma in my life.

The above statement made during Interview One reveals one of Jan's core life beliefs that all people, regardless of their current situation, should take responsibility for their actions and decisions. When faced with a tension between her belief that all individuals should be responsible and her job requirement as a social worker to assume other people's responsibilities, Jan decided to quit her job as a social worker because she no longer could assume the role and meet the expectations of what a social worker should be.

After quitting her job as a social worker, Jan went back to school and earned a Master of Public and International Affairs degree and a certificate in International Security. Jan worked briefly for the CIA and then after budget cuts, went back to the field of social work and worked at Children First, an organization created to help children and teenagers at risk. Throughout all of these job changes, Jan looked for the right fit of a job that would align with her interests and her life beliefs. Unhappy floating between job after job, Jan decided to go back to school to become certified in teaching and reading. During Interview One, Jan described the conversation she had with her older sister when she was struggling to find a job she would enjoy:

> So after my mother had died, my sister and I were talking and she said what do you want to do? And I said I don't know. Because she knew I wasn't happy with what I was doing. I mean that's why I was bouncing from job to job. I was in one job for a year, got bored with it and moved on to the next. And I said I don't know. She said mother told me one time that you said that you wanted to be a teacher. And I said I can't go back to school. I have to support myself now. And she said, well I will support you….So I went to Eastern University and got my masters, and it only took a year because they took a lot of the credits from my first masters….and I got my masters in education.

After earning a Master of Education degree in reading and her reading specialist certificate, Jan held several long-term substituting positions in several different districts

including positions as a fifth grade science teacher and as a gifted teacher. Jan then became the reading teacher at the district where she has been for the past fifteen years.

In the classroom, Jan positioned herself as a teacher who had many life experiences and as a teacher who was quite unique from her students, not having cable at home, not watching any television or many movies unless it was with her great-niece and great-nephew. Anyone who knew Jan also knew that she was a dog lover, owning five different breeds of dogs. She was an experienced teacher who had a reputation among faculty members of running a classroom where student misbehavior was not a problem and her students were encouraged and challenged to do their best. Jan also was known in the school as the resource lady who could help you with reading strategies (since she was the literacy coach) and answer your questions about 4Sight testing (since she served as the 4Sight testing lead teacher).

4.2.4 Jan's classroom and her students

Jan was one of the eight reading teachers at Liberty Middle School. As a reading teacher, Jan was responsible for teaching five sections of reading to seventh grade students. These students varied in ability and included regular- and lower-level students. Jan commented in a conversation with me that she usually did not have upper-level students or even regular-track students, so this year when she was given a section of regular-level students who she felt she could take on field trips, she was excited. Although at different times during the six-month study I observed all of Jan's classes, I decided to observe her fifth period class every week since I did not see significant differences in Jan's instructional practice from one class to the next.

The fifth period class was composed of ten boys and nine girls, with one student (Erik) moving in the middle of the study, another student (Dwayne) having infrequent attendance rates,

and a new student (Alyssa) arriving close to a month left in the school year. According to Jan, the fifth period class was considered a regular-level class.

The curriculum for this class appeared open to Jan's discretion as long as she was teaching the PSSA skills that the hired PSSA coach described at the inservice I attended on January 22nd. Jan dedicated class time to two topics: the teaching of weekly vocabulary words and the discussion of literature. Jan's decision to focus on weekly vocabulary and the discussion of literature is interesting because certain typical tasks of a reading teacher's job are left out such as writing and grammar. Later in this chapter I will address how Jan's decision to frame her instruction around vocabulary and literature reveals her beliefs about teaching and the teaching of reading. Jan decided to focus on either vocabulary or literature discussions on certain days of the week, a schedule she created and shared with her students by posting the topic of the day on a whiteboard calendar displayed on the front wall. Below is my description/summary of the activities that occurred on each day of the week.

Table 4: A Description of Jan's Weekly Schedule

Day of the Week	Activity for the Day
Mondays	**Copy Day:** Students copied the ten vocabulary words and four "Thinking Activities" from the whiteboard. Students had time to look up the vocabulary words and answer the "Thinking Activities." Students talked to each other as they worked.
Tuesdays	**Vocabulary Review:** As a class, students reviewed the vocabulary words for the week. The review included one student writing on the Promethean board the word, definition, part of speech, student generated sentence, synonym, and antonym.
Wednesdays	**Listening to the Novel:** Students spent the period listening to the audio book and discussing the novel.
Thursdays	**Listening to the Novel:** Students spent the period listening to the audio book and discussing the novel.
Fridays	**Vocabulary Quiz and Game:** Students took their vocabulary quiz. The quiz consisted of Jan reading a sentence with the vocabulary word used and students writing down the correct definition choice (displayed on the Promethean board). The rest of the period students played a game on the computer, either Text Twist or Flip Words.

Despite the above schedule, I would not characterize Jan as a traditional teacher, yet it was hard to see her as an entirely innovative teacher or a teacher who was all about fun. However, I would characterize Jan's classroom as one of having fun while learning. Jan appeared to try to keep students on their toes and was constantly asking questions. For example, Jan had rubber, sticky eyeballs that she would have students throw up on the ceiling and walls as a reward. She also used candy and extra credit points as rewards for good behavior. Decorations displayed in her classroom included a fake skeleton and a fake parrot in a cage that would chirp if someone would clap. These decorations seemed to capture the attention of Jan's students. Jan

also formed personal relationships with her students, appearing genuinely concerned when one student, Timothy, got hurt in gym class. She also was interested in learning more about Elizabeth's trip to Europe and wanted to see her pictures. She also gave Bethany a birthday present at the end of class one day. When I attended the field trip with the fifth period class to see the play *Of Mice and Men*, we took the seventh and eighth graders to a local mall's food court to eat lunch before heading back to school. When several students did not have money for lunch, Jan was quick to give them money. She even bought them lottery tickets when they asked and purchased cookies to take back to her fellow teachers before leaving the mall. Through all of this, I began to see Jan as a teacher who cared, not only about her students but also about her fellow teachers who had become her friends over the years of teaching at Liberty Middle School.

4.3   JAN'S BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING, AND HER STUDENTS

In this section, I present the results of my analysis of the interview data that I collected on Jan's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students. Jan participated in five interviews over the course of the six-month research study. These interviews were open-ended in nature and relied on the methodology used by life history studies and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). The five interviews were designed in such a way as to elicit personal stories from Jan about her beliefs concerning teaching, learning, and her students while simultaneously asking questions about Jan's educational contexts and the belief negotiations that occurred. For example, Interviews One and Two focused on learning more about Jan's personal experiences as a student and teacher. Interview Three explored Jan's thoughts concerning a misalignment between her stated beliefs and her instructional practice.

During Interviews Four and Five I asked Jan questions about her educational contexts and the negotiations that took place when there was a tension between her beliefs and her instructional practice and/or educational context.

In the sections that follow, I explain my methodology for finding Jan's core beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students and I outline her core beliefs as well as subcategories of these beliefs, drawing primarily on the interview data and using the student and administrator interviews and classroom discourse data to triangulate my findings. Then, I explain where Jan's beliefs came from and discuss the factors that mediated her beliefs.

4.3.1 Jan's beliefs about teaching and teaching reading

In order to determine the hierarchy of Jan's beliefs about teaching, both general and discipline specific, I used the same analysis process that was previously described in this chapter that was used to find Jan's core life beliefs. I looked at both *frequency* and *connectedness* in order to determine Jan's core/foundational beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students. The interview data revealed that Jan had three *belief systems*, a group or cluster of individual beliefs, about teaching. Jan held one belief system that was about general beliefs about teaching that were not discipline specific. The individual beliefs within this belief system focused primarily on the role of the teacher in the classroom and the teacher's pedagogy. These general beliefs about teaching also helped Jan to position herself as a teacher in her school context and in the larger educational context who had different approaches to teaching compared to the rest of her colleagues. For example, Jan strongly supported using books on tape rather than having students read aloud in class. During several interviews, Jan explained how this instructional decision separated her from the rest of the reading teachers who believed that books on tape were not the

98

best approach to reading instruction. Jan's second and third belief systems were more discipline specific and included her beliefs about literature and vocabulary instruction.

A cultural model about teaching also became apparent after I coded and analyzed the data. I constructed the following narrative to capture Jan's cultural model about teaching:

> Jan believed that the best way to organize a classroom was to create an environment where students' questions guided instruction. As the teacher in the classroom, she believed it was necessary to take on the role of a knowledgeable teacher, answering student questions and drawing on her own life experiences to answer these questions. She believed that literature lent itself to a student-led discussion because the interpretation of literature was personal. In order to create personal interpretations, students needed to apply the literature to their own lives and build upon the knowledge of their classmates and teacher since each individual had different life experiences. Jan also believed that in order to learn vocabulary words, students needed to learn words in context and connect those words to their personal experiences.

The following three tables provide evidence as to how I arrived at my interpretations in order to create the above narrative of Jan's cultural model of teaching. These three tables show the individual beliefs in each of the three belief systems about teaching that Jan expressed during the five interviews and include information regarding frequency counts and the level of prominence of these beliefs across all coded teaching beliefs and interviews.

Table 5: General Teaching Beliefs – Non-Discipline Specific

General Teaching Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of General Teaching Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Teachers should teach responsibility	15	29%	4
Students' questions should guide instruction	12	23%	3
Teachers should share their life experiences with students	6	12%	3
Teachers should incorporate more than their discipline	6	12%	2
Teachers' instructional practice should be informed by research	5	10%	3
Teaching style is personal/unique to the individual teacher	4	8%	3
Teachers' beliefs should match their instructional practice	4	8%	3

Table 6: Beliefs About the Teaching of Literature – Discipline Specific

Teaching Literature Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of Teaching Literature Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Apply literature to your life	12	52%	3
The interpretation of literature is personal	6	26%	4
Interpretive questions should guide instruction	3	13%	3
There is a difference between reading to comprehend and reading in-depth	1	4%	1
Reading is enjoyable because you can relate it to your life	1	4%	1

Table 7: Beliefs About the Teaching of Vocabulary – Discipline Specific

Teaching Vocabulary Beliefs	Frequency Count	Percentage of Teaching Vocabulary Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Words should not be copied from the dictionary	7	44%	2
Learn words in context	5	31%	2
Learn prefixes, suffixes, and roots	3	19%	1
Learn synonyms and antonyms	1	6%	1

4.3.2 Co-occurrences within the general teaching belief system

After determining the frequency counts of the individual beliefs within these three belief systems, I examined the connectedness of these individual beliefs to other beliefs within and across the three belief systems about teaching. Table 8 shows the co-occurrences of Jan's individual general teaching beliefs within this belief system.

Table 8: Co-Occurrences Within the General Teaching Belief System

Episode Number	Students' questions guide instruction	Share life experiences	More than discipline	Research informs practice	Unique teaching style
1.17	X	X			
1.23	X	X			
3.5				X	X
3.9	X		X		

What is significant about these co-occurrences is that only three of Jan's seven general teaching beliefs co-occurred and that the beliefs that did co-occur were the three most frequent beliefs except for the need for teachers to teach students to be responsible. Therefore, it can be

assumed that one of Jan's core beliefs about teaching was that students' questions should guide teachers' instruction. Jan believed that she needed to draw on her own life experiences and her knowledge of other disciplines in order to be able to answer her students' questions since these questions were not always directly related to the discipline of reading. What is interesting about Jan's belief in a classroom that is guided by students' questions and this belief's connectedness to other beliefs within this system is that Jan's core life belief was the idea of the importance of believing in your abilities, in other words having high self-esteem. I argue that these two beliefs (students' questions should guide discussion and having high self-esteem) might be contradictory in terms of Jan's role in the classroom, for in order for students' questions to guide instruction, it would require the teacher to act more as a facilitator rather then an all-knowing expert.

In addition, it is important to note that Jan's belief in teaching students responsibility, even though it was the most frequently stated belief during the five interviews and was mirrored in her life belief system, did not co-occur with other beliefs within the general teaching belief system. Furthermore, as will be described later in this chapter when I look at co-occurrences *across* belief systems, there were very few co-occurrences with other individual beliefs *across* belief systems. Although this at first was a surprising finding, I realized that Jan's general teaching beliefs focused on pedagogical decisions related primarily to discussions in class. When Jan discussed teaching students responsibility, this was in terms of student behavior and students taking responsibility for completing assignments and getting good grades. Because Jan saw responsibility in terms of behavior and grades, it makes sense that it would not be connected within this belief system.

As suggested by theories of beliefs (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1982; Nespor, 1987 Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968), beliefs are usually rooted in experience. Therefore, I analyzed the

interview data to determine the source of Jan's core beliefs that students' questions should guide a teacher's instruction and that teachers should share their life experiences and their knowledge of other disciplines. A common theme that stretched across all five interviews was Jan's deep appreciation for her parents and the learning that took place at home. During Interviews One and Two, which were designed to elicit stories about the teacher participants' own schooling and life experiences, Jan, after reflecting on her education, concluded that she taught her students how she learned. Jan made the following comment during Interview Three to illustrate her awareness of the influence of her own life experiences on her teaching: "What I brought to school was brought from home. And what I bring to the classroom is the approach my parents had with me as well." Jan continued to explain how her own learning influenced how she taught, and she described that when she was in school, she had a lot of questions for her teachers and she hoped that they would elaborate and deviate from the lesson's topic in order to answer her questions. She quickly discovered, however, that her teachers – except for Mrs. Black who Jan described as quite different from her other teachers – would stick to the lesson plan and not answer her questions. Mrs. Black's willingness to answer Jan's questions and deviate from the lesson plan would later prove to be a model for Jan and would serve as a major influence on Jan's future teaching. Jan furthered her description of Mrs. Black during the first interview:

> My third grade teacher was fantastic. Mrs. Black. And she was different than the other teachers. Her husband was an engineer, and she didn't live in Seabridge. I think she lived in Chestnut Grove to be honest. She was more sophisticated. More cosmopolitan because they had traveled more and she allowed me- I was bored most of the time in class- and she allowed me to do other things. And she answered some of my questions. And she would ask me a question and if I didn't know the answer, she would allow me to go and look it up. She would tell me to go and research things. She would give me problems to do and things to solve, which kept my mind going.

Perhaps because of Jan's frustration as a student in school, Jan appeared to consciously decide to go off on these tangents with her own students once she became a teacher. Not only did

the core belief of students' questions guiding instruction connect with individual beliefs within the general belief system about teaching and connect to Jan's own experiences as a student, but this belief also was mirrored in Jan's beliefs about teaching literature specifically.

4.3.3 Co-occurrences within the teaching of literature belief system

Jan's most frequently mentioned beliefs about the teaching of literature included (a) apply literature to your own life and (b) the interpretation of literature is personal. These two beliefs were verbalized across all five interviews and were also verbalized in instances of Jan's classroom discourse, for she openly shared these beliefs with her students. For example, when Jan described the book report assignment for *The Giver*, she shared an example of her own project with the class. The following discourse excerpt provides an example of Jan sharing her belief about the interpretation of literature being personal with her students and how she did not want to see all 125 of her students copy her thinking. Jan explained to her class, "Okay. That's <my> interpretation….I don't want to see a 125 of <my> interpretations. Because everyone didn't see the same thing <I> did hopefully." In addition to evidence of this belief in classroom discourse, students also mentioned during their interviews with me that they learned that the interpretation of literature is personal.

Not surprising, when talking about teaching literature in the five interviews, Jan made connections between her two most frequently expressed beliefs about the teaching of literature and her less frequently expressed individual beliefs that composed this belief system. Table 9 shows the co-occurrences in her teaching literature belief system.

104

Table 9: Co-Occurrences Within the Teaching of Literature Belief System

Episode Number	Apply literature to your life	The interpretation of literature is personal	Interpretive questions guide instruction	Comprehending vs. reading in-depth
1.16	X			X
2.18	X	X	X	
2.20	X			X
3.12	X	X		

Based on the data depicted in Table 9, all of the co-occurrences of Jan's beliefs about the teaching of literature included either the belief that you should apply literature to your own life or the belief that the interpretation of literature is personal with a less frequent belief about the teaching of literature. Other significant aspects of these co-occurrences was that Jan saw that interpretive questions led to the formulation of a personal interpretation and that by applying the literature to your own life, you would be able to form this type of interpretation. However, it is important to note that Jan did not specify (nor was she asked during the interviews) who was responsible for asking these interpretive questions – the teacher, the students, or both. As will be discussed later in this chapter in the section where I describe Jan's instructional practice, Jan posed the majority of the interpretive questions and expected her students to discuss and answer these questions. Jan saw these in-class discussions moving students from comprehending what they read to understanding in-depth and that this move was a result of Jan's facilitation of class discussions.

Much like Jan's general teaching beliefs being rooted in her childhood and schooling experiences, Jan's core beliefs regarding the teaching of literature stemmed from her experiences reading as a child in her home. During Interview One, Jan described her first memories regarding reading. Jan recalled during this interview how her mother introduced her to the novel *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand. When talking about this memory, Jan recalled how her mother, cousin,

and aunts would sit around and talk about the book. Jan explained that those types of conversations about books "were part of my life always" (Interview One). These types of open discussions around literature that Jan saw modeled to her as a young child serve as one possible explanation for Jan's belief that the interpretation of literature is personal and that when reading, you should apply literature to your own life.

4.3.4   Co-occurrences within the teaching of vocabulary belief system

During the five interviews, Jan also shared her beliefs about vocabulary instruction. After determining the frequency counts of the individual beliefs within this belief system about the teaching of vocabulary, I examined the connectedness of these individual beliefs to other beliefs within this belief system. Table 10 indicates all of the episodes in which there were co-occurrences.

Table 10: Co-Occurrences Within the Teaching Vocabulary Belief System

Episode Number	No dictionary	Learn in context	Learn prefixes, suffixes, & roots
3.2	X		X
3.5	X	X	
5.3	X	X	X

Although there were several co-occurrences within this belief system, it is important to note that Jan's beliefs about vocabulary instruction occurred only in two of the five interviews, and only a total of five out of the 98 episodes specifically focused on vocabulary instruction. In four of those five episodes, Jan was directly asked to reflect on her beliefs about vocabulary instruction and was presented with classroom discourse surrounding a vocabulary lesson. These

few episodes focusing on her beliefs about vocabulary instruction, led me to believe that Jan's beliefs about vocabulary instruction were not core to her overall teaching beliefs.

4.3.5 Jan's beliefs about learning

During the five interviews, Jan verbalized only two beliefs about learning: (a) discussion leads to learning (nine instances mentioned in three interviews) and (b) completing worksheets is not learning (nine instances mentioned in two interviews). There were two instances where these two beliefs about learning co-occurred with each other. What is significant about Jan's learning beliefs is that these beliefs had the potential to conflict with the standardized curriculum and test-preparation booklets that Jan's district would be implementing the following school year. Jan discussed her beliefs about learning primarily during Interviews Four and Five when she became aware of the curriculum being revised for the following school year. It made sense that Jan would discuss her learning beliefs and the evolving school context simultaneously because in a sense the implementation of a standardized curriculum and the use of test-preparation materials contradicted her discussion-based approach to both literature and vocabulary lessons. This evolving curricular and school context will be discussed later in this chapter, for it was a tension that emerged during the course of this research study and one that Jan recognized as potentially influencing her instructional practice in the next school year.

4.3.6   Jan's beliefs about her students

Jan also expressed beliefs about her students, particularly about the students in the class I observed for this six-month study. Table 11 shows Jan's three beliefs about her students and the frequency counts, percentage of beliefs about her students, and occurrences across interviews.

Table 11: Beliefs About Her Students

Beliefs About Her Students	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Her Students	Interviews
Students with higher ability levels are better students	2	50%	1
Students are bored easily	1	25%	1
Students need routines	1	25%	1

Based on the above frequency counts and the instances of these beliefs across the five interviews, it did not appear that Jan's beliefs about her students had a strong effect on her instructional practice or across her belief systems. Although Jan expressed during informal conversations that she was happy to have a section of regular-level students this year, her instructional practice did not vary across the five sections of the classes she taught even though the ability level (according to test scores and the tracking of students) did vary.

4.3.7   Co-occurrences across belief systems

By looking at frequency counts and connectedness of beliefs within a belief system, I was able to identify Jan's core beliefs within these individual belief systems. An important next step in the analysis process was to determine co-occurrences *across* belief systems, for those beliefs that had high frequency counts, co-occurred within their belief system, and co-occurred outside of

their belief system, would arguably be Jan's core beliefs across all belief systems. My rationale for identifying Jan's core beliefs was that in order to be able to understand the relationship between Jan's beliefs and instructional practice, it would be necessary to first locate the core beliefs and then compare these core beliefs to the observational data (e.g., field notes, classroom discourse, student interviews) to determine if in fact these core beliefs influenced Jan's teaching. Table 12 identifies the interview episodes in which the beliefs from different belief systems co-occurred.

Table 12: Co-Occurrences Across Belief Systems

Episode Number	Life					General Teaching					Teaching Literature			Teaching Vocab		Learning	
	Responsibility	Self-esteem	Productive	Education	Responsibility	Student questions	Life experiences	More than discipline	Research	Teaching style	Apply to life	Interpretation is personal	Interpretive questions	No dictionary	Learn vocab in context	Discussion is learning	Worksheets are not learning
2.1						X											X
2.18							X	X			X	X	X				
2.19							X				X						
3.1						X		X							X	X	
3.5			X						X	X				X	X		
3.9		X		X		X		X							X	X	
3.12						X					X	X				X	
5.7							X									X	
5.10		X								X						X	X
5.12												X					X
5.18	X				X												
5.22	X				X												

Based on the co-occurrences across belief systems represented in Table 12, there were few surprises, for the beliefs that were frequently mentioned and deeply connected within their individual belief system were also the beliefs that were deeply connected across belief systems. For example, Jan's core belief that students' questions should guide discussion fed into her beliefs about literature instruction being personal and interpretive. Furthermore, Jan's core beliefs about learning stressed the need for a discussion-based classroom, where students' questions were explored, rather than a reliance on worksheets that required memorization rather than in-depth thought. These teaching and learning beliefs also connected to Jan's life beliefs, for in order to be able to create this environment, Jan would need to have the ability and self-esteem to be willing to explore and discuss students' questions, drawing on her own life experiences and knowledge of other disciplines.

In sum, Jan had deeply held beliefs that were rooted in her life experiences and that connected within and across her belief systems about life, teaching, and learning. Because of the frequency, deep connections, and Jan's awareness of her beliefs and how they developed and connected to her own experiences, I anticipated strong alignments between these beliefs and her instructional practice.

4.4   JAN'S INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

Drawing upon my field notes that documented my weekly observations and the weekly-recorded classroom discourse that occurred for the duration of this six-month research study, in the following section I describe Jan's instructional practice, specifically surrounding literature and vocabulary. During my weekly observations, I observed four days of instruction devoted

primarily to the discussion of *Gathering Blue*, a novel by Lois Lowery. I also observed four days of instruction devoted primarily to the review of the weekly vocabulary words. In the following sections, I first focus my attention on briefly describing Jan's literature and vocabulary instruction. Then I discuss alignments and misalignments between her beliefs and her instructional practice, offering explanations as to why these misalignments existed. The primary goal of this section is to describe how Jan's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students influenced her instructional practice.

4.4.1 Alignments and misalignments between Jan's beliefs and literature-based instruction

Jan's literature instruction included listening to a book on tape, with students following along in the student desk copy. One student would sit up front with the tape recorder and would have the task of pausing the recorder when Jan signaled it was time to discuss what they had just heard. During a forty-minute period, the class would generally listen to one chapter of text, with chapters ranging between six and ten pages in length. The rest of the class period would be devoted to discussion.

As discussed in a previous section of this chapter, Jan's core general and literature-based teaching beliefs included creating a classroom environment where students' questions guided instruction. In addition, Jan believed that literature should be discussed in such a way that students would apply literature to their own lives and would form their own interpretations. In order to identify whether, in fact, Jan's instructional practice aligned with these core beliefs, for my analysis of the literature-based discussions my coding primarily focused on demarcating and classifying teacher and student questions. For example, my coding included the following: (a)

demarcating questions, (b) identifying who posed the question (Jan or a student), (c) for student posed questions, noting if there was uptake, meaning that Jan and/or the class responded to the question, and (d) classifying the question asked by type (yes/no, close-ended, open-ended). I coded for questions because I was interested in determining what questions were leading the discussion and I also wanted to see if Jan's instructional practice aligned with her core general teaching belief that students' questions should guide a teacher's instruction. I was curious to see if Jan, in fact, allowed students to ask questions, and when a question was posed, regardless of its connection to the literature discussion, if Jan would be willing to answer these student-generated questions. I also was interested in seeing if Jan's two core beliefs about the teaching of literature (the interpretation of literature is personal and you should apply literature to your own life) were evident in these class discussions. The following table shows the results of the coding of the four literature-based transcripts.

Table 13: Questions Posed During Literature Discussions

Transcript Number	Number of Teacher Questions	Number of Student Questions	Percentage of Uptake of Student Questions
Transcript 1	5 yes/no 12 closed	12 yes/no 3 closed	93%
Transcript 2	3 yes/no 6 closed 1 open	4 yes/no 2 closed	100%
Transcript 3	13 yes/no 6 closed 10 open	6 yes/no 1 open	86%
Transcript 4	2 yes/no 13 closed 6 open	5 yes/no 1 closed 2 open	86%

According to the findings depicted in Table 13, Jan asked more questions than her students. It is interesting to note that on the days when Jan asked several open-ended questions (Transcripts Three and Four), Jan asked questions more than 80% and 72% of the time,

respectively. These findings also reveal that Jan asked more challenging open-ended questions that required her students to think critically and move beyond surface-level features, such as the summary of plot, and perhaps was evidence of Jan's beliefs that the interpretation of literature is personal and that there can be multiple interpretations. The fact that Jan posed these questions and her students did only in three instances out of 36 total questions, led me to believe that Jan felt her students could not generate these types of interpretive questions and that she served an important role in the classroom.

These findings also show that when students did ask questions, Jan and the class were willing to talk about their questions, even if they deviated from the original literature discussion. The following excerpt is an example from the start of one class period. Jan was eager to start the book on tape because the class was behind in the reading. Timothy asked a question regarding *The Giver,* the previous book they had read, and even though Jan felt pressure to get started, she decided to answer his question.

> Timothy: I have a question for you before we start. Are we going to have like a food called baba ganoush in here? Remember when we had that in the last one. Are they going to have a weird thing here?
>
> Jan: Baba ganoush wasn't in the other one.
>
> Mike: She just wrote it on the board.
>
> Jan: It was me trying to explain to you. I was using baba ganoush as a-
>
> Mike: An example.
>
> Jan: And I still haven't found any. It used to be at Save More.
>
> Timothy: I have a picture of it on my poster.
>
> Jan: Okay. Good. I used baba ganoush to explain to you how the community couldn't see color because they had never been taught. So when I wrote baba ganoush on the board, and you had no idea what it was-

114

Mike: That's sort of like them.

Jan: It was like them not knowing what color was.

Timothy: Oh.

There also was a strong alignment between's Jan's belief in being willing to share personal experiences with students and talk about things outside of a particular discipline. During a literature discussion, Jan talked to students about the Catholic faith since a character in the text was living in a cell. What started as a discussion to define the term "cell," led into Jan sharing her knowledge of the Catholic faith and her own experiences during her childhood with Catholic nuns.

Although there were several alignments between Jan's instructional practice and her core beliefs about teaching and learning (such as the need to contextualize learning and being willing to respond to students' questions), there also were several misalignments. Even though students did ask questions during discussions and Jan was willing to answer their questions, Jan was always the one to stop the tape and ask the first question about what they had just heard regarding the book. During one observation of Period Four and Period Five, I noticed that Jan asked the same questions to both periods when they listened to the book. This reveals that although Jan did answer students' questions and allowed these questions to guide her instruction, she also allowed the literature to guide her instruction and she appeared to have a plan of what questions needed to be discussed based on what the text provided and what she felt her students knew. If it truly was solely students' questions guiding her discussions and instruction, then she would have allowed for students to pose the questions after listening to the tape rather than posing them herself. Instead, Jan allowed students' questions to guide discussion when they were

outside of the discipline of reading, but when they were engaged in a literature-based discussion, Jan posed the questions herself.

At the time of this study, Jan had freedom regarding the literature she taught and the types of questions she asked because, as will be described in the negotiation section of this chapter, the standardized curriculum that was being developed by the district would not be implemented until the following school year. Yet, how Jan structured her literature discussions, with her posing the questions and driving the conversations, created a misalignment between Jan's beliefs about teaching and her instructional practice even though Jan was not feeling curricular- or policy-based pressures to teach in this particular way. Therefore, it can be argued that there were other reasons for this disconnect between her beliefs and her instructional practice.

Ernest (1989) argues that a misalignment between beliefs and practice can occur for the following reasons: (a) the shallowness (lack of depth and centrality) of an individual belief within a belief system, (b) the lack of consciousness of a belief, and/or (c) a mitigating context. In Jan's particular case, her beliefs about a classroom guided by students' questions and open for multiple interpretations of literature not only were frequently stated in interviews and classroom discourse but also were deeply connected within and across belief systems. In addition, Jan appeared to be very conscious of her beliefs and consistently stated them across interviews. Furthermore, Jan felt that her school context was changing for the worst and that this context began to push up against her strongly held beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students. However, at the time of this study, this context did not constrain Jan in terms of what and how she approached teaching in her classroom. At the same time, a misalignment did exist, which I attribute to the lack of Jan's reflection not on her beliefs but rather on how her beliefs compared

and contrasted with her instructional practice. Belief scholars might posit that a lack of reflection means a lack of consciousness. However, I argue that it was not a lack of consciousness of her beliefs but rather a lack of consciousness of how her beliefs aligned and misaligned with her instructional practice.

One component of the methodology of this study was to present the teacher participants during interviews with excerpts from their teaching and previous interview data, asking them to compare what they saw similar and different in their instructional practice to what they said they believed was important to teaching. During these interviews, when Jan examined her own instructional practice, she explained that she was surprised and happy to see such strong connections between her beliefs and instructional practice. Although Jan was correct in identifying these alignments, there were possible misalignments, and when pushed in the interview to possibly explore these misalignments, Jan did not identify them. In part, Jan's limited depth to her reflection was because of my own limitations on how to encourage this type of analysis and habits of thinking to occur. I did not specifically offer Jan much guidance on how to reflect on this data. Furthermore, I did not explicitly state that I saw that there was a misalignment. As will be discussed briefly later in this chapter, an important implication of this research is to think about professional development for teachers to help them identify misalignments between their beliefs and instructional practice and to construct opportunities and habits of thinking for critical reflection.

4.4.2   Alignments and misalignments between Jan's beliefs and vocabulary-based instruction

In addition to weekly literature-based discussions, Jan also chose to implement weekly vocabulary instruction that was organized around a list of ten different words that were teacher chosen. Jan mentioned during an interview that she chose words based on a common theme. For example, one week the theme for vocabulary words was the judicial system. When reviewing vocabulary words, Jan took the same approach each week. On Mondays students were asked to copy down the words and definitions from the whiteboard. Then on Tuesdays, the entire class period was spent reviewing the vocabulary words. The review included the following: (a) pronouncing the word, (b) identifying the part of speech, (c) defining the word, (d) creating a sentence using the word correctly, and (e) identifying a synonym and antonym. During the review, Jan gave students information about the origin of the word and talked about prefixes and suffixes to help students figure out the definition of the word rather than looking up the word in a dictionary, even though they had already copied the definition from the whiteboard the previous day. On Fridays, students took a vocabulary exam. Jan read aloud sentences with the vocabulary words being used in the sentence, and students were asked to write the correct definition (using a word bank) for the word read in the example sentence.

In Jan's vocabulary instruction, the following beliefs were evident: teachers should share their life experiences with students; teachers should incorporate more than just their discipline; students should learn words in context; students should learn prefixes, suffixes, and roots; and students should learn synonyms and antonyms.

Although there were many similarities between Jan's beliefs and her instructional practice, Jan's vocabulary instruction did misalign with her teaching vocabulary belief that words

should not be copied from a dictionary and with her general teaching belief that students' questions should direct instruction. First, by having students spend a day (Mondays) copying the definitions of the words from the whiteboard, Jan was not asking her students to copy definitions from a dictionary but she was asking them to simply copy and memorize. In addition, Jan's weekly assessment required students to think about the word in context since the word was given in a sentence, but students could also simply have memorized the definitions because that was what they were being asked to do for the Friday exam. Additionally, Jan's decision to choose the words each week misaligned with her belief that students' questions should guide instruction.

4.5   JAN'S STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING CONTEXTUAL TENSIONS

In the section that follows, I describe Jan's evolving school context, where she began to feel a tension between her life and teaching beliefs and those endorsed by the administration, primarily the principal, Mr. Green. For the majority of this study, Jan was not pleased with the leadership of the new principal, but she felt like she still maintained teacher agency in her classroom. As the study progressed, Jan expressed a concern that perhaps this freedom would be challenged due to a standardized curriculum and the use of test-preparation workbooks, and she saw that curricular- and policy-based pressures might begin to influence her instructional practice. When faced with the potential challenges ahead of her, Jan described three strategies she had for maintaining her beliefs and teaching style: (a) censoring her speech and the sharing of her beliefs, (b) teaching on the sly, and (c) isolating herself from the school context.

4.5.1   Tensions between Jan's beliefs and her school context

A major theme that occurred in all five interviews and also was present in Jan's classroom discourse was an overwhelming sense of Jan's negative attitude toward the principal and her current school context. Jan and the rest of her teacher colleagues had recently undergone an administrative change in their building. This was the first year where the old high school principal, Mr. Green, and his administrative staff were moved to Liberty Middle School, the middle school where Jan taught. Jan expressed to me in an informal conversation that this move occurred partially because of government sanctions that were a result of the district failing to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) but also because the previous year such great gains in test scores were made at the middle school under the leadership of Mr. Anderson that he and his administrative staff were moved to the high school in hopes of producing the same great results in this new building. Therefore, Jan and the rest of the faculty at Liberty Middle School began the new school year with an entirely new administrative staff, and Jan expressed resentment for what she felt was a punishment even though the teachers and students in her building had achieved great success in terms of improving test scores.

One reason for the negative feelings Jan had toward the new principal and the current school context can be attributed to the strong leadership of the previous principal. Since Mr. Anderson was such a strong leader, and as Jan described, allowed other people to take control of certain aspects of the school context, Jan struggled when this freedom and personal responsibility was taken away from her under the new principal's leadership, therefore limiting her ability to be productive and responsible for her actions, two of her core life beliefs. Since the school context was going against what Jan had experienced during her positive experience under the leadership of Mr. Anderson as well as her beliefs about life, teaching, and education, it was not surprising

that a tension emerged and a negative attitude developed halfway through the school year. One of the biggest challenges/frustrations for Jan was that she felt like she was fighting stupidity, that what was being done currently in the school context went against logic and reason – another connection to one of Jan's core life beliefs. However, at this point in the study, Mr. Green's leadership had not entered into Jan's classroom. Rather, it was affecting the overall school context in terms of building rules, staff developments, etc., but Jan still had freedom in terms of what and how she taught in her classroom.

Over the course of the research study, it became evident that Jan saw her beliefs about teaching and life as interconnected and that her identity outside of school and her beliefs about life could not be changed because of a school, district, or state mandate. During Interview Three, Jan described her inability to change her beliefs: "No. I can't change the way I am. I really can't. And it's- and it's going to be a real struggle." This quote really highlights the struggle Jan was currently facing between her beliefs and her evolving school context that was in the process of developing a standardized curriculum focused on workbook exercises in preparation for the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).

Jan's inability to change her beliefs and the moving toward a standardized curriculum and test-preparation materials created a tension for Jan. In addition to the new administrative staff, the school context was also undergoing curricular changes. During my interviews with Jan and my administrative interview with Mr. Scott, the seventh grade principal, both mentioned that because of government sanctions due to the school's failure to make AYP, the district was now required to implement a more detailed curriculum, which would require that all reading students would now be reading out of the same anthology, regardless of their level. Now Jan would be faced with a standardized curriculum for the next school year where before Jan had freedom in

121

what she taught. Jan expressed her frustration during Interview Five regarding this new curriculum and explained how she would deal with the new curriculum:

> If they want me to have this story done by Friday, that story will be done by Friday, but it will be done my way. It will be done the way I do things not the way Samantha Bernstein does things. It's always going to be- this is going to be my classroom until they cart my dead body out of here or they take me out kicking and screaming. But this is my classroom and I can only do what I can do. And that's the only way I'm going to be able to survive.

With administrative and curricular changes, Jan was faced with a new school atmosphere that appeared to go against her core beliefs. Therefore, Jan was faced with the difficult task of negotiating her school context with her beliefs and instructional practice. In the sections that follow, I describe three strategies Jan used to maneuver this difficult territory. Out of the 98 episodes from the interview data, 18 of those episodes focused on negotiations as the central theme. Furthermore, the discussion of negotiations occurred during all five interviews, thus showing its prominence.

4.5.2 Drawing on life beliefs as a negotiation strategy: Censoring speech

One approach Jan used to negotiate her school context was to censor her speech rather than explicitly verbalizing her opinions about the state of the school context. For example, one of the biggest tensions was between Jan's belief that teachers and administrators should teach students responsibility and the school context, according to her, where the head principal had become lax in rules and expectations and that the enforcement of these rules was inconsistent. During Interview Four, Jan described the current school context's lack of rules: "Nobody will stoop to do anything now because they're [students] allowed to eat in the building, they're allowed to wear sunglasses in the building, you question their attire because it doesn't fit school code, he [head

principal] does nothing about it. And so that's the frustrating part." What appeared to be the most frustrating part regarding the lack of consistent rules enforced by the head principal was that it went against one of Jan's core life beliefs: a person should think logically and rationally and should take responsibility. Jan felt like the head principal did not make rational and logical decisions, and in order to negotiate this space and still have a voice, Jan decided to draw on her core beliefs of thinking logically and rationally to counteract, as she said, the stupidity that was pervading her school context.

Drawing on her ability to think logically and rationally, Jan's negotiation strategy was to censor her speech while using sarcasm as a means of expressing her true feelings about the state of the school context. During Interview Two, Jan described how she censored her speech and stated, "I don't say everything I want to say….There are only a few people that I talk to openly." She elaborated and said that she only would "explode to certain people." During Interview Two, Jan also noted how sarcasm helped her to express her true feelings and voice her concerns:

> I don't actually bite my tongue, it's how I present things. I never really bite my tongue, I just say things in a way that it can't be misconstrued as being racist or you know politically incorrect. I mean it's put in such a way that it's nice…I think logically through it. How can I make this into something that won't be offensive to everybody around me kind of thing.

The above interview excerpt shows how Jan relied on her life beliefs, those rooted in her experiences and in the philosophy of Ayn Rand, to confront any tensions she felt in her school context. Jan viewed her head principal as thinking and acting illogically. Rather than openly sharing her complaints regarding the school context and her frustration toward the head principal, Jan knew that she would need to use sarcasm and limit what she said to certain people in order to feel like she still had teacher agency and a voice in her school context, not fighting to change the school context, but having agency in the fact that she could maintain her core beliefs.

4.5.3 Moderately changing practice while maintaining core beliefs: Teaching on the sly

With the revised curriculum to be implemented the following school year, at the end of this study Jan voiced a concern about this curriculum and how it directly opposed her beliefs about how to teach literature and vocabulary. She recognized that this change in curriculum was partially a result of failure to make AYP, but at the same time, she felt like the school and education system in general were going down the wrong path, moving toward teaching students *what* to think rather than *how* to think. During Interview Five, Jan described how she was planning to approach these new curricular mandates, specifically the requirement to teach out of an anthology and to use a PSSA workbook:

> If you want me to teach out of that book, I'll teach out of that book. You want me to give worksheets, I'll give worksheets. Mr. Green's big thing at the meeting- the last faculty meeting was- which was only five minutes long by the way- was you know the big announcement that every math class- every student in every math class will have a PSSA workbook and every reading teacher will have PSSA workbooks for- so we're going to teach them how to answer the questions on the test and that's all we're going to do. Not how to look at the question and answer it on your own.

Although the use of workbooks directly contradicted Jan's beliefs about teaching vocabulary (e.g., vocabulary words should be taught in context; students should learn prefixes, suffixes, and roots when learning vocabulary words) and literature (e.g., the interpretation of literature is personal; apply literature to your own life) and her beliefs about learning (e.g., completing worksheets is not learning; discussion leads to learning), Jan was faced with a mandated curriculum, starting with the summer reading assignment and extending into the next school year. Rather than completely ignoring the curriculum, Jan resolved to modify her instruction to an extent. During Interview Two, Jan explained why she was willing to make these changes in her instructional practice:

> Jan: I really like what I'm doing. You know I don't want to lose teaching.

Megan: Okay. So that's why you're willing to adjust?

Jan: Yes. I make my compromises for that reason.

Unlike Jan's decision to leave the field of social work, Jan did not want to leave the teaching profession and expressed during Interview Two, before the major curriculum changes occurred, that she would compromise her instructional practice and her actions to an extent. However, she did not say that she would be willing to change her beliefs.

When faced with the curriculum changes, Jan agreed to follow the curriculum but looked for ways to continue to discuss novels. During Interview Five, Jan looked ahead to next year under the mandated curriculum, and she described how she would still be able to maintain her beliefs and instructional practices surrounding literature: "And if I want to teach a novel I'll pick out my novels, and I'll give them to certain classes and I'll say we're doing this on the sly. Don't let anyone know we're doing this. And I'll teach them that way too." By teaching "on the sly," Jan believed that she still had teacher agency in a school context that was becoming more and more rigid.

In sum, a second strategy Jan used to handle the tension created by a mandated curriculum that did not align with her beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students was to compromise her instructional practice to an extent, teaching out of the anthology and PSSA workbook. Although Jan would teach the required content, her approach to this content would be aligned with her beliefs about teaching literature and vocabulary. Furthermore, she would still include her own novels and vocabulary words as additional content, letting her students know that they were doing this on the sly.

4.5.4 Separating the classroom from the school context: Isolation

The third strategy Jan used to mediate the tension between her beliefs and her school context was to separate herself from the school context by retreating to her classroom. One way Jan separated her classroom from the rest of the school context was in regards to discipline. Jan had certain rules and expectations for her students inside the four walls of her classroom, but once students left her classroom, she knew that students would be faced with inconsistently reinforced rules and most likely would break these rules outside of her classroom. During Interview Three, Jan explained the distinction between what happened in her classroom regarding discipline and what happened in the larger school context: "They [students] could walk out of here and call me every name in the book and they know that it doesn't matter to me what they do as long as in my classroom they do what's expected."

Jan also separated herself from the rest of the school context as a strategy for making teaching in this context manageable. Jan discussed her strategy for coping with the frustrating school context and her decision to continue teaching:

> Because I walk in my room and I run my room the way I run my room. I'm able to- it's frustrating to go out and deal with all that. It's frustrating to know what's going on out there, but I still control my room. And until that changes, it will be bearable. You know these kids act like jerks in the hall. They run, they scream, they do all these things, but when they walk into my room, they know what to expect or they know how I'm going to scream and yell at them if they don't do this, this, and this. So they have an expectation and they know this is what's expected of them.

Additionally, Jan separated her classroom from the rest of the school context in terms of the roles she served in the school context. At the end of this study and the school year, Jan decided to retreat to her room and no longer officially serve as the literacy coach or take personal responsibility for the organization of the implementation of the 4Sight Testing. Instead, Jan

decided to implement effective reading strategies in her classroom and no longer had the desire to contribute to the greater well-being of the entire school. Although she no longer had the official title, she knew that fellow teachers who respected her thoughts and opinions would seek out her help regardless. Jan's decision to no longer serve in the capacity as a literacy coach was a difficult decision, but she arrived at this decision by drawing on her core life beliefs and beliefs about teaching. When asked during Interview Four how she came to this decision, she explained her decision by making reference to *Atlas Shrugged*:

> It took a long time. It took all year. It took a long time to come to that decision, and the fiasco before the PSSA was the straw. I'm going to go to *Atlas Shrugged* because this is what popped into my mind when I started thinking about it. Hank Rearden is given an ultimatum and his family, they tell him they want his mills. And they tell him why it's his responsibility to take care of this because he needs to do this for the betterment of the country and for the betterment of mankind. That kind of thing. And it dawns on him that he's the one that built all this. He's the one that has the control of it, and now they're taking the control and telling me I owe somebody something. I don't owe anybody anything. I don't owe Mr. Green anything. I did it because it was exciting to me and it was something that I could try different things and I could- it made me less bored with being here. So it was like building something and taking control and seeing something happen that wasn't happening before. That's never going to happen again. And I realize that. And I'm not indebted. I don't owe Mr. Green anything. I don't owe any of these teachers anything. I didn't feel that I was doing it because I owed them but because I saw that they were taking this and learning from it, so I don't see any other way to do it other than to separate myself completely.

 During Interview Four, Jan described what it meant for her not to be the literacy coach anymore and how this would impact her role at the school:

> Next year I'm going to come at 8:09 and leave at 3:30, and I'm not going to do anything. And that's kind of disgusting to me because I have a lot to contribute. But I can't because I'm not going to fight stupidity. You know it's like going back to I can't make people think. I can't make my students think. I can open the door. I can show them the room. But I can't make them walk in and sit down. (3-second pause) I can't- I don't even look at Mr. Green anymore. I can't even speak to him anymore because he has taken what I've taken seriously for the last eight years and help build to what it is now. So I kind of feel a slap in the face, and to be very honest, so do the majority of the teachers. I mean I'm telling you this from my point of view but I can tell it from their point of view as well.

The above statement during Interview Four not only illustrates the frustration Jan had toward the head principal, but it also reveals Jan's decision to isolate herself as a means of protesting what she saw as the negative direction of the changing school context. It is important to note that Jan was an actively involved member of this school context, taking the lead as the literacy coach and 4Sight Testing coordinator. By the end of this school year, Jan felt like what she observed happening in her school context (e.g., lack of rules, focus on technology rather than reading strategies) went against logic and reason. The above quote reveals that Jan felt a lack of teacher agency under the direction of the new head principal. In order to take back her agency and what she had contributed to her school, she decided to isolate herself from not only the principal but also the school context, escaping to her room where she could have some control over her instructional practice and her students' learning.

Rather than fighting for what she believed in or trying to make a change in the school context, speaking out about what she thought was right and wrong about the current school situation, Jan decided to retreat to the safety of her classroom where she did not have to censure her speech. In the safety of her classroom, she could also teach according to her core beliefs, and she could teach content that was not part of the curriculum but was taught on the sly. Her classroom became her safe haven, a place where her core beliefs could continue to influence her instructional practice. Jan decided to separate herself from the rest of the school context. The following quote from Interview Five summarizes Jan's three negotiation strategies: "Whatever they want is fine. It's just that simple. And when I walk in my classroom, I'll do it my way. And I don't need to share my skills with anybody because obviously they're not needed."

4.6   SUMMARY

My analysis of Jan's beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts demonstrates that Jan's core beliefs about teaching and learning often coincided with her instructional practice, but there were times when her beliefs and instructional practice seemed disconnected, not necessarily because of curricular- and policy-based pressures but because of Jan's unawareness of a misalignment between her beliefs and her instructional practice. Jan seemed to be more aware of tensions between her beliefs and her school context and was not as aware of those tensions and/or misalignments that occurred in her own classroom. This finding of a lack of awareness of the alignments and misalignments between her beliefs and her instructional practice extends that of previous research on beliefs that explained reasons for this misalignment (Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968), for findings from this study suggest that a disconnect between beliefs and practice may exist due to a lack of reflection and not due to inconsistencies between individual beliefs within and across belief systems. This finding has professional development implications in that teachers need to be taught ways of thinking and strategies for critically reflecting on their beliefs and instructional practice.

Furthermore, my findings suggest that school, curricular, and policy contexts created a tension for Jan because she perceived these three educational contexts as conflicting with her core life and teaching beliefs. When faced with these tensions, Jan drew upon her beliefs to help her determine negotiation strategies such as censoring her speech and sharing of beliefs, pulling in content on the sly as a means of balancing her own beliefs and instructional practice with those of the changing school context, and isolating herself in her classroom where she felt teacher agency still existed to a degree. These findings have implications for teacher retention, for I wonder if these negotiations will be effective or whether Jan will decide to leave the

profession, similar to her decision to leave the field of social work, because the expectations of

the profession did not align with her core beliefs.

5.0   CHAPTER V: JESSICA

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of Jessica, an English Language Arts teacher with five years of teaching experience at West Highland Area High School, a school building in the same district as Jan. First, I describe Jessica's journey to becoming a teacher and the class that I observed for the duration of this six-month research study. Then, I outline Jessica's beliefs about teaching – both general and discipline specific – as well as her beliefs about learning, her students, assessment, and high-stakes testing, showing the connectedness of these beliefs within and across belief systems. Next, I present my analysis of Jessica's instructional practice, noting alignments and misalignments. Finally, I outline the tensions Jessica faced between her core beliefs, her instructional practice, and her school context. I describe the strategies Jessica used to negotiate these tensions.

I demonstrate that Jessica's individual beliefs within her different belief systems focused primarily on her students and reflected the concerns and challenges of her particular school context. Because Jessica was a teacher in a school district that continued to fail to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and the administrative staff stressed the importance of raising test scores, this school and policy context greatly influenced Jessica's beliefs; she expressed a belief system about assessment as well as

beliefs about teaching, her students, and learning that were connected to her beliefs about assessment. However, Jessica's assessment beliefs focused primarily on assessment in her classroom and not on the standardized state assessment. In addition, Jessica expressed very few discipline-specific beliefs about the teaching of English and focused her beliefs on the needs of her students and on her thoughts about assessment. Furthermore, since Jessica's beliefs reflected the school and policy context, there were very few tensions that Jessica faced between her beliefs, instructional practice, and her school context. When faced with a tension in the school context, Jessica drew upon her teacher agency and became more actively involved in the school context.

5.2   DESCRIPTION OF JESSICA

5.2.1   Jessica's childhood and family

It was evident during the interviews and observations of Jessica's teaching that Jessica had strong ties to her family, community, and school. Jessica was the oldest of three siblings; she had a sister and twin brothers. In her free time she enjoyed spending time with her family and friends, frequently seeing movies or going to a dueling piano bar. When asked to describe herself, Jessica joked that she was a compulsive shopper and was beginning to have an interest in high-end designer clothing and shoes, causing her husband to become nervous. She also mentioned that she had a love for literature and reading but found that her teaching responsibilities prevented her from reading more than two books a year. Her favorite authors included James Patterson and

Nicholas Sparks, but she found herself reading *Beowulf* and *Dracula* in order to prepare to teach these pieces of literature to her twelfth graders.

Jessica's love for her school and community can partially be attributed to the fact that Jessica lived in and attended the district in which she currently taught. Throughout Jessica's schooling, Jessica took her learning seriously and always wanted to do her best. She appreciated teachers who pushed her thinking and made it challenging to earn an A in the class. During high school, Jessica dated a boy she later married after college. Both Jessica and her husband were currently employed as teachers at West Highland Area High School; her husband was a tenth and eleventh grade Social Studies teacher. As will be discussed later in this chapter, attending West Highland Area High School as a student gave Jessica a unique perspective on the school when she became a teacher at the same school. She quickly noticed the differences between her experiences at this school and the experiences of the students she taught, noting that her students were very different from who she was as a student at the same school. One reason Jessica's beliefs focused primarily on her students can be partially attributed to her own experiences as a student in this same context. Once teaching in this district, Jessica found that the differences between her experiences as a student and the experiences, lifestyles, and ability levels of her students became more apparent, and Jessica felt that she needed to modify her beliefs about teaching and learning in order to accommodate the needs of her students.

5.2.2   Jessica's journey to becoming a teacher

Jessica played the role of teacher many years before she knew that this was the profession she wanted to pursue. As the oldest of three siblings, Jessica frequently taught her younger sister and twin brothers how to study and would quiz them with flashcards – a studying method she learned

133

from her mother – when helping them study for school. When asked to reflect on her decision to become a teacher, Jessica explained that she knew she wanted to be a teacher when she was in seventh grade because of the great example a Special Education teacher, who was the school's newspaper advisor, set for Jessica. During Interview One, Jessica stated:

> I was in her [the Special Education teacher] room all the time before school, after school, any free periods working on the newspaper. And she just worked very well with them. And she had about probably ten mostly male students, and I just really liked the dynamic of how her day went and how she interacted with them and how they were with her. And I think seventh grade is when I realized this is what I want to do, which is really young.

Once deciding that she wanted to become a teacher, Jessica struggled to determine what age level and discipline she wanted to teach. She knew immediately that she wanted to work with secondary students because when she reflected on her teenage years, she realized that she enjoyed all of the activities associated with high school – prom, football games, graduation – and would enjoy participating in these activities in a different capacity. Choosing a discipline was a little more challenging for Jessica, so she decided to double major, choosing both Special Education and English as her two disciplines. Jessica felt like both disciplines were a good fit because she valued how the seventh grade Special Education teacher treated her students and she also enjoyed her English classes throughout high school.

Jessica attended a university about two hours from where she grew up and completed the first portion of her student teaching in a life skills room of a five/six building and the second portion of her student teaching in a high school English classroom. Both of her teaching placements were at the same district, a district that bordered the district in which she currently was employed.

In sum, Jessica's journey to becoming a teacher reveals the strong influence her family and schooling experiences had on her decision to become a teacher. Jessica's positive

experiences as a student at West Highland Area High School and the positive teacher role models she had in both middle and high school influenced her decision to become a teacher. Not straying too far from home, Jessica remained connected to the district that she attended as a student by student teaching in a district nearby and by immediately seeking employment at her alma mater upon the completion of her college studies.

5.2.3   Jessica's teaching career

Jessica started teaching at West Highland Area High School immediately after graduation. Her first two years of teaching she served as a Special Education teacher, teaching both English and Social Studies. Her third, fourth, and fifth years of teaching at this same school district she served as an English teacher. During the interviews, Jessica described several times the differences she saw between attending the high school as a student and her perspective on the high school now that she was a teacher. She explained that during her first several years of teaching, her younger twin brothers were attending the high school, and she mentioned that the stories she told her brothers about things that happened in her classroom and in the school were things that her brothers did not even know had taken place. Jessica also described how it seemed like there was a completely different population that she was working with as a teacher than what she knew and saw as a student attending the same school four years earlier. Jessica explained:

> I went to high school here. I've been here my whole life. I came back to teach here. It's weird though because what I'm teaching is completely different from what I saw when I was in this building. I never knew the population of students I am teaching existed here. Which is very strange. They keep you very- I don't want to use the word segregated- but maybe isolated from each other. There were the kids going to college and the kids not going to college. And you very rarely passed in the hallways, and that's about as much contact as you have with each other. So when I started here and I got the kids that I got, it was wow, I had no idea this population of students existed in this building. And my brothers were still here my first two years teaching, and I would tell them like oh my

135

gosh, this crazy story, and they would say that doesn't happen here. They just had no idea. It's really strange.

The above interview excerpt reveals the surprise Jessica experienced when she began teaching at the same school that she attended as a student. What is interesting about Jessica's reflection on this experience is that she noticed that perhaps the school was serving two different populations of students, and although the school administrators explained that tracking did not occur in this district, Jessica believed that it was apparent that students were separated by ability and behavior levels. It is possible that a teacher who had not attended West Highland Area High School as a student would not be as attuned to the differences among students, but as a former alumna of West Highland Area High School, Jessica could not help but notice these stark differences among students and her own experiences as a student. Furthermore, by viewing the school context with specific attention paid to her students, this influenced her beliefs about teaching and learning and therefore resulted in her beliefs being closely aligned with the immediate needs of her students. In addition, Jessica could have viewed the school in a negative way, believing that the school district had gone down hill since she attended as a student. However, Jessica chose to believe that she was working with a different population of students than she had associated with as a student in this same school context.

Not only was Jessica working with a different population of students than what she experienced as a student in this same school district, but she also realized that there was not a specific curriculum in place that teachers had to follow. Jessica explained that during her four years of teaching at West Highland Area High School, she had the freedom to do what she wanted in terms of curriculum and rarely was observed by administrators. Jessica explained, "I don't want to make this sound bad. We have an anthology and anything that's in the anthology we can do and any supplements that we want to incorporate that we want, no matter what it is,

we can add. As long as no other teacher uses it in their anthology. So pretty much they hand you a book and say this is your curriculum." This year, however, changes were being made to the curriculum to make it more standardized across the different teachers who taught the same grade to ensure that all students were learning the same skills. One reason for this push for a standardized curriculum was a result of the school's failure to make AYP on the PSSAs. Reflecting on the school's decision to move toward a more standardized curriculum, Jessica voiced a concern that some teachers might feel like their freedom in the classroom was being taken away, but Jessica also saw the writing of this new curriculum as a way to become involved and fight for what teachers wanted to do in their classrooms. During Interview One, Jessica described her decision to be a member of the curriculum committee and compared her decision to those teachers who chose not to be involved:

> I think some of the teachers are going to think that at lot of their freedom is being taken away. I think a lot of people become teachers because they like to control what's happening in their room, and it really is a profession where what happens in this area no one really is aware of. And I know a lot of teachers say, 'Oh I can't believe I'm not going to teach blah, blah, blah.' But they're the same teachers who won't get onto the committee and fight for what they want to do. So I figure if I'm going to be mandated to teach something I may as well help come up with it.

In addition to serving on the curriculum committee, Jessica also served many other roles in the school district. Jessica was actively involved with the senior class, teaching one section of twelfth grade English, serving as the Senior Powder Puff Coach and as the Senior Class Advisor. As the Senior Class Advisor, Jessica organized the class elections and fundraisers and spent the majority of her time planning for the prom. Prom at this district was a big event and included a promenade with parents and community members in attendance, a police motorcade that took the students to a boat for dinner and dancing, and a post-prom event on a different boat, with the entire event lasting until three o'clock in the morning. Jessica explained the reason for the

137

importance of the prom: "Prom itself is huge. It's the biggest event the community has each year. The way somebody brought it up to me is most of these kids will never have a formal wedding. They will never actually walk down the aisle with a white gown, so this is kind of like in place of that for the community." Besides her responsibilities with the senior class, Jessica also served as the flower fund coordinator for the district and served on several committees, such as the discipline committee and Project 720. When asked why she decided to participate in so many school activities, Jessica explained:

> I went to school here. I think that has a lot to do with it. I have a lot of school pride. When I started teaching my brothers were here, so I wanted to be involved with things like for them. I know there are really good kids in this building and sometimes they do get left out and I just want to make sure there's somebody here that's pushing for them. Also, I like to be involved. I kind of like knowing what's going on. I figure if I'm teaching here and someone's asking me to be on a committee where I can kind of have some say, why not.

In addition to her responsibilities at the school, Jessica also served as a cooperating teacher for a student teacher for the past two years and was enrolled in a master's program in Instruction and Learning and also was working on her principal papers.

In sum, Jessica had school pride rooted in the years she attended West Highland Area High School as a student, and this school pride motivated Jessica to be actively involved in the school context. By being actively involved in the school context, Jessica saw that she could influence the school context and create better opportunities for her students. Jessica's active involvement in the school context, her school pride, and her sensitivity to noticing the differences between her own experiences as a student in this school context and the experiences of her students, shaped her beliefs to reflect the needs of her students and the evolving school context.

5.2.4   Jessica's classroom and her students

Jessica was one of sixteen English teachers at West Highland Area High School. Jessica's teaching schedule for the year of this study – which was her fifth year of teaching at West Highland Area High School – included teaching four sections of ninth grade English and one section of twelfth grade English. During several of the interviews, Jessica explained how she primarily had all of the lower-level students and found that, for the ninth grade class, she had all of the ninth grade students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), all of the students from Alternative Education, and some life skills students. She also explained that she had students in her ninth grade classes with much higher-level abilities.

For the purpose of this six-month research study, I chose to observe Jessica's second period ninth grade class. In this class there were 28 students on the roster, but because of absenteeism and discipline infractions, on any given day there were eight to twelve students who attended Jessica's class. These eight to twelve students were the ones who frequently attended and were participants in the study.

Ninth grade English was organized as a genre approach to teaching English. Jessica developed and implemented units on short stories, poetry, mystery novels, and fairytales. Jessica also taught literature units on *Animal Farm, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Odyssey*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Jessica also spent time teaching the five-paragraph essay, preparing students for 4SightTesting and the PSSAs, and on other supplemental activities.

Jessica was a teacher who cared deeply about her students. Every year she wrote letters to her graduating seniors, wishing them luck and encouraging them to stay in contact with her if they needed any help with anything. She also gave her home phone number to all of her students and wrote a letter home to the parents of her students explaining that her students could contact

her at home with any questions about coursework they were completing for her class as well as any life issues/concerns they might have. Jessica also stayed after school most days until 5:00, offering additional support for students and frequently gave up her planning period to meet with her students. In the classroom, Jessica was a teacher who liked to have a lot of fun by playing games in order to maintain student interest, varying the activities for each day of class, and having surprises along the way for students in order to keep them on their toes. During my six-months of observations, it was apparent that class time was devoted to learning and that Jessica was always prepared for every class session. Jessica also ran a tight ship, never having any discipline infractions during my observations. At the same time, Jessica created an environment that was safe and comfortable for all of her students.

5.3   JESSICA'S BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING, AND HER STUDENTS

In this section, I present the results of interview data collected on Jessica's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students. I also present data collected on her beliefs about classroom management, assessment, and high-stakes testing since these were three additional belief systems that Jessica discussed throughout the five interviews. Using the analysis process described in Chapters III and IV, I located Jessica's core beliefs and I outline these beliefs in the sections that follow.

5.3.1 Jessica's beliefs about teaching and teaching English

A cultural model about teaching became apparent after I coded and analyzed the data. I constructed the following narrative to capture Jessica's cultural model about teaching:

> Jessica believed that her instructional practice should be guided by the general learning and personal needs of her students. As the teacher in the classroom, she believed that it was her responsibility to assess her students' learning and to help her students to improve their scores on an assessment, for Jessica believed that an increase on a classroom assessment meant that her students were learning. Jessica believed that in order for learning to occur, students needed to feel respected in the classroom and that they should be given numerous opportunities to take the same assessment.

The following tables provide evidence as to how I arrived at my interpretations in order to create the above narrative of Jessica's cultural model of teaching. These tables show the individual beliefs in each of the belief systems about teaching and include information regarding frequency counts and the level of prominence of these beliefs across all coded teaching beliefs and interviews.

Table 14: General Teaching Beliefs – Non-Discipline Specific

General Teaching Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of General Teaching Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Students' needs should guide instruction	13	45%	4
Teachers should push their students	8	28%	4
Teachers should implement a variety of fun activities	3	10%	1
Teachers should prepare students for their futures	2	7%	1
Teachers should believe in their students	2	7%	1
Teachers should care about their students	1	3%	1

Table 15: Beliefs About the Teaching of Literature – Discipline Specific

Teaching Literature Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of Teaching Literature Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Ask students questions to check for understanding	2	67%	1
Taking notes helps with reading comprehension	1	33%	1

What is interesting to note about Jessica's teaching beliefs is that Jessica had a very limited number of discipline-specific beliefs about the teaching of English. For example, Jessica only voiced two beliefs about the teaching of literature throughout all five of the interviews. Furthermore, Jessica did not overtly or tacitly express any beliefs about the teaching of writing or the teaching of vocabulary, which were voiced by the other two teacher participants in this study. Moreover, Jessica voiced only five general teaching beliefs, and all of these general teaching beliefs were related to the teacher's relationship with students and the teacher's role in the classroom. These results are significant because they suggest that Jessica's general teaching beliefs were centered on students and helping students to learn. Furthermore, the fact that Jessica's general teaching beliefs centered on her students made sense considering that Jessica noticed the differences between her own experiences as a student at West Highland Area High School and the experiences of her students.

5.3.2 Co-occurrences within the general and discipline-specific teaching belief systems

I then examined the connectedness of Jessica's individual teaching beliefs within and across Jessica's two teaching belief systems. I found that there were no co-occurrences across these two belief systems or within the belief system containing Jessica's individual beliefs about the teaching of literature. All of the co-occurrences were evident within the general teaching belief system. Table 16 reveals the connectedness of individual beliefs within Jessica's general teaching belief system.

Table 16: Co-Occurrences Within the General Teaching Belief System

Episode Number	Students' needs should guide instruction	Teachers should push their students	Teachers should prepare students for their futures	Teachers should believe in their students
1.13		X	X	X
1.15		X	X	
2.13	X	X		

What is significant about the above results is that all three of the episodes where there was evidence of co-occurrences occurred with Jessica's two most frequently voiced general teaching beliefs (students' needs should guide instruction and teachers should push their students). It is also important to note that during Interview One, Jessica recalled her high school English teacher who inspired her to have high expectations for her students and to push her students to want to be successful. Since belief theorists (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968) posit that beliefs are rooted in experience, it makes sense that Jessica's second most frequently voiced general teaching belief and a belief that co-occurred with other individual beliefs within this belief system would connect to her own schooling experience.

143

5.3.3 Jessica's beliefs about learning

Over the course of the five interviews, Jessica also expressed several different beliefs about learning. Jessica voiced these beliefs when asked specifically to define learning, but she also voiced these beliefs on her own when describing her teaching and how she approached assessment in her class. Table 17 shows the different learning beliefs that Jessica voiced during the five interviews.

Table 17: Beliefs About Learning

Belief About Learning	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Learning	Number of Interviews
Learning is an increase in test scores	16	80%	4
Learning is applying knowledge across contexts	2	10%	2
Learning is an aha moment	1	5%	1
Learning takes place when students are engaged	1	5%	1

One interesting aspect of Jessica's beliefs about learning was that her primary way of defining learning was to state that it was an increase in test scores. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Jessica's beliefs focused on her thoughts regarding assessments in her classroom and high-stakes testing in general. Therefore, the fact that Jessica saw learning as an increase in test scores further supports the notion that Jessica's beliefs about assessment were an important component of her overall teaching beliefs. In addition, when telling a story during Interview One about how she learned to read and write, Jessica's story focused primarily on her memories of being drilled in order to learn how to read and her experiences being tested on reading and writing. By discussing assessment when asked to describe her learning, the connection that

Jessica made between these two belief systems (assessment and learning) further illustrates the importance that Jessica placed on testing. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Jessica assessed her ninth grade students frequently during the course of the six-month research study, showing the prominence of assessment not only in her belief systems but also in her instructional practice. Jessica's three less frequently voiced beliefs about learning occurred when she was asked directly to define learning; therefore, I posit these were less central beliefs to Jessica's belief system about learning.

Table 18: Co-Occurrences Within the Learning Belief System

Episode Number	Learning is an increase in test scores	Learning is applying knowledge across contexts	Learning is an aha moment	Learning takes place when students are engaged
1.24	X	X	X	X

According to the above results of the co-occurrences within Jessica's belief system about learning, it is evident that Jessica's learning beliefs only co-occurred when she was asked specifically to define learning. However, Jessica's most frequently stated learning belief (learning is an increase in test scores) did co-occur across other belief systems – which will be described later in this chapter – and therefore I posit is one of her core beliefs.

5.3.4 Jessica's beliefs about her students

Table 19: Beliefs About Her Students

Belief About Her Students	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Her Students	Number of Interviews
Other teachers have low expectations for low-level students	5	15%	4
Students in honors classes are good students	5	15%	3
Low-level students cannot accomplish as much	4	12%	3
Low-level students are not dumb	4	12%	4
Low-level students should not read adapted versions of texts	4	12%	3
Low-level students in this context have behavior problems	4	12%	3
Low-level students need more teacher assistance	3	9%	3
School may not be a priority for some students	2	6%	2
Low-level students struggle with high-stakes testing	1	3%	1
Honors students should be pushed	1	3%	1

What is significant about Jessica's beliefs about her students is the apparent contradiction between some of the individual beliefs within this belief system. The first evident contradiction is that Jessica positioned other teachers within the school as having low expectations for low-

level students; she also positioned herself as different from these "other" teachers for she believed that low-level students were not dumb. Jessica positioned the belief that low-level students cannot succeed as something removed from herself and that this was a belief of others within the school context, in essence verbalizing a perceived cultural model of the school context. However, throughout the five interviews, there were four occasions across three interviews when Jessica tacitly expressed beliefs similar to the perceived school cultural model about low-level students. In the following excerpt from Interview One, Jessica described the differences she saw her fourth year of teaching when she was given the opportunity to teach Regular English in comparison to her previous schedule of teaching lower-level students and Special Education classes:

> Jessica: I dropped Special Ed and I did two years of Regular Ed English and we started a linguistic program. It's called Language. It's more phonetics based. It's reading and writing improvement course. I taught that for two years and I kept my senior English, but instead of it being the applied with the low-level, I got Regular Ed., which, wow! They're smart. A completely different world. I had to completely relearn how to teach. And this year, just the way the cards fell, I got very low-level again. My twelfth grade is- I guess they're mainstream, but they're very <low> compared to what I had last year. Every single senior I had last year all went to college. I probably have four or five going this year out of my senior class.

> Megan: Okay. And you said that you had to relearn how to teach-

> Jessica: I did.

> Megan: How so? Can you explain that to me a little bit?

> Jessica: To expect more. To require more outside of class. I did- this first couple of years everything we read was in class because if I assigned it outside of class, nothing would get done. Nothing. So very little homework. Everything was me assisting them consistently. I had to actually learn how to take a step back and let them learn things on their own because they could and it was skills that they needed. And that's not how I taught previously. So last year was a really good year for me. It probably was the best year I've had. I had really great kids.

From the above transcript excerpt, although it appeared that Jessica had low expectations for her low-level students, perhaps Jessica's comments could also be interpreted as that she did have high expectations for her students but that these expectations were realistic given her knowledge of her students.

Another contradiction between the individual beliefs Jessica held about her students was that she made a distinction between low-level and honors students, and she positioned honors students as better students. In the previous excerpt from Interview One, Jessica reflected fondly on the previous year when she taught regular students and said that they were "great kids." Even though Jessica had not had the opportunity to teach honors students during her five years at West Highland Area High School, she did make a distinction between low-level and regular English students and even honors students. When looking at Jessica's discourse, she appeared to verbalize a more positive attitude toward students with higher abilities. As will be discussed in the section of this chapter describing Jessica's instructional practice, Jessica appeared to genuinely care about her students and wanted all of them to be successful and did not voice any of her thoughts regarding low-level and high-level students to her students or during her teaching. However, when faced with the reality of her students' ability levels and the school's decision to group students of varying levels of ability all in one room, Jessica voiced a frustration in that she was unable to meet the needs of all of her students. She also explained how she needed to alter her instructional practice in such a way that she felt like she was unable to cover the content in-depth because students were beginning at such a basic level.

Even though contradictions did exist within Jessica's belief system about her students, there also were numerous co-occurrences within this belief system. Table 20 depicts the results of these co-occurrences within Jessica's belief system about her students.

Table 20: Co-Occurrences Within Student Belief System

Episode Number	Other teachers have low expectations for low-level students	Students in honors classes are good students	Low-level students cannot accomplish as much	Low-level students are not dumb	Low-level students should not read adapted texts	Low-level students in this context have behavior problems	Low-level students need more teacher assistance	School may not be a priority for some students	Low-level students struggle with high-stakes testing	Honors students should be pushed
1.6	X	X								
1.12		X	X	X	X	X				
2.12		X			X					
2.14	X					X			X	
2.16	X		X							X
4.1		X					X			
4.6		X						X		
5.5	X			X			X			

Table 20 reveals that out of all of Jessica's belief systems, there were the most co-occurrences within the belief system containing her beliefs about her students. I posit that this finding suggests that Jessica held beliefs about her students that were deeply connected and were beliefs that she was consciously thinking about at this time because of the effect the different ability levels of her students was having on her instructional practice. Since this was a pressing concern, it made sense that Jessica frequently discussed her beliefs about her students, even when she was not asked directly during the five interviews. The results depicted in Table 20 also reveal that Jessica's most frequently voiced beliefs about her students (other teachers have low expectations for low-level students and students in honors classes are good students) were always a part of the co-occurrences within this system.

Perhaps the prevalence of co-occurrences within her belief system about her students and the contradictory beliefs that existed within this belief system stemmed from Jessica's own experiences as a student at West Highland Area High School. Since Jessica was previously enrolled in honors classes as a student and since she noticed a difference in the learning abilities

and behavior of the students she taught at the same school, it made sense that a tension between her beliefs about her students would be evident. Jessica wanted to believe in her students and have high expectations for her students, going against a prevalent cultural model perceived by Jessica in the school district where numerous teachers had low expectations for the lower-level students, yet Jessica recognized differences between the students she taught and the students she interacted with as a student enrolled in honors classes at the same school.

5.3.5   Jessica's beliefs about classroom management

During the five interviews, Jessica also expressed several beliefs about classroom management. It was interesting to hear Jessica voice a coherent belief system about classroom management, especially since the other two teachers in this research study did not verbalize a belief system about classroom management. Although Jan did express the belief that students should be responsible for their actions and decisions and did mention that she held her students accountable for their actions, Jan did not express other beliefs about classroom management specifically. In addition, as will be discussed in Chapter VI, Rebecca, the third teacher participant, discussed classroom management issues she faced in her teaching, but she described these issues in terms of challenges she faced in her teaching and school context and did not express her beliefs about classroom management. However, when Jessica expressed her beliefs about classroom management, she also described how these beliefs positioned her differently from other teachers in her school context regarding classroom management. As will be discussed later in Chapter VII, the beliefs teachers express often position them as a type of teacher in a particular context, and this positioning needs to be accounted for when collecting and analyzing data on teacher beliefs because some beliefs may be more frequently expressed in order for the teacher to create

a certain identity in the school context. Table 21 outlines Jessica's individual beliefs about classroom management and Table 22 documents the co-occurrences within this belief system.

Table 21: Beliefs About Classroom Management

Belief About Classroom Management	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Classroom Management	Number of Interviews
A teacher should not yell at students	10	62%	4
A teacher needs to show students respect	3	19%	3
A teacher should have a sense of humor	2	13%	2
A teacher should allow students time to discipline themselves/correct their own behavior	1	6%	1

Table 22: Co-Occurrences Within the Classroom Management Belief System

Episode Number	A teacher should not yell at students	A teacher needs to show students respect	A teacher should have a sense of humor	A teacher should allow students time to discipline themselves/correct their own behavior
1.12	X	X		
2.19	X	X		
2.20	X			X
4.9	X	X	X	

Similar to the co-occurrences found within Jessica's other belief systems, Jessica's two most frequently voiced beliefs about classroom management (a teacher should not yell at students and a teacher needs to show students respect) were always involved in the co-occurrences within this belief system. Therefore, these two beliefs were Jessica's core beliefs about classroom management.

The source of these beliefs can be explained by Jessica's experiences as a student, her experiences as a student teacher, and her experiences having a student teacher in her own classroom. Through all of these experiences, Jessica experienced firsthand instances when teachers would yell and show disrespect to students, and these tactics proved ineffective. Therefore, Jessica decided to implement classroom management strategies that were the opposite from what she saw modeled to her.

5.3.6   Jessica's beliefs about assessment

Jessica also frequently discussed during the five interviews her thoughts on assessment in the classroom, even when she was not directly asked about this aspect of her teaching. Table 23 summarizes Jessica's beliefs about assessment and Table 24 depicts the co-occurrences within this belief system.

Table 23: Beliefs About Assessment

Belief About Assessment	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Assessment	Number of Interviews
Tests can measure learning	5	36%	3
Students should take the same test several times	5	36%	2
Teachers should implement a variety of assessments	1	7%	1
Students should be assessed every day	1	7%	1
The results of an assessment should inform teacher practice	1	7%	1
Timed tests should only be used when mandated by the school/state	1	7%	1

Table 24: Co-Occurrences Within the Assessment Belief System

Episode Number	Tests can measure learning	Students should take the same test several times	Teachers should implement a variety of assessments	Students should be assessed every day	The results of an assessment should inform teacher practice	Timed tests should only be used when mandated by the school/state
2.8	X	X				X
3.9	X	X				
5.1	X		X			
5.4	X			X	X	

What is significant about Jessica's beliefs about classroom assessment is the similarities to Jessica's beliefs about learning. Similar to Jessica's belief that learning is an increase in a test score, she also believed that a test was a good indicator of learning. Since her belief that a test is

153

an indicator of learning was most frequently voiced and also was voiced in every co-occurrence

within this belief system, I argue that this was one of Jessica's core beliefs about assessment.

Jessica also believed strongly in allowing students to take the same exam several times.

The source of this belief was the fact that Jessica believed that students felt pressure when taking

exams, and Jessica even confided to me in several interviews that she also felt pressure when

taking timed exams in school as well as the Praxis exams she took in order to receive her

Pennsylvania teaching certification. During Interview Two, Jessica explained the nervousness

she felt when taking timed tests and explained why they made her so nervous.

> Jessica: Well I mean just the one [timed test] that's freshest in my mind is definitely the Praxis. Like the four core ones we had to take like the writing one. Not that I'm a slow reader, but when I'm focused, I tend to be a little bit slower I guess. So like the writing part, you know how you had to fix like the grammar in it, I would sit there and I would read every single response, even though I guess like once I knew which one it was, I should have moved on. I just needed to double check for myself. I passed but I remember kind of being very- I was very upset about it. Being very nervous. I took that one on the computer, so I don't know if just the different type of atmosphere, but I was not comfortable at all. I remember being <very> nervous. I remember crying before. Just thinking I'm never going to be able to do those timed tests. I can't stand them. I try not to do timed tests with my kids a lot. I know sometimes we have to. But yeah they make me very nervous.

> Megan: Do you have any kind of explanation as to why they made you so nervous?

> Jessica: I don't know. Tests in general have always made me very nervous. And I mean I was a good student- I don't know- I don't know what caused it. All throughout school I remember being very nervous. I remember even one time my mom after parent teacher day mentioned that one of my teachers said to her something about how she could tell that I had test anxiety, which is really weird. I thought I hid it pretty well.

What also is significant about the co-occurrences within the assessment belief system is

that all of Jessica's beliefs about assessment, regardless of the frequency of these beliefs, had at

least one instance of a co-occurrence within this belief system. This suggests that this belief

system was deeply connected.

It is interesting to note the focus or content of Jessica's beliefs about assessment. Jessica's beliefs primarily focused on the benefits of testing (e.g., tests can measure learning) and how a teacher should use tests in the classroom (e.g., students should take the same test several times, the results of an assessment should inform teacher practice, teachers should implement a variety of assessments), but Jessica did not specify her beliefs about the content and organization of the assessment itself. For example, she did not specify the type of questions she included on different assessments or what format of assessments she believed were most effective (e.g., tests, project-based assessments). She also did not talk about assessment in terms of her discipline specifically.

5.3.7 Jessica's beliefs about high-stakes testing

In addition to describing her beliefs about assessment in her classroom, she also expressed her beliefs about high-stakes testing, specifically 4Sight Testing and the PSSAs. Table 25 reveals the beliefs Jessica held about high-stakes testing and Table 26 depicts the co-occurrences within this belief system. By having a separate belief system devoted to individual beliefs about high-stakes testing, Jessica made a distinction between the types of assessments she implemented in her classroom and those assessments mandated by the state.

Table 25: Beliefs About High-Stakes Testing

Belief About High-Stakes Testing	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About High-Stakes Testing	Number of Interviews
High-stakes testing causes students pressure and stress	7	50%	3
The content of high-stakes testing is not the skills students need for life	2	14%	2
How teachers teach does not match what is tested	2	14%	2
Students are tested too much	2	14%	1
High-stakes testing is not an accurate indicator of student learning	1	7%	1

Table 26: Co-Occurrences Within the High-Stakes Testing Belief System

Episode Number	High-stakes testing causes students pressure and stress	The content of high-stakes testing is not the skills students need for life	How teachers teach does not match what is tested	Students are tested too much	High-stakes testing is not an accurate indicator of student learning
1.24			X		X
2.10	X	X		X	

One aspect of Jessica's beliefs about high-stakes testing that is interesting is the seemingly negative regard she had toward this assessment in contrast to the positive regard she had for the regular use of assessment in her classroom. For example, Jessica contended that tests were a good indicator of learning; however, when discussing her beliefs about high-stakes testing, she mentioned on one occasion that high-stakes testing, specifically 4Sight testing, was not a good indicator of learning. One reason why Jessica felt this way about the 4Sight Testing

156

was because students did not take the test seriously. However, could not the same be said about the assessments students completed for her class? Instead, she positioned the implementation and results of assessments in her class as effective in comparison to the results on high-stakes testing.

5.3.8 Co-occurrences across belief systems

I then looked at the co-occurrences across belief systems in order to locate Jessica's core beliefs about teaching, learning, her students, and assessment. Table 27 depicts these co-occurrences across belief systems. The co-occurrences in **bold** represent the most frequently co-occurring beliefs across her belief systems.

Table 27: Co-Occurrences Across Belief Systems

Episode Number	General Teaching		Learning				Students								Classroom Discipline			Assessment					High-Stakes Testing		
	Students' needs	Push students	Higher test scores	Applying across contexts	Aha moment	Takes place when engaged	Other teachers: low expectations	Low-level accomplish less	Honors: good students	Low-level: not dumb	Low-level: no adapted texts	Low-level: behavior	Low-level: help	Push honors	No yelling	Show respect	Sense of humor	Tests show learning	Take same test	Assessment variety	Assessed daily	Scores/Practice	Pressure/Stress	Tested content	No learning
1.12								X	X	X	X	X			X	X									
1.24			X	X	X	X	X	X																X	X
2.5	X		X																						
2.15											X							X							
2.16		X	X	X			X	X					X						X						
3.5			X																X				X		
3.9			X															X	X				X		
3.13	X												X												
4.9												X			X	X	X								
5.1																			X	X				X	
5.4			X															X			X	X			
5.5							X			X			X		X										
5.10		X						X																	

158

Jessica's most frequently co-occurring beliefs derived from four different belief systems: beliefs about learning, beliefs about her students, beliefs about classroom management, and beliefs about assessment. The four most co-occurring beliefs were (a) learning is an increase in test scores, (b) low-level students cannot accomplish as much, (c) a teacher should not yell at students, and (d) students should take the same test several times. These four beliefs reveal Jessica's focus on the importance of assessment in the classroom. Based on these beliefs, I expected to see a teacher who frequently used tests in her classroom as a means of assessing students learning and changing her instructional practice based on the results of these assessments. As will be described in the section that follows, there was much alignment between Jessica's core beliefs and her instructional practice.

5.4   JESSICA'S INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

Throughout the course of the six-month study, I observed units on literature when a short story, novel, or play was read and literary terms were discussed. I also observed days when students reviewed for upcoming tests as well as the testing days themselves when students took the 4Sight test and quizzes and tests for different units. Finally, I observed days when the class set of laptops was used to conduct a Webquest associated with the mystery unit and another day when students were in the library completing research on Greek gods and goddesses. Regardless of the topic for the class session, Jessica always began the period when the bell rang and had a variety of activities planned during the course of the period in hopes of maintaining student engagement.

5.4.1 Alignments and misalignments

When analyzing the classroom discourse data and my field notes for Jessica's instructional practice, I realized that there were numerous alignments between Jessica's core beliefs verbalized during the five interviews and her instructional practice. One of Jessica's core beliefs was that an increase in test scores revealed learning. This was evident during one class session that focused on helping students to learn different literary terms, such as simile, metaphor, personification, etc. During this particular class session, students took an assessment at the beginning of class that asked them to match definitions to literary terms. For this assessment, there were a total of ten literary terms that needed to be matched. After students completed this assessment, students watched a 15-minute video that reviewed the literary terms in a fun way. After watching the video, students took the same exam again (with the literary terms and definitions in a different order) to see if they earned a higher score after watching the video. When Jessica was presented with this classroom discourse during Interview Three and asked to reflect on her instructional practice, she commented that one reason why she had the students take the test for a second time was because she wanted to be able to assess what her students had learned regarding these terms and how she could adjust her instructional practice accordingly in order to meet the needs of her students.

> I wanted to see what they knew just from what we've previously talked about, and there were about two that I knew they weren't going to know. And I just- when I watched the video I knew it was about fifteen minutes long, it wasn't like too drawn out. And I figured anything that helps them would benefit me. Any kind of different ways and then what I did with it after the video was I wanted to see who improved in looking back and forth. Most of them did.

This example class session also revealed Jessica's belief about the importance of giving students the opportunity to take the same assessment several times. On a separate occasion when

160

students were independently reading mystery novels, students completed an assessment after reading several chapters of the novel. If students did not receive an 85% or higher on the assessment, students knew that they would need to reread the chapters, study, and take the same assessment again. This process occurred until students received a score of 85%. This is another example of how Jessica's instructional practice aligned with her belief that test scores revealed learning and that students should have the opportunity to take the same assessment several times.

Another strong alignment between Jessica's instructional practice and her core beliefs was in the realm of classroom management. Never once did Jessica yell at her students when I observed over the course of the six-month research study. Jessica maintained a pleasant, light-hearted, and caring tone with her second period class. This strategy seemed to be effective, for there were no classroom management issues observed over the course of the six-month research study.

It was more challenging to determine definitively whether or not Jessica's instructional practice revealed low expectations for her low-level students. Although during the five interviews a contradiction emerged between Jessica's verbalized belief that low-level students were not dumb and that teachers should have high expectations for these students, she also simultaneously tacitly expressed a belief that low-level students could not do as much and that honors students could be pushed more. When looking at her instructional practice to see if this contradiction existed and to see what her expectations were for her students, I found it difficult to assess what, in fact, were the ability levels of her students. Since I did not have access to student test scores, grades, etc., I could only base my understanding of whether or not students were being pushed to their fullest potential based on Jessica's thoughts and my observations of

students' participation during class activities and discussions. Therefore, I realize that this lack of knowledge regarding student outcomes is one potential limitation of this research study.

Furthermore, it seemed like having high expectations for students was relative to where students began. For example, Jessica mentioned in an interview that her goals for her students were slightly different this year because she realized that this year's students needed to begin with the basics before they could move onto higher-level thinking skills. Therefore, although the activities and assignments were at a lower level in comparison to previous years, Jessica felt like she was still pushing her students and maintained her high expectations for her students in relation to where they had started. Although I could code the teaching artifacts I collected (e.g., assessments and assignments) and the classroom discourse for instances of levels of thinking using Bloom's taxonomy, it would be difficult to interpret these results since I only knew students' ability levels according to Jessica's thoughts on this issue. Regardless, what can be said about Jessica's instructional practice relative to her beliefs about her students is that there were many instances of Jessica using assessment to determine where students were and adjusting her instructional practice accordingly to help students improve from where they started. This was evident when learning literary terms, writing five-paragraph essays, and reading the mystery novels and other pieces of literature, such as *The Odyssey* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Jessica modified her instructional practice in order to make accommodations for the varying levels of ability of her students.

5.5   JESSICA'S STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING TENSIONS

Jessica did not express very many tensions or challenges that she faced as a teacher at West Highland Area High School. Instead, Jessica frequently commented on how much she enjoyed working at this school; she enjoyed working in the same building as her husband, she valued the camaraderie with other teachers in the building, she felt invested in the lives of her students, and she found inspiration in the leadership of the new principal and administrative staff. Therefore, when coding the interview and classroom discourse data for tensions and negotiations, very few examples of tensions and negotiations were evident.

The frustrations Jessica did voice regarded two main areas of concern: (a) the way students were placed into classes, specifically regarding the inclusion of students of varying levels of ability in the same class and (b) the ability levels of the students she was working with this year and her inability to teach as much content as she did last year. However, Jessica expressed confidence that under the leadership of the new principal, these issues would gradually be resolved, and she credited these current challenges to a transition in leadership. Jessica appeared to maintain a positive attitude about her school context and was willing to become more involved in the school context and to make changes to her instructional practice in order to meet the needs of her students and to adhere to school initiatives.

5.5.1   Changing school initiatives and curricula: Involvement increases agency

As mentioned previously, West Highland Area High School experienced several structural and curricular changes during the course of this six-month research study as a result of failure to make AYP on the standardized state assessment. At the beginning of the school year, the

administrative team from the middle school became the administrative team at the high school. In addition, the new administration was in the process of developing more standardized curricula across all grades and disciplines. When faced with these changes in the school context, Jessica appeared to take the attitude that the more involved she could become in these changes, the more voice she would have in the school context as a whole. Therefore, rather than sitting back and allowing the changes to happen, Jessica saw opportunities for becoming more involved and fighting for what she believed made for best practices in teaching. Jessica chose to become actively involved rather than isolating herself in her own classroom.

During Interview Two, Jessica described what it was like writing the curriculum for ninth grade English.

> Jessica: I just wrote the entire ninth grade curriculum that every ninth grade teacher will follow. It was a lot of work. I went through our anthology. I had to pick like the- select the novels. We had to go through what anchors, what standards we were going to hit, how we were going to assess each novel or selection, and then what order. So I had to actually go through and say like these are the 53 things that we are going to cover. This is the exact order that every ninth grade teacher has to hit them. So we're losing a lot of our freedom, but I wrote it, so it's kind of like- it doesn't bother me as much. I think it might some of the other ninth grade teachers-
>
> Megan: Because you got your say.
>
> Jessica: I mean we were all able to be on the committee, but for whatever reason, they chose not to. So they could have had as much input as they wanted, they just- they started at the first meeting and then slowly the other three just kind of dropped out.
>
> Megan: The other three ninth grade teachers?
>
> Jessica: Yeah. So I just felt like if I'm being forced to teach a certain way or to teach certain selections, why not have as much say as I can. So it was a lot of work, but I think it's definitely going to be worth it next year when I'm hitting like what I know they need to cover.

In the above discourse, Jessica revealed the two different approaches teachers in this context took when faced with the writing of a more standardized curriculum. Jessica chose to be

involved because she saw it as an opportunity to have her voice heard. Jessica discussed that it was time-consuming to be involved in the writing of the curriculum, but in the end she was happy that she had the opportunity to mold the curriculum to her instructional practices. In this way, Jessica negotiated the space of a standardized curriculum by writing the curriculum herself and by finding teacher agency within her own classroom and in the school at large.

5.5.2 Modifying instructional practice to meet students' needs

Another negotiation strategy Jessica employed, when faced with a tension in the school context, was to modify her instructional practice. For example, Jessica felt challenged as a teacher to meet the needs of all of her students since she had a variety of ability levels in one class. In the ninth grade Period Two class that I observed, Jessica had a variety of learning abilities from life skills students, students reading on a fourth-grade level, to students at or above grade level. When faced with these varying ability levels, Jessica drew upon one of her core general teaching beliefs (students' needs should guide a teacher's instruction) and realized that she needed to make changes in her instructional practice based on the needs of her students and the results of their test scores. During Interview One, Jessica was asked if she had a style of teaching that felt more comfortable for her. She explained, "I think I finally got to a place where I'm okay. That no matter the level of students I have that I am able to be happy with what I'm doing. So if it's cooperative learning or direct instruction or if it's a lot more of them independently or if I have to be with them every minute, I've figured it out and I'm okay." Although Jessica had a style of teaching that perhaps was more comfortable and she envisioned herself as a certain kind of teacher in the classroom, she also knew that it was important for her to modify her instructional practice if it meant better learning opportunities for her students.

During Jessica's five years of teaching at West Highland Area High School, Jessica had made changes to her instructional practice because of students' behavior needs and also because of their learning abilities. During Interview One, Jessica described her first year of teaching when she felt she needed to change her instructional practice and chose to rely more heavily on independent work in order to reduce student misbehavior.

> Megan: You mentioned too like I think it was your first or second year of teaching and you called home and you said that I'm doing a lot of independent work with my students.
>
> Jessica: I did.
>
> Megan: Was that different than what you envision that you wanted to do in your classroom or?
>
> Jessica: Definitely. You come in with these like grand ideas of you know these projects and all these wonderful things going on, and then I think I definitely felt like I was defeated that year. That was a hard year. Just figuring out who I was as a teacher, figuring out that this population of students is much different than what I expected teaching. It was really hard. It was- not that I was giving up, but it was almost like I knew I couldn't win. And this is what worked for them, and independent work worked. And it's hard to do that every day because you really don't feel like you're doing anything. But parents were very understanding. I didn't have one parent complain. And it was about six weeks that all they did was they came in, and the assignment was on the board, and they knew what they needed to do and if they needed help I would- I was walking around, monitoring, helping them. I've never done it since and I pray I never have to do it again because I hated it.

In the above excerpt, Jessica revealed her ability to adjust her instructional practice based on her students' needs and the need to assume a different teacher identity in order to better meet the needs of her students. However, Jessica voiced an underlying hesitation or tension with changing her instructional practice because she mentioned that she hoped that she never had to change her instructional practice to rely heavily on independent work again. Since Jessica believed that students' needs should guide instructional practice and since Jessica's teaching, learning, and assessment beliefs focused primarily on the student, perhaps it was easier for her to

change her instructional practice. However, she still faced a conflict because she held certain ideals about the type of teacher she wanted to be in the classroom.

5.6   SUMMARY

Throughout the study, it was evident that Jessica held many beliefs about teaching, learning, her students, and assessment that focused primarily on the needs of her students. Whether Jessica was defining learning, discussing the benefits of classroom assessment, or discussing best practices in teaching, Jessica framed these beliefs with students in mind. By placing students at the center of her beliefs, this perhaps made it easier for Jessica to modify her instructional practice because she believed that these modifications were in the best interest of her students.

Since Jessica's beliefs were focused on the needs of her students, it was challenging for me to locate misalignments in her instructional practice because Jessica acknowledged that it did not matter what her beliefs were about teaching; what mattered to Jessica was what her students needed. What may have appeared to be a misalignment in her instructional practice instead was deemed to be the result of her belief that she needed to modify her instructional practice based on her students' needs and the results of assessments. Therefore, the student superseded Jessica's vision of who she wanted to be as a teacher.

There were, however, apparent contradictions between individual beliefs within belief systems, specifically within her beliefs about her students. Throughout the five interviews, Jessica positioned herself as having high expectations for all of her students, something that made her different from the majority of teachers in her school context who perhaps had lower expectations for low-level students and students with behavioral issues. However, Jessica also

unconsciously voiced beliefs about her students that revealed that she enjoyed teaching higher-level students and that she did, in fact, have what could be perceived as lower expectations for her lower-level students in terms of the amount of work they completed and the level of thinking skills required for assignments and class activities. When analyzing Jessica's instructional practice, Jessica never verbalized these less conscious beliefs about ability levels to her students. Rather, she treated all students with respect, expressed confidence in their abilities, and served as a supportive and encouraging coach for all of her students. The contradictions within this belief system support belief theorists' (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968) previous understanding of belief systems in that contradictions between individual beliefs can exist within a belief system if an individual is not aware that a contradiction exists. In Jessica's case, she was not aware that she was unconsciously expressing a different belief about her students.

What was interesting about Jessica was her ability to capitalize on her teacher agency. Jessica became invested in the changes that occurred in her school context. Jessica thrived on her ability to become involved in all different aspects of the school context and felt rejuvenated by what she considered to be excellent leadership on the part of the new administrative staff and her ability to have a strong voice in the changes that were occurring in the curriculum. Overall, Jessica felt optimistic about the direction in which the school was heading and knew that if she was willing to invest her time and energy, she could make positive changes in the school context that were aligned with her beliefs. Jessica's decision to be actively involved in the school context and to have a voice in the curricular changes that were occurring in her district differed drastically from Jan's decision to remove herself from the school context by isolating herself in her own classroom. These different negotiation strategies employed by Jan and Jessica when

faced with changes in their school contexts will be discussed further in Chapter VII where I discuss the importance of having a strong administration team who will encourage teachers to contribute positively to the larger school context.

6.0   CHAPTER VI: REBECCA

6.1   INTRODUCTION

Rebecca, an English Language Arts teacher with five years of teaching experience, was employed at Covington Area High School for the duration of this six-month research study. Covington Area School District, the second school district that served as a research site for this research study, was a small, rural school district that continued to make Annually Yearly Progress (AYP) on the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA). Covington Area School District was a district in many ways very different from West Highland Area School District, the district in which both Jan and Jessica were employed. As described in Chapter III, I purposefully selected both school districts because I hypothesized that the school, curricular, and policy contexts might influence the types of pressures felt and negotiation strategies employed by the three teacher participants.

In this chapter, I first provide a detailed description of Rebecca and include a description of Rebecca's journey to becoming a teacher and the class that I observed for the duration of this six-month research study. Then, I outline Rebecca's beliefs about teaching – both general and discipline specific – as well as her beliefs about learning and her students, showing the connectedness of these beliefs within and across belief systems. Next, I present my analysis of

Rebecca's instructional practice, noting alignments and misalignments. Finally, I outline the tensions Rebecca faced between her core beliefs, her instructional practice, and/or the educational contexts. I describe the strategies Rebecca used to negotiate these tensions.

I demonstrate that Rebecca held numerous beliefs about teaching and about teaching English, specifically, making it challenging to locate her core beliefs. Furthermore, Rebecca's less core beliefs often aligned more directly with her instructional practice than her core beliefs, a finding that reveals the possible limitations of the interview methodology used in this research study and that challenges current theories of teacher beliefs that posit that more centrally located and connected beliefs will more strongly influence instructional practice. My analysis of Rebecca also revealed that she struggled to implement her beliefs about the teaching of literature, facing similar challenges to those Jan faced. However, Rebecca was able to identify these misalignments between her beliefs and instructional practices, yet she struggled to critically reflect and analyze this aspect of her teaching. Finally, Rebecca's understanding of the school community, specifically parents and students, who she perceived as not valuing education, conflicted with Rebecca's own personal beliefs about the value of education that were rooted in her family upbringing. Rebecca utilized two negotiation strategies including modifying her instructional practice and isolating herself in the classroom as a means of coming to terms with this tension.

6.2   DESCRIPTION OF REBECCA

6.2.1   Rebecca's childhood and family

During the course of the six-month research study, it was apparent that Rebecca had a strong relationship with her family and that her family life influenced who she was in the classroom. Growing up with her parents and her younger sister in Ohio only a few miles from her extended family, Rebecca recalled during the interviews how important family was and how her relatives did not move too far away from her family. Although Rebecca recalled numerous happy memories and experiences with her family, she also remembered the financial struggles her family faced and the importance her parents placed on education. Rebecca's parents were both employed during her childhood, but her father's employment was not always stable. Her father worked for the steel mills, and Rebecca recalled during Interview Three that her father often floated between jobs since the steel mills were frequently laying off workers: "My dad has been a supervisor at steel mills before in the past, which steel mills around here haven't been doing so well in the last two decades. So he would kind of go one place and then they would shut down, go to another place and then they would shut down." Rebecca's mother was a librarian, and Rebecca credited her mom's love of reading to her own interest in reading. During Interview Three, Rebecca stated, "She [her mom] read to me constantly and there were always books in our house…So I think that was a large educational influence in my life as well because of her having that job." Rebecca recalled that when she was growing up her family did not have the money to take music and dance lessons like other children did. Instead, Rebecca and her sister became active in dance but could afford lessons only once a week rather than five to six days a week like most of her childhood friends. Being raised by parents who valued education, Rebecca explained

172

in several interviews that this value and her childhood experiences influenced who she was in the classroom.

Another prominent role her parents played in Rebecca's upbringing was the emphasis they placed on the value of education. Rebecca explained during Interview Three that both of her parents were unable to attend college because of financial circumstances, but they still stressed the importance of an education. In between tears during Interview Two, Rebecca recalled the value her parents placed on education:

> I don't think my parents ever verbally said education is important. You must do this. But they really took an interest in whatever I talked about. What we were doing in school. And if I had any sort of projects, they would always be willing to help me if I needed that help. Not do it for me, but help me or listen to me when I talked about things. So I think that showed me that they cared and that they thought school was important....And I can just remember on graduation day. I've never seen my dad cry, and my dad- and now I'm going to start to cry. But I've never seen him cry before, and that was the first time. And just to know that he cared that much about my getting an education and I think I saw how important that was and I just want other kids to have the experience too and to feel like their parents really care about them and what they learn and to believe in them.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, Rebecca perceived her upbringing in a family that supported education to be different from the parents of her students who appeared, in her eyes, not to value education or school. This perceived difference in the value placed on education created a tension for Rebecca when faced with students whom she perceived as coming from a family background where education was not valued. When faced with this tension, Rebecca resolved not to change her beliefs about the importance of education and rather decided to modify her instructional practice in hopes of providing engaging learning opportunities for her students.

6.2.2 Rebecca's journey to becoming a teacher

Rebecca's journey to becoming a teacher was always a clear path; she always knew that she wanted to be a teacher. She played school with her younger sister at home, usually assuming the role of the teacher during these pretend-play moments. When choosing a college to attend, Rebecca selected a school that was known for its strong reputation in its undergraduate program in Education. After student teaching, Rebecca held a yearlong substitute position teaching ninth grade honors English and Theater Two and Three. She then taught at the middle school of the same district for one semester before teaching at Covington Area High School.

During her three and a half years at Covington Area High School, Rebecca had taught eighth and tenth grade English as well as twelfth grade Advanced Placement (AP) English. Over the course of the three and a half years, Rebecca also was the dance choreographer for the musical for one year, the coach of the Shakespeare competition, an advisor of students working on independent studies, and a piano teacher, giving lessons to interested students. In these three and a half years, there had been several changes in the administrative staff including three different assistant principals and a new superintendent since Rebecca started teaching in this district. Rebecca was currently working on a master's degree in education at a local university.

6.2.3 Rebecca's classroom and her students

Rebecca was one of nine English/Reading teachers at Covington Area High School. The year of this study, Rebecca was responsible for teaching four sections of eighth grade English and one section of AP English for twelfth graders. Although at different times during the six-month research study I observed all of Rebecca's classes, I decided to observe her fourth period eighth

grade class every week since I did not see significant differences in Rebecca's instructional practice from one eighth grade class to the next. I chose not to observe the AP class since one aspect of my study was to examine the policy pressures that influenced Rebecca's instructional practice. Since the students enrolled in AP English were seniors and had already taken the PSSAs, I assumed that there would be little policy pressures influencing her instructional practice for this class. In addition, the AP class was composed of a total of five students, which was atypical compared to the eighth grade classes in which 20-30 students were enrolled.

The fourth period class I observed on a weekly basis for the duration of the six-month research study was composed of eleven boys and eleven girls with one student (Brett) moving to another district in the middle of the study. Students in this class had a variety of academic achievement levels including several students who consistently made academic honor roll while three students were taking this class for the second time because they had failed the first time.

The curriculum for this class appeared open to Rebecca's discretion as long as the content she was teaching did not overlap with the other English/Reading classes. When asked during Interview One to describe the school's English curriculum, Rebecca explained that she felt she had broad curricular and pedagogical freedom:

> I have a lot of freedom, which I'm very lucky to have. My structure this year in some ways is based around what the elementary school does and in some ways it's based around what the rest of the department does in the future. We don't want any repeats. So we spend a lot of time on inservice days making sure that no one is repeating what somebody else is doing. Because we do have freedom from the district to do what we want as long as it meets the standards, but we also have to make sure that there's no overlap.

Rebecca further elaborated on the freedom in the curriculum and mentioned that this year, because the budget allowed for it, she was able to purchase a new novel, *A Northern Light*, that she would be teaching to her students. Her ability to purchase and teach this new novel

demonstrated that there was flexibility not only in how Rebecca approached her day-to-day instruction but also in the pieces of literature that she chose to include in her classroom. During the six-month research study, I observed two literature units centered on three different texts – *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Giver*, and *A Northern Light* – as well as instruction focused on writing a research paper and preparing for the writing portion of the PSSA.

I would characterize Rebecca as an organized teacher whose first priority was to create a classroom environment where learning was the central focus. As a teacher, Rebecca was prepared for all class sessions, created classroom activities that would engage students in learning, and presented herself as the utmost professional. Rebecca was also a teacher who cared about her students' education and about preparing her students for their futures.

6.3   REBECCA'S BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING, AND HER STUDENTS

In this section, I present the results of interview data collected on Rebecca's beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students. As previously described in Chapter III, Rebecca participated in five interviews over the course of the six-month research study. Using the same analysis process as described in Chapters III and IV, I located Rebecca's core beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students, and I outline these beliefs in the sections that follow.

6.3.1 Rebecca's beliefs about teaching and teaching English

A cultural model about teaching became apparent after I coded and analyzed the data. I constructed the following narrative to capture Rebecca's cultural model about teaching:

> Rebecca believed that an organized classroom where learning was the primary focus was the best way to run a classroom. As the teacher in the classroom, Rebecca believed it was her responsibility to create a fun learning environment where there were a variety of classroom activities and assignments and a chance for students to make personal connections and to express their opinions and multiple perspectives on what they were learning. She believed that literature lent itself to the sharing of personal opinions for she believed that the interpretation of literature was personal and in order to create personal interpretations, students needed to apply the literature to their own lives. Furthermore, Rebecca believed that she should be a constant professional – taking her planning and implementation of lessons seriously and engaging in conversations with her students that were school appropriate – and she strived to help her students to value their education.

The following tables provide evidence as to how I arrived at my interpretations in order to create the above narrative of Rebecca's cultural model of teaching. These tables show the individual beliefs in each of the belief systems about teaching and include information regarding frequency counts and the level of prominence of these beliefs across all coded teaching beliefs and interviews. When analyzing Rebecca's general teaching beliefs, I found that Rebecca held a wider variety of equally strong beliefs about teaching than Jan and Jessica.

Table 28: General Teaching Beliefs – Non-Discipline Specific

General Teaching Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of General Teaching Beliefs	Number of Interviews
There should be a balance between getting to know your students during class and a focus on learning	14	22%	4
A classroom should be organized and not a free for all	6	10%	4
Students should have the opportunity to share opinions without judgment	6	10%	4
Students should be given opportunities for creative expression	6	10%	4
Students should be given a variety of activities during class	5	8%	3
Students should be given choice for assignments and activities	5	8%	1
Students should have the opportunity to make personal connections with what they are learning	5	8%	4
Teachers should be professional	4	6%	1
Learning and the classroom should be fun	4	6%	3
Students should be given opportunities in class to hear multiple perspectives	3	5%	1
Teachers should have high standards	2	3%	1
Teachers should move around the room when teaching	1	2%	1
Teachers should have a goal for every lesson	1	2%	1
Teachers should be well-versed in their content areas	1	2%	1

Table 29: Beliefs About the Teaching of Literature – Discipline Specific

Teaching Literature Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of Teaching Literature Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Apply literature to your own life	10	56%	3
Variation of interpretations	6	33%	3
Not always a right and wrong answer when reading	1	6%	1
A teacher should skip over objectionable language	1	6%	1

Table 30: Beliefs About the Teaching of Writing – Discipline Specific

Teaching Writing Belief	Frequency Count	Percentage of Teaching Writing Beliefs	Number of Interviews
Teachers should show students examples of writing	4	50%	1
Teachers should explain to students the different components of an essay	2	25%	1
Teachers should teach brainstorming techniques	1	13%	1
Teachers should be consistent with their writing requirements	1	13%	1

6.3.2 Co-occurrences within the general teaching belief system

I then examined the connectedness of the individual beliefs *within* and *across* these belief systems about teaching. Table 31 reveals the connectedness of individual beliefs within the general teaching belief system.

Table 31: Co-Occurrences Within the General Teaching Belief System

Episode Number	Rapport with students	Organized	Share opinions	Creative expression	Variety of activities	Student choice	Personally connect	Fun	High standards	Well-versed in content	Active teacher
1.4			X				X	X			
1.7				X	X			X			
1.15		X		X	X		X				
2.1	X								X	X	
2.2						X					X
2.4			X	X	X						
2.8		X				X					
3.6	X	X									
4.14			X	X	X		X				
4.23						X		X			
5.2						X	X				

What is significant about these co-occurrences is the lack of a strong pattern in the co-occurrences *within* the general teaching belief system. As evident in the above table as well as in Rebecca's general teaching beliefs shown in Table 28, Rebecca held 14 general teaching beliefs including beliefs about the role of the teacher in the classroom and beliefs about instructional delivery and classroom organization. Perhaps because of the large number of general teaching beliefs that Rebecca held and the similar frequency counts for some of these individual beliefs (e.g., three beliefs occurred five times and three other beliefs occurred four times), there were numerous co-occurrences of several of her general teaching beliefs, but there were not two or three of those beliefs that always occurred with less frequent beliefs. Therefore, it was

problematic to determine Rebecca's core general teaching beliefs only on the co-occurrences *within* the general teaching belief system. I argue that it is necessary to look at co-occurrences *across* Rebecca's other belief systems in order to determine her core general teaching beliefs. The co-occurrences *across* belief systems will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.3 Co-occurrences within the teaching of literature belief system

Table 32: Co-Occurrences Within the Teaching of Literature Belief System

Episode Number	Apply literature to your own life	Variation of interpretations	A teacher should skip over objectionable language
2.4	X	X	
5.1	X		X

Although Rebecca held two frequently expressed beliefs about the teaching of literature (as depicted in Table 29), there were very few co-occurrences *within* Rebecca's belief system about the teaching of literature (as depicted in Table 32). According to belief theory (Abelson 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968), a belief that is not deeply connected to other beliefs is less likely to strongly influence instructional practice. However, similar to what I argued previously in this chapter, when one is looking for the *centrality* of an individual belief, both co-occurrences *within* and *across* belief systems should be calculated. If numerous co-occurrences between Rebecca's beliefs about teaching literature and individual beliefs across other belief systems were evident, these co-occurrences across belief systems could mean that, in fact, Rebecca's beliefs about teaching literature were core beliefs but were not directly connected *within* her belief system about the teaching of literature. Therefore, in order to locate Rebecca's core beliefs, I located the co-occurrences *across* belief systems, and I present these results later

181

in this chapter. In addition, as will be discussed in Chapter VII when comparing and contrasting the findings across the three teacher participants, Rebecca and Jan's most frequently stated beliefs about the teaching of literature seemed to be "ideals" for which all English Language Arts teachers strive. Many English Language Arts teachers want to encourage personal connections to be made when reading literature and to value multiple interpretations. However, these "ideal" beliefs rooted in literary theory may be more challenging to implement into a teacher's instructional practice perhaps as a result of varying levels of student ability, time and curricular constraints, and the historical notion of the role of a teacher.

6.3.4   Co-occurrences within the teaching of writing belief system

Table 33: Co-Occurrences Within the Teaching of Writing Belief System

Episode Number	Teachers should show students examples of writing	Teachers should teach brainstorming techniques	Teachers should be consistent with their writing requirements
4.6	X	X	X
4.7	X		X

Rebecca mentioned her beliefs about the teaching of writing only when asked directly about these beliefs and instructional practices in the interviews. Therefore, it can be derived that Rebecca's beliefs about the teaching of writing were less connected within and across belief systems, therefore limiting the depth and centrality of these individual beliefs. However, it is important to note that there was a strong alignment between Rebecca's beliefs about writing verbalized during Interview Four and her writing instruction. This alignment suggests possible limitations of using frequency counts in data to determine core beliefs, for just because a teacher does not frequently verbalize a belief does not necessarily mean that it is not a core belief.

Additionally, the discourse Rebecca used to verbalize her beliefs about teaching writing in comparison to the discourse she used to verbalize her beliefs about teaching literature provides insight into another possible reason for a strong alignment between her teaching writing beliefs and instructional practice. Rebecca's expressed teaching writing beliefs all began with "the teacher should" and then included a specific instructional strategy a teacher should use when teaching writing. The discourse of Rebecca's teaching literature beliefs was removed from the role of the teacher and instead provided a description of literature and how it should be interpreted. Since the teaching literature beliefs were not framed around the role of the teacher and the instructional practices that should be implemented, it was not surprising that the teaching writing beliefs aligned with Rebecca's writing instruction since the belief itself was worded in such a way as to describe the instructional practices Rebecca wanted to implement in her classroom. As will be discussed in the implication section of Chapter VII, this finding suggests that how a belief is worded may influence the teacher's ability to allow this belief to influence his/her instructional practice. This suggests that both preservice and inservice teachers need assistance in not only formulating their beliefs but when formulating these beliefs, conceptualizing this belief in relation to instructional practice and consciously wording the belief as one regarding instruction in hopes of allowing this belief to influence their instructional practice.

6.3.5 Rebecca's beliefs about learning

Table 34: Beliefs About Learning

Belief About Learning	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Learning	Number of Interviews
Motivation is needed to learn something	5	38%	2
Learning takes place in discussions	2	15%	2
Personal connections need to be made for learning to occur	2	15%	2
Rewards don't inspire learning	1	8%	1
Learning is acquiring a new perspective	1	8%	1
Learning is an aha moment	1	8%	1
Learning is difficult to assess in large classes	1	8%	1

Similar to Rebecca's beliefs about writing, Rebecca mentioned her beliefs about learning only when she was directly asked in the form of an interview question (e.g., What is learning? How do you know when learning is going well?). However, Rebecca's beliefs about learning, specifically her three most frequently expressed beliefs (e.g., motivation is needed to learn something, learning takes place in discussions, personal connections are needed in order for learning to occur), informed Rebecca's general teaching beliefs and, in a sense, mirrored these general teaching beliefs. For example, one of Rebecca's general teaching beliefs was that students should have the opportunity to make personal connections with what they are learning. Rebecca extended this general teaching belief into her learning belief by believing that learning occurred only when these personal connections were made by students; therefore, it was important for a teacher to create a classroom space where connections were made. Within this belief system, there was only one co-occurrence that occurred when Rebecca tried to define

learning, and she said that learning was acquiring a new perspective and learning was an aha moment. Further co-occurrences *across* belief systems will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.6   Rebecca's beliefs about her students

Table 35: Beliefs About Her Students

Belief About Her Students	Frequency Count	Percentage of Beliefs About Her Students	Number of Interviews
Education is not important to her students	9	75%	3
Students at this school become disrespectful as they age	1	8%	1
Eighth graders have energy	1	8%	1
Twelfth graders are lazy	1	8%	1

Based on the above table, it can be inferred that Rebecca's core belief about her students was that education was not important to her students since this belief was verbalized 75% of the time when discussing beliefs about her students and this belief was verbalized in three of the five interviews. In addition, the only co-occurrence that occurred within Rebecca's belief system about her students was that education was not important to her students and that older students became more disrespectful as they aged. Rebecca's belief that her students did not value education contradicted Rebecca's own personal belief, rooted in her family upbringing, that education was important and therefore created a tension between Rebecca's commitment to education and her teaching and her perceived understanding of the community, specifically parents and students, who did not value education. This tension and how Rebecca negotiated this space will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.3.7   Co-occurrences across belief systems

After determining Rebecca's individual beliefs and identifying connectedness within belief systems, I then looked at co-occurrences *across* belief systems in order to determine Rebecca's core beliefs across all belief systems. Table 36 identifies the interview episodes in which the beliefs from different belief systems co-occurred. Those co-occurrences marked in **bold** reveal the co-occurrences that were most prevalent.

Table 36: Co-Occurrences Across Belief Systems

Episode Number	General Teaching									Literature				Learning			Students		
	Rapport & learning	Organized	Share opinions	Creative expression	Variety of activities	Student choice	Personal connections	Fun	Active teacher	Apply to life	Variety of interpretations	Right/Wrong answer	Objectionable language	Motivation	Personal connections	Rewards don't inspire	Education not important	Disrespectful with age	Energetic 8th graders
1.13	X								X							X	X	X	
2.2						X													X
2.4			X	X		X				X	X				X				
2.8		X			X									X					
2.13			X								X	X							
2.14							X			X									
4.2			X								X								
4.14			X	X			X			X					X				
5.1					X					X			X						
5.2						X				X									
5.3								X						X					
5.7			X							X	X								

The results depicted in the above table helped me to locate Rebecca's core beliefs within the large number of beliefs Rebecca had verbalized across the five interviews. The rationale for my interest in minimizing the number of beliefs that I would analyze in the classroom discourse was because I was interested in the core beliefs that were frequently stated across several interviews and co-occurred within and across belief systems. The results of my analysis revealed that these core beliefs drew from two belief systems – general teaching beliefs and beliefs about the teaching of literature – and included (a) students should be given the opportunity to share their opinions, (b) you should apply literature to your own life, and (c) there are a variety of interpretations to literature.

In sum, Rebecca viewed her classroom as one where students should be able to share their opinions in an environment where they would not be judged for their opinions. This belief was rooted in her own personal experiences where she witnessed one of her high school English teachers criticize one of Rebecca's classmates for not having a "sound" interpretation or an "informed" opinion of a particular novel. Rebecca's belief in recognizing the value of students' opinions mirrored Rebecca's core beliefs about teaching literature in that (a) students should make connections between literature and their own lives and that (b) there are a variety of interpretations, therefore allowing for different opinions about a literary text to be expressed. Identifying these three beliefs as Rebecca's core beliefs, I hypothesized that there would be strong connections between these three core beliefs and her instructional practice. However, I was less certain of these strong connections because of the large number of individual beliefs Rebecca held concerning teaching and because of the discourse Rebecca used to verbalize her beliefs about the teaching of literature, which did not specifically describe Rebecca's role in the implementation of this belief into instructional practice.

6.4   REBECCA'S INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE

During the six-month research study, I observed class sessions related to writing instruction as well as instruction on reading texts such as *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Giver*, and *A Northern Light*. Regardless of the content of the instruction, Rebecca always made use of every second of class time, beginning class right when the bell rang, engaging students throughout the entire period through class discussion or individual or group activities, and ending the class less than one minute before the bell. Rebecca also was always very organized, having students pick up handouts on the way in, having the objectives and agenda for the day written on the whiteboard, and having all instructional materials prepared. Never throughout my weekly observations for six months did I see Rebecca unprepared for class.

In this section I explore the relationship between Rebecca's beliefs about teaching and teaching literature specifically and her instructional practice by providing evidence of alignments and misalignments. In this analysis, I draw heavily from my field notes, transcripts of classroom discourse, and teaching artifacts including handouts and assessments given to students by Rebecca. For Rebecca's beliefs about the teaching of literature, I analyzed the classroom discourse and teaching artifacts for *A Northern Light* for two reasons: (a) *A Northern Light* was the novel I observed from the beginning to the end of the unit and (b) during Interviews Four and Five, Rebecca was asked to reflect on her teaching beliefs and her instructional practice for the unit on *A Northern Light*.

6.4.1 Alignments

There were numerous alignments between Rebecca's beliefs and instructional practice. What was particularly interesting was that those beliefs that were not considered to be Rebecca's core beliefs – since they had low frequency and co-occurrence counts – actually aligned strongly with her instructional practice. For example, Rebecca believed that a classroom should be organized and not a "free for all" and that students should be given a variety of activities during the class period. This was evident in every class period because Rebecca was always organized, the class time was spent productively, and students engaged in several activities throughout the period including independent reading, whole class discussions, group work, Think Pair Shares, and other activities. Other alignments between Rebecca's beliefs and her instructional practice included her belief that learning should be fun. In several student interviews, students expressed that they enjoyed Rebecca's class because they were having fun while learning. During a student interview, James explained why he liked reading books in Rebecca's class: "I think it is pretty neat that she [Rebecca] goes out of her way to do something to make the book more fun." Rebecca also expressed a belief about providing student choice on assignments and activities and that there should be opportunities for creative expression. As evident on her culminating assignment for *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Rebecca allowed students to choose what project they wanted to complete – a diorama, iPod list for a character from the novel, thank you letters, a song, a scrapbook of a character's journey, or pack a character's bag. Rebecca mentioned during an interview that she viewed projects as a good way to provide students with an opportunity for creative expression and student choice. Whenever possible, Rebecca alternated between an exam and a culminating project at the end of a unit.

Similarly, I observed strong alignments between Rebecca's beliefs about her role in the classroom and her instructional practice. Rebecca believed that teachers should be professional. Rebecca demonstrated her professionalism throughout the six-month research study by always being prepared for all class periods, by treating her students with the utmost respect, and by following all school rules and policies. Rebecca also believed that part of this professionalism was the need for teachers to be well-versed in their content area. Rebecca was an avid reader and had a strong background in literature. She also was enrolled in a graduate program at a local university to continue to improve her instructional practice and content knowledge. There also was a connection between Rebecca's belief that teachers should have a learning goal for every lesson and Rebecca's instructional practice. Rebecca verbalized this learning goal to her students at the beginning of every class period and also included learning objectives on all of her lesson plans.

Although there were numerous alignments between Rebecca's teaching beliefs and her instructional practice, it is important to note that the aforementioned beliefs were not Rebecca's core beliefs. Belief theorists (Abelson 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968) hypothesize that core beliefs are the beliefs that are more likely to be directly aligned with instructional practice. However, this was not the case for Rebecca. This finding makes me wonder why there appeared to be such a strong connection between her less central and less connected beliefs and her instructional practice. One possible reason is that her general teaching beliefs were easier to enact in practice. For example, if a teacher wanted to run an organized classroom, there are particular items a teacher could easily implement – an agenda, an opening activity, a closing activity, materials prepared ahead of time – in order to create this organized classroom. In addition, Rebecca's general teaching beliefs focused on the role of the teacher and

the students, and these beliefs were conceptualized to include thoughts on instructional practice, therefore, making the leap from her belief to instructional practice was easier since both the belief and instructional practice were clearly connected within the belief itself. As will be discussed in the section that follows, Rebecca found it more challenging to align her core beliefs about literature instruction (students should have the opportunity to apply literature to their own lives and recognize that there are a variety of literary interpretations) as well as those general teaching beliefs that mirrored her teaching literature beliefs (students should have the opportunity to share their opinions without judgment, students should have the opportunity to make personal connections with what they are learning, and students should be given opportunities in class to hear multiple perspectives). One possible reason for the disconnect between Rebecca's core teaching literature beliefs and her instructional practice is that these teaching literature beliefs were more challenging to implement in the classroom, regardless of how strong these beliefs were to Rebecca's teaching, because they were derived from theory and not conceptualized in terms of instructional practice. Additionally, without seeing as a student effective models of how these literature beliefs could be enacted in practice, Rebecca was at a disadvantage of making this a reality in her instructional practice.

6.4.2 Misalignments

Similar to Jan, the misalignments that I identified and presented to Rebecca during Interview Five were those core beliefs related to her literature instruction: (a) you should apply literature to your own life and (b) there are a variety of interpretations of literature. In addition, Rebecca's core general teaching belief that students should be given the opportunity to share their opinions related to literature instruction was also presented to Rebecca during these interviews since this

was Rebecca's third core belief. In order to analyze for alignments and misalignments between her core beliefs and her instructional practice, I examined five transcripts of classroom discourse about the novel *A Northern Light* and the packet of questions that students received at the beginning of the unit that guided these class discussions. I examined both the classroom discourse and packet of questions for the following: (a) the types of questions asked (yes/no, close-ended, open-ended), looking specifically at whether the question allowed for multiple interpretations; (b) the number of opinion questions asked; and (c) the extent to which the class discussion deviated from the packet of questions.

Rebecca gave students a question packet at the beginning of the unit. Sometimes the questions were completed as homework when a chapter or two was assigned as reading the night before. At other times, the questions were answered in class, either in the form of class discussion after reading the novel aloud as a class, individually after silent reading during class, or in small groups if students were given time to read in groups. The packet of questions had questions for each of the 49 sections of the novel. For each section, there were approximately two to five questions. These questions primarily related to vocabulary, literary terms, character development, plot, and setting.

After coding the packet of questions for the type of question (yes/no, close-ended, open-ended) and looking specifically at the number of questions that asked for students to give their opinion or to relate the text to their own lives, it was evident that close-ended questions primarily composed this document with 127 out of 140 of the packet questions being coded as close-ended questions. Examples of the close-ended questions included when students were asked (a) to define a literary term (e.g., allusion, metaphor, simile), (b) to give a summary of an event that happened in the novel (e.g., What is Weaver's mother saving for? What did Grace ask Mattie to

do?), and (c) to answer a why question that had a limited response because the answer was explicitly stated in the novel by one of the characters (e.g., Why does Mattie think she will not be able to go to New York City?). Conversely, there were a total of 13 out of 140 questions included in the packet that did allow for more student opinion and personal connections to be made, composing 9% of the total number of questions asked in this packet. These open-ended and opinion questions were worded as "what do you think" and allowed for student opinions to be voiced. These questions also asked students to make connections between their personal lives (e.g., Think of a day in your life you will never forget) and something that was happening in the novel, although students were not asked explicitly to make these connections.

After coding for the types of questions posed in the question packet, I then examined the classroom discourse for the five days of observations of when Rebecca and the class discussed *A Northern Light*. I analyzed the classroom discourse in order to determine whether the question packet guided the discussion of the novel or whether Rebecca and the class deviated from this packet of questions. The results of this coding are summarized below in Table 37.

Table 37: Discussion of *A Northern Light*

Date	Question from the Question Packet	Close-Ended Elaboration Question	Close-Ended Vocabulary Question	Open-Ended Personal Connection Question
5/8/08	6	1	3	**1**
5/9/08	9	0	0	**2**
5/14/08	15	11	0	**0**
5/21/08	9	4	1	**0**
6/2/08	4	3	0	**1**

The results of this coding revealed that 60% of Rebecca's questions during class were asked word-for-word from the question sheet; therefore, the majority of questions that were asked during discussions of this novel were close-ended questions rather than open-ended

questions that asked for students' opinions. Furthermore, when Rebecca did deviate from the question sheet, 33% of these additional questions were close-ended with only 6% of these additional questions being open-ended. The following excerpt from class discussion is representative of the literature discussions Rebecca led. In this particular excerpt, the questions came directly from the question sheet.

> Rebecca: Okay. We are going to pause right there. Take a look at Number Two. What do Mattie and Royal disagree about? Curt.
>
> Curt: How good books are and that they're not a waste of time.
>
> Rebecca: Okay. So who believes that books are exciting and good?
>
> Curt: Mattie.
>
> Rebecca: Mattie. Okay. So Mattie believes that books are kind of the most exciting thing, and Royal believes that other things in life are more exciting.
>
> (A ten-second pause while students write the answer on their question sheets.)
>
> Rebecca: Is there anything else they disagree about? Kim.
>
> Kim: Her word of the day.
>
> Rebecca: Okay. He says that her word of the day is silly.

This excerpt demonstrates the literal, IRE characteristics (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1982) of the discussions that Rebecca led and how they differed greatly from two core literature beliefs (that students should apply literature to their lives and that there are a variety of interpretations) and her core general teaching belief (that students should have opportunities to share their opinions).

When asked during Interview Five to reflect on the *A Northern Light* unit, Rebecca identified aspects of her teaching she would change when teaching this unit next year, and the

conversation focused specifically on the types of questions that were included on the question sheets and discussed during class.

> Rebecca: I do have questions on there that there is a clearly correct or incorrect answer as well. And I think that there probably are more of those questions on my question sheet where there is a correct answer for, but I think I try as much as possible to make at least a quarter of those questions opinion questions or something that they can reflect on.

> Megan: That's interesting. And something that came up too, you talked a lot about this balance you want when talking about literature to bring in their [student] opinion but also have right and wrong answers, fact-based answers. So I guess my question is do you feel that with *A Northern Light*, thinking about it now that you taught it, did you have that balance between the type of questions that you asked and the activities that you did?

> Rebecca: I think there's a decent balance but that it could weigh a little heavier on the opinion side and creativity side. So I think that there could be a little more of that and it would strike a better balance.

> Megan: Oh. So you're saying right now you think it's more fact based when you reflect on it.

> Rebecca: Yeah. I think it's more fact based, thinking back about my question sheets. But I think it could be more opinion based at times.

> Megan: Does that bother you at all that the balance wasn't there 100 percent?

> Rebecca: I'm not going to beat myself up too much about it because this is my first time teaching this book. I think every time I teach something new for the first time there's always going to be things that I'm gonna want to improve later, and I think it's really hard sometimes to think so far ahead in the book. Did I have this balance? And sometimes it's hard to see until you're to the end of it if there was that balance or not. So yes I'm disappointed that there's not as great a balance as I would like there to be, but I'm not extremely worried because I still think that students were really able to relate to this book and really get interested in reading from it.

Rebecca revealed in Interview Five that she was aware of this misalignment and that she wanted to include more opinion questions on the question sheet and during class discussions when she taught this novel for a second time. She came to terms with this misalignment by mentioning the limitations of her ability to have a strong alignment between her beliefs and instructional practice because this was the first time that she had taught the novel, and she hoped

196

that there would be a stronger alignment the next time she taught this novel. Not only did she plan on revising the types of questions included in the question packet, but she also hoped to include more activities in class while reading the novel rather than simply answering questions each class period. It was evident during two of my observations that Rebecca was already trying to implement more creative activities in the classroom that allowed for multiple interpretations to be voiced. Rebecca had students perform one section of the novel allowing for different interpretations in how the novel was performed. Rebecca also implemented a hot-seat activity that allowed students to take on the persona of a character and to answer questions based on what they knew about this character.

However, in the above excerpt of Rebecca's reflection on her instructional practice for *A Northern Light*, she quantified the number of questions she felt should be opinion questions (one quarter), and she also appeared to minimize the extent of the misalignment by explaining that this was the first time that she taught the novel, so one would expect certain misalignments to occur. Although I did not prompt Rebecca to further investigate her belief that there should be a quarter of opinion questions composing the overall questions nor did I ask her to explain specifically what she would do differently in order to allow for a greater alignment in the future, Rebecca appeared to be generally satisfied with her literary instructional practice, and I felt that she missed an opportunity to critically analyze her instructional practice. Since Rebecca had the freedom to teach *A Northern Light* in whatever way she deemed appropriate since the school's curriculum did not specify guidelines and requirements for the teaching of this novel, partially because it was a new text that had never been taught, I wondered what caused Rebecca to be unable to implement her beliefs about the teaching of literature. Furthermore, Rebecca seemed to come to terms with the misalignment between her teaching literature beliefs and her instructional

practice, yet she was aware of tensions in her school context that conflicted with her general teaching beliefs. Similar to Jan, Rebecca was more inclined to identify tensions within her school context rather than tensions within her own instructional practice.

6.5   REBECCA'S STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING TENSION

While Rebecca was aware of the previously described misalignment between her beliefs and instructional practice, she placed more importance on aspects of the school context that resulted in her having to modify her instructional practice. Rebecca described several tensions that she faced as a teacher at Covington Area High School. The tensions included Rebecca's interactions with students and the parents of students whom she thought did not value education, something that conflicted with her own childhood upbringing in which her parents valued and stressed the importance of an excellent education. A tension related to the lack of importance placed on education were the discipline problems Rebecca encountered with her tenth grade students during the first year of her teaching at Covington Area High School. In addition, there were tensions that involved the faculty and administrators at Covington Area High School with these tensions emerging when Rebecca would disagree with their approach to and beliefs about teaching. In these three areas of tensions, Rebecca employed several different negotiation strategies to navigate these areas. These negotiation strategies are described in the following section.

It is important to note that Rebecca frequently aligned her beliefs and her instructional practices with the administration, mentioning in several interviews that she did not have to adjust her instructional practices because of school-wide mandates, for usually Rebecca was already

teaching the way that the administrators wanted to see. For example, two school-wide initiatives that were part of the strategic plan were teaching bell-to-bell and differentiating instruction. Rebecca explained during Interview Four that she already used these approaches in her teaching:

> Megan: Is bell to bell something that was a difficult adjustment for you or did you see the value in it and you thought you were doing it anyway?

> Rebecca: It wasn't an adjustment for me at all because I typically found that I would plan too much than I could accomplish in a period. I always tried to achieve more than we really had time for. And I think especially my first couple of years there I was still guilty of that. So for me it wasn't a punishment at all. It was actually like oh I'm already doing that. You know not a big deal.

Rather than having to change her instructional practices or her beliefs about teaching, Rebecca was fortunate to be in a school environment in which she believed her beliefs about teaching were supported by her administrators. However, Rebecca did feel a tension between her beliefs and instructional practices and the school community and fellow teachers in the school building. These were areas where Rebecca felt forced to modify her instructional practice in order to meet the wishes of her students, the parents of her students, and fellow teachers.

6.5.1 Modifying instructional practice to meet students' needs: Hitting a brick wall

One approach Rebecca used to negotiate the tension created by what she perceived as a limited value placed on education by both students and parents was to change her instructional practice in order to encourage her students to behave and to value their education. One of the biggest challenges Rebecca felt that she faced as a teacher at Covington Area High School was handling discipline problems when she taught tenth grade students. Rebecca equated these discipline problems with the lack of interest students had in school and she viewed parents as contributing to the idea that education, and therefore school, was not important. During Interview One when

asked to describe a memorable teaching moment, Rebecca chose to describe in detail the discipline problems she encountered with a tenth grade English class her first year of teaching at Covington Area High School. Rebecca described the discipline problems she faced as a first-year teacher and her decision to modify her instructional practice by giving students extrinsic rewards for good behavior.

> Rebecca: I think my second year of teaching here I had tenth grade, and I think it was my first wake up call that not every student is going to want to learn and that you can have a large majority of kids in your class who are very defiant and really don't want to be here and really don't care about you or the class…. And I think that that was the first time I thought, wow, I'm going to really have to work extremely hard to get their attention and motivate them. And I had always put a lot of time into my lesson plans but I found that the things that I had done before were just not going to work with them. I pretty much on a daily basis would have kids sometimes get in my face or shout at me. I had things thrown at me such as sharpened pencils and coins. They would destroy things in the room. We had dictionaries destroyed….I had a substitute here one day too and they had a soccer game with my dictionaries that I had just ordered. They destroyed windows and ripped the screens out and would throw things out the windows as well. Which I mean you can't physically pull them away and stop them, and I could turn them into the office and send them down, but a lot of times even when I would try to do that, they would refuse to go to the office and start swearing and get mad at me. So then I would have to call for someone to come up and get them from my classroom, but principals are on lunch duty a lot of times during that fifth period, so it would be hard for me even to get a hold of administration to come watch them. I know for a few times I did actually have administrators that would have to stand outside my door and watch them as a class and make sure they weren't doing anything. And they would pull kids out. I had a couple kids pulled out who remained in ISS for my period for the rest of the year because they were so disruptive that I couldn't continue and they were destroying so many things in the classroom.

> Megan: And you said that you realized for the first time with that class that you had to sort of adjust your teaching or you had to think about it differently. Can you give an example of how you approached it differently or how you pushed through in order to teach?

> Rebecca: Yeah. I don't necessarily think that I'm happy that I did this, but I had to give them a lot of ultimatums, and I'm not sure that that definitely worked out for me. But it was things like you have to get this done within this amount of time to ensure that they were working because I couldn't get them to work otherwise. For a few of them, a grade was important to their parents, not necessarily them but to their parents. I did a lot more of calling home with them. It didn't show results for me unfortunately, but I tried. I tried to make everything relate to them and their personal experiences. I tried to find out what

they liked and disliked. I had them fill out surveys, which I always do with my students, but I paid a lot more attention to that. I tried to give rewards when they did follow what I went along with. I don't really like to give kids rewards because I don't really think that will inspire them to want to learn intrinsically, so I really try to avoid giving candy or things like that. I really don't like to do that. But with that class, I found that some days that did help me to give some sort of reward whether it be you know Starburst or some sort of candy at the end. If it could get me through an activity, I was willing to do it at that point because everything else had pretty much failed for me. And some of them had come to expect that you know at home. You know their parents, if they did something, they would get a reward. And so I found that I almost had to cater to that. One-on-one talks with some of them. I would give positive notes to some of them if they were doing what they were supposed to be doing….Those were the things I tried when I was at my last resort.

In the above interview transcript, Rebecca described the student misbehavior that she was surprised to encounter her first year at Covington Area High School. When faced with this challenge, Rebecca implemented different strategies in hopes of motivating her students to care about their schoolwork and their behavior in her class. In the end, she decided to use extrinsic rewards as a means of motivating her students and felt that this was her only choice in this situation since students had "come to expect" rewards from their parents for their behavior. In this interview transcript, Rebecca reveals a tension between her approach to motivating students and the approach of parents in the community. Furthermore, Rebecca describes that when she was at her "last resort" or felt that there were no other options, she found it necessary to temporarily change her instructional practice, which then created a misalignment between her beliefs and instructional practice.

Later in the interview, Rebecca was asked to reflect on her decision to give extrinsic rewards to her tenth graders and how she felt about changing her instructional practice in order to accommodate the needs of her students.

Megan: So going back a little bit to this reward. You mentioned that that was something that you didn't necessarily support or were sort of against but then you realized that you needed to do it because that's what was going to work in the classroom. How did you feel

about making that decision to do something that maybe didn't match up with what you initially wanted to do in your classroom?

Rebecca: I still don't like that I did it. I like to stick to my teaching philosophies that I personally have. And I don't feel that it was entirely successful. It may have gotten me through a period but did it help them become life-long learners? No, probably not. It got them to do what I wanted them to do during that 40 minutes. So I don't feel good about the decision that I made but I guess that I was just out of options and I was frustrated and I was tired. And I think that's why I gave in to it.

Megan: And why do you think you came to that point where you had to make that decision? Like what was really causing the frustration? Was it the students? Was it the context?

Rebecca: It was the students' attitudes towards me I think. I know that not every student is going to like me, and I'm okay with that to a degree. But I think personally it's hard to take every day students not liking you and hating everything that you do. And even though you try to help them and try to be nice to them as much as I could. Even if you did something nice to them they would come back the next day and be just as mean as they were before. And so I think- they were more personally insulting than any class I've had. Like some students don't follow your rules and you expect a certain degree of that. But in terms of- I mean I would have kids say things about how I would look that day or that I was stupid. Just these comments I think were personally insulting to me. And so emotionally I was so stressed out at night that it was hard for me to focus on being a good teacher and overcoming that because I took it personally even though I knew I shouldn't have, it was hard not to. And when you're getting things thrown at you there's a certain aspect of fear coming to the classroom each day.

Megan: Definitely.

Rebecca: I've had my tires slashed too. So.

Megan: Oh really. Oh my gosh. So how did you decide to come back the following year after like the experience that seems horrible?

Rebecca: Hmm. That's a good question. It was hard for me to come back. I think knowing that I was going to have tenth grade again, but I had already had them as eighth graders, so I knew them….Also, I just didn't know where I was going to go to get another job. And I didn't want to have to move again and I think- part of me felt that it was again a challenge. I like challenges. I thought I can come back. I can do this. I can do better this year. And just have this attitude that it's going to get better. It's going to be okay.

The above quote reveals that Rebecca did in fact change her instructional practice by giving extrinsic rewards, an action that conflicted with her beliefs about learning in which she

202

positioned learning as happening with intrinsic motivation and not with extrinsic rewards. The above transcript also reveals Rebecca's dissatisfaction with her decision to modify her instructional practice and to give extrinsic rewards. Reflecting on this decision two years later, she felt that she was out of options and had to conform to the expectations of her students in order to have a chance of improving their behavior. Rebecca's comments also suggest that this breaking point, or the point where she was willing to change her instructional practice, occurred when she came to an emotional climax where she was out of options. During Interview Five, Rebecca once again reflected on her first year of teaching with this tenth grade class, and she described that she was "backed into a brick wall" and this decision was a "last resort kind of thing" and that she had no other choice but to change her instructional practice, even if it was only temporarily.

The tension Rebecca faced was with her students and with parents whom she perceived as holding different beliefs about the importance of education than she possessed. Furthermore, Rebecca felt that since education was not necessarily highly valued in this community, this resulted in students misbehaving in class and not competing their homework. What is interesting to note about her negotiation strategies within this tension was that Rebecca drew on her education, specifically her pedagogical knowledge, to think of ways to motivate her students and to increase their engagement with the ultimate goal of improving their classroom behavior. Rebecca first actively thought of different approaches to improving her instruction before she was willing to adopt a pedagogical strategy (giving extrinsic rewards) that conflicted with her teaching beliefs. This demonstrates Rebecca's ability to modify her instructional practice with these modifications at first aligning with her beliefs about teaching. It also demonstrates Rebecca's ability to think about her instructional practice from multiple perspectives, her

willingness to implement different strategies and approaches to help to eliminate the tension, and to be willing to modify her instructional practice for the needs of her particular students. However, Rebecca reached a certain point where these modifications no longer aligned with her instructional practice, and she felt forced to modify her instructional practice for the needs of her students.

6.5.2   Following school policies: Avoiding conflict and choosing her battles

The second strategy Rebecca used to mediate the tension between her beliefs and her school context was to voice her beliefs and any concerns she had to administrators and other teachers but to realize the limitations of her voice, choosing to avoid potential conflict. Rebecca believed that when faced with a tension, it was important for her to pick her battles and to be flexible with her instructional practice unless something conflicted heavily with her beliefs about teaching. During Interview Five, Rebecca was asked to explain how she felt when she realized that she did not have control over a certain situation in her school context – whether as a result of an administrative mandate or as a difference of opinion between teachers – and was asked to change her instructional practice in order to conform to the expectations of the school context.

> Rebecca: I think I come to terms with it because I struggle with conflict and I have a hard time arguing for what I want. I think it's mainly because I have voiced my concerns with most of these issues that we've talked about, and I feel like even though I have voiced them to either other members of my department or to my administration that nothing really happens or gets done about it. And I think that I get to the point where I'm frustrated by constantly repeating my concerns with it, and I don't always have the power to change things or to make things right….There's only so much sometimes that you can do. And we have taken all of our concerns to the highest person we can think of taking it to and we've come to a brick wall…. And so I think you know after it's all over and done with, I have to remind myself that I've tried and that I can keep trying, I can, but I have to realize that it might not immediately be solved. So I have to keep doing my job and keep doing the things that I do and try to make the things that I do better and better every year

and I guess for the time being deal with what I can't change right now, but have control over what I can change and do better.

Megan: So sort of you're in a position where you don't have the control and so you have to basically conform to what's expected of you.

Rebecca: Right. And it's- I mean it's not my school. I'm not the principal. I'm not the superintendent. I'm also not the community, and so I can't- and all of those people have a right to make decisions within the school. And so I can't be the sole one making decisions, and so I have to realize that. You know I can voice my complaint but I can't physically change things myself.

What is significant about Rebecca's statement is that to an extent she recognizes her limited agency in this school context, but while recognizing this limited agency she also builds an argument for why it is important for more than the teacher to have a say in what goes on in any school context. Rebecca suggests that because of the numerous parties involved – teachers, administrators, school board, students, parents – it is important to allow all members of the school community a voice in making decisions. Rebecca's comments also reveal her desire to avoid conflict and to fight those battles that contradict her core beliefs of what she believes to be effective teaching. Until that time comes, Rebecca appears content in voicing her concerns and changing her instructional practice if her voice does not impact the decision at hand. She then prepares herself for a time when she will be able to voice her concerns in hopes that the second time around, perhaps others will listen.

6.6   SUMMARY

Throughout the study, it was evident that Rebecca held many different beliefs about teaching, learning, and her students, making it challenging for me to determine Rebecca's core beliefs. Although Rebecca had fewer evident core beliefs in comparison to Jan and Jessica, Rebecca's

instructional practice aligned with many of her less frequently stated general teaching beliefs. Similar to Jan, Rebecca's instructional practice did not align with her beliefs about the teaching of literature. Rebecca, however, identified this misalignment in her instructional practice and recognized that some of her questioning techniques inhibited her students from making personal connections and offering a variety of interpretations when discussing literature. Not only was Rebecca aware of this misalignment, but she also appeared interested in reflecting on her instructional practice and revising her instructional practice for the next time she would teach the novel *A Northern Light*. Yet, this reflection during Interview Five resulted in Rebecca concluding that since this was the first time she had taught the novel, she should not be too hard on herself if there were misalignments. Similar to Jan and Jessica, Rebecca struggled to critically reflect upon her instructional practice (i.e., identify her learning goals, recognize patterns in student learning and understanding in relation to her learning goals, and revise her instructional practice in order to better reach these learning goals) and think of ways to better align her beliefs and instructional practice.

When reflecting upon tensions that emerged within her school, Rebecca seemed able to more fully reflect on these tensions and on her instructional practice. Not only was Rebecca able to identify the source of the tension, but she also used several different strategies in order to try to be able to maintain her beliefs before changing her instructional practice where it no longer would align with her beliefs. When faced with a tension, Rebecca implemented instructional practices that did not align with her beliefs only when she felt she had no other choice. However, she viewed this change as temporary, for with more reflection and thought, Rebecca was certain that she would be able to implement a strategy that would align more closely with her beliefs.

What was interesting about Rebecca was her desire to reflect on her instructional practice and her belief that she was able to reflect deeply on her instructional practice. Yet, it appeared that Rebecca was able to reflect deeply on her instructional practice in relation to her school context but was limited in her reflection on the relationship between her beliefs and instructional practice. During the last interview, when asked if she had anything she wanted to say about her participation in this research study, Rebecca made the following comment:

> I think it's- even though I'm already critical of myself, I think it [participating in the study] has made me even more critical of myself (laughs) and what I do in the classroom, but I don't think that's a bad thing. I think it's a good thing for me to question my beliefs and my philosophies and even though you know in the past I had outlined my teaching philosophy in other classes and things, I think my teaching philosophy is probably constantly changing depending on my experiences in the classroom, so I'm glad that it makes me think about that more, and that it makes me think about the lessons specifically that I do in the classroom and whether or not they worked and should I do more of this and less of this. So I think these interviews have definitely made me realize that.

This quote reveals Rebecca's commitment to reflecting on her instructional practice and beliefs and on how classes she took, both as an undergraduate and graduate student, had helped her to be more reflective. However, I wondered if Rebecca was, in fact, critical of her teaching and if her teaching philosophies were constantly changing. Rebecca did reflect on her beliefs and instructional practice, but without her thinking about or being prompted to discuss different ways to align her beliefs about the teaching of literature and her instructional practice, I questioned whether the next time Rebecca taught *A Northern Light*, a better alignment would be evident.

7.0   CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

7.1   INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I compare and contrast Jan, Jessica, and Rebecca's beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students; their instructional practices, and the negotiations they made when tensions emerged in their particular educational contexts. One objective of this chapter is to begin to build theory regarding teacher beliefs and how these beliefs might influence instructional practice. In addition, I discuss the implications of this study for teacher education and future research on teacher beliefs.

7.2   SIMILARITIES IN FINDINGS ACROSS THE THREE TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

7.2.1   Beliefs about the teaching of literature

Both Jan and Rebecca held similar beliefs about the teaching of literature including that the interpretation of literature is personal and that students should apply literature to their own lives. These beliefs about the teaching of literature align with theories of response to literature (Karolides, 2000; Probst, 2004; Rosenblatt, 1995), positioning Jan and Rebecca away from the

notions of New Criticism (Brooks, 1947; Welleck & Warren, 1949) where only one interpretation of a text is correct and reader response is not considered. For both Jan and Rebecca, the majority of misalignments between their beliefs and instructional practice were those beliefs about the teaching of literature. One possible reason for this misalignment can be attributed to the tacit New Criticism practices of teaching literature in United States secondary schools today. Although current literary theory includes sociocultural theories of reader-response (Beach, 2000; Galda & Beach, 2001; Lewis, 2000; Smagorinsky, 2001) that acknowledge the role of the reader and his or her social and cultural positionings in the interpretation of literature, other studies have shown that teachers still rely on New Criticism approaches to the study of literature and encourage one "correct" answer and a close reading of the text, devoid of personal response, authorial intent, and the analysis of cultural influences (Applebee, 1993; Rabinowitz, 1992). Thus, although Jan and Rebecca both professed to believe in Reader Response approaches to teaching literature, they might have been influenced by former teachers and current colleagues to practice the common New Criticism approach to literature.

Another possible explanation for the misalignment between Jan and Rebecca's reader-response beliefs about the teaching of literature and their instructional practice can be attributed to the role of the teacher in the English Language Arts classroom. Historically, the role of the teacher has been somewhat of an authoritarian figure, an all-knowing individual who has wisdom to impart to students with students receiving, memorizing, and repeating information from the teacher, what Freire (1970) called the *banking concept* of education. Specifically, when thinking about English Language Arts teachers, the *banking concept* appears when these teachers guide their students to a "correct" interpretation of a piece of literature. Although educational researchers and educators have debunked this image of teachers over the past several decades

and have called for a more student-centered and constructivist approach to teaching, perhaps teachers today find it difficult to break free of these traditional images of teachers. In addition, the models of teaching Jan and Rebecca had in their own literary experiences as students in schools coincided with the traditional view of the teacher as an authoritarian; neither Jan nor Rebecca remembered having a teacher who allowed his/her students to discuss the piece of literature, taking the discussion in the direction of the students' interpretations and questions. During Interview One, Rebecca described how she wanted to be different from her high school English Language Arts teacher when she became a teacher: " I definitely knew that I wanted more reading in the classes and more discussion than we did. We didn't really get a lot of chance to discuss. It was more here's a question sheet. What are the answers? Whereas that has its place, there wasn't a communication of ideas or chance for you to really share your opinions about what you read." Without a strong model of this type of literature instruction, Jan and Rebecca were left to the challenge of aligning their ideal beliefs about the teaching of literature and literary theory with their instructional practice, a challenging task for any teacher.

Furthermore, the prominence of high-stakes testing seemed to have impacted the way both Jan and Rebecca approached literature instruction. Several recent empirical research studies in English Language Arts classrooms (Agee, 2004; Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Zancanella, 1992) have concluded that literature discussions are guided by the need to prepare students for high-stakes testing, with these tests valuing one correct answer. Given the constraints of the current policy context, this could be another reason why Jan and Rebecca did not elicit students' personal responses since the questions on the standardized state assessment did not ask opinion questions. However, Jan and Rebecca both expressed during the interviews that they felt that they had the flexibility to teach what they wanted to teach and still prepare their students for the standardized

state assessment. Rebecca specifically mentioned that she did not feel a lot of pressure concerning raising test scores, particularly because her district continued to do well on these standardized assessments. However, it seemed that both teachers were unconsciously influenced by this pressure.

In the case of Jessica, there did not appear to be a misalignment between her beliefs about teaching literature and her instructional practice. Rather, it was difficult to even determine if a misalignment or alignment existed since she infrequently discussed her discipline-specific beliefs. Although I could have asked Jessica more directly about her discipline-specific beliefs about teaching English, when she had the freedom to discuss her beliefs about teaching, learning and her students, Jessica chose to discuss primarily her beliefs about assessment.

In sum, Jessica verbalized very few beliefs about the teaching of literature and Jan and Rebecca had difficulty aligning their beliefs about the teaching of literature with their instructional practice. This finding is significant because it suggests that teachers may need help forming and identifying their discipline-specific beliefs and aligning these beliefs with their instructional practice. As belief theorists and teacher belief researchers argue (Abelson, 1979; Ernest, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968), a belief that an individual is conscious of is more likely to align with his/her practice. Furthermore, I posit that the more conscious and reflective a teacher is about his/her beliefs *and* instructional practice, the more likely there will be a strong alignment between beliefs and instructional practice. Later in this chapter, I offer suggestions for how teacher education programs might be able to help teachers to develop their discipline-specific beliefs and habits of reflective thinking to better equip teachers to critically analyze their beliefs and instructional practice.

7.2.2   Difficulty and discomfort when analyzing instructional practice

Another similarity across all three teacher participants was the challenge they faced when asked to critically reflect on their instructional practice in comparison to their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students. In Jan's case, she was only able to see alignment between her beliefs and instructional practice and could not identify or try to understand how someone else might view the alignment she identified as a misalignment. Jessica and Rebecca tended to see misalignment before alignment, but when asked to reflect on these misalignments, both Jessica and Rebecca responded with surface-level reflections that resulted in them remaining unaware of the full extent of the misalignments. For example, Rebecca acknowledged that she did not pose very many opinion questions when discussing the novel *A Northern Light* – those questions that might encourage her students to make personal connections between their lives and the novel – and attributed this misalignment to the fact that this was the first time she had taught the novel. Rebecca minimized the extent of the misalignment, and rather than examining her instructional practice and the classroom and interview data for why this misalignment might exist and what she could do in order to create a stronger alignment between her beliefs about teaching literature and her instructional practice, Rebecca chose to only briefly discuss this misalignment during the interview, explaining that she was not going to "beat herself up" about it.

Another similarity, evident when the three teacher participants reflected on their instructional practice, was the discomfort, anxiety, and uncertainty they felt when engaging in this type of activity. For example, when presented with a transcript during Interview Three, Jessica explained that the process of looking at her teaching at that level of detail was "strange," and it appeared that Jessica was unsure of how to analyze her instructional practice. The following excerpt reveals Jessica's discomfort and uncertainty.

212

Megan: So can we just talk about what your initial reaction is having the opportunity to actually look at this?

Jessica: Well it's strange.

Megan: Yeah? Why do you think it's strange?

Jessica: Yeah, it is weird. I guess I just never- seen what I've said. Like on paper before. It's definitely strange.

Megan: Okay.

Jessica: Yeah. But um I don't know what to say (laughs).

At the end of Interview Three, Jessica was asked for her feedback on the process of looking at a transcript of her teaching and excerpts from the interviews. Once again, Jessica verbalized a vulnerability she felt when examining her teaching: "I don't want to say that it was difficult but I mean I guess you do feel a little bit vulnerable. Do you know what I mean? Like reading word for word what you say. Because I mean I do it every day but don't- I mean I reflect but not in the way that I'm actually word for word looking at what I'm saying."

Given the personal nature of teaching, it was not surprising to find that Jessica and Rebecca felt uncomfortable examining their teaching. Teaching requires that teachers are deeply invested in their instructional practice and that they present themselves vulnerably in many instances to their students. Therefore, when asked to analyze their own teaching and to have the opportunity to be given a transcript that documented the classroom happenings, this was perhaps unfamiliar and uncomfortable to the teacher participants. A significant implication of this study for teacher education is the need to provide opportunities and tools for preservice and inservice teachers to critically reflect on their beliefs, instructional practice, and contextual constraints, with the goal of creating dispositions of reflective practitioners, an implication I return to in detail toward the end of this chapter.

7.2.3   Importance of strong leadership

Since Jan and Jessica were teachers in the same district that had experienced a shift in administration at the beginning of the school year the year of this study, it was interesting to see the impact strong administrator leadership had on the attitudes and types of negotiation strategies employed by Jan and Rebecca. When describing their school contexts, it was apparent that Jan was dissatisfied with the principal at the middle school in which she taught, and Jessica was thrilled and inspired by the principal at the high school, the building in which she taught. Why their opinions about their current principals were particularly intriguing was because the previous year, Jan worked under the leadership of Jessica's current principal and Jessica worked under the leadership of Jan's current principal. It became apparent throughout the six-month study that Jan and Jessica held similar views about both principals, although Jan was more vocal at expressing her dissatisfaction and resentment toward her current principal. When asked to describe her school context during Interview Four, Jan spent part of the interview describing the recent changes in administration, and she compared Mr. Green, her current principal, to Mr. Anderson, her former principal.

> Mr. Green talked to me during the summer and told me several times 'I've heard so many good things about the content coaches, I've heard so many good things about this building, and I'm not coming in here to change anything. I'm not going to fix what ain't broke.' I said that's wonderful….And then he had a general meeting for all the teachers I guess the end of July. And said the same thing that he had said to me. Because the administration building is attached to us, they walk through our building all the time. And what they like about our building is we have ownership over it. It's my hall. I keep people out of my hall that kind of thing. And he said you know we're not going to do anything differently. So he did the same thing at the beginning of the school year and said the exact same thing. And then the kids came and everything changed. And he did it his way. It wasn't our building any longer. He wanted control over it. And I understand wanting to make sure that things are done the way that you want to have things done, but to ignore the fact that the building runs the way it runs because we do take ownership of it. And to totally ignore that is stupid. One of the things that Mr. Anderson had going for him above

214

everything else was that he was able to see what people did best and allow them to do it. And he gives them the flexibility to do it.

The above interview excerpt reveals the negative attitudes Jan held toward her new principal, Mr. Green, and the admiration she had for her former principal, Mr. Anderson. What Jan appreciated about Mr. Anderson's leadership was that he relinquished control to the teachers in the building, allowing teachers to take charge of certain aspects of the day-to-day happenings and strategic planning in the school. By providing teachers with certain responsibilities, Jan felt that teachers felt a sense of agency and ownership in their school context. This sense of agency, however, Jan believed was eliminated once the school year began and Mr. Green wanted to do it "his way."

During my fourth interview with Jessica, she also expressed similar sentiments about Mr. Green and Mr. Anderson, although her comments appeared more restrained and polite when discussing what she perceived to be Mr. Green's weaknesses as a principal. During Interview Four, Jessica commented on the positive changes that had occurred under the leadership of Mr. Anderson during the year in which this research study was conducted. One difference she saw in the school context was that there were no longer any fights in the school, something that had typically been a daily occurrence under the leadership of Mr. Green. Another difference was that teachers were being held accountable for submitting their lessons plans each week and were observed several times throughout the school year. Jessica expressed during Interview Four that by having a principal with strong leadership skills and a strong work ethic, the principal's positive behavior and attitude were changing the behavior of the other administrators in positive ways:

> So it's nice that they're [administrators] coming in. They're giving positive feedback. That's great. They're in the hallways all the time, which never happened before. Our principal last year, he would leave in the middle of the school day to go take his grad

classes or his doctorate classes. So just wasn't here. Wasn't around. If there were problems with parents, he was not supportive of the staff at all. He always backed the parents. And so Mr. Anderson and Mrs. Benson are doing like a tremendous job and even some of the other principals that were here, now that like our upper administration here is changed, they've really stepped up and changed. So it's kind of funny to see how like their work ethic changes when they have someone a little bit above them….They're very open to ideas like if you have an idea you can always go to Mr. Anderson or Mrs. Benson. They're very open and willing to listen and actually take into consideration more so than the previous years. Things were just kind of done before. Even though we were on committees it was like you would be on this committee, you would come up with these ideas and nothing would ever be used. This year we're noticing a lot more that they really do think through all the best possible solutions and they listen and even if they take part of your idea. Just overall just <so> much better.

Jessica also commented during Interview Four on the inspirational qualities of Mr. Anderson and how his commitment to improving the school inspired her to be more actively involved in the school context. The following excerpt reveals how Jessica was willing to "jump on board" not only with professional development initiatives (such as the push for rigor and relevance) but also in terms of learning and improving her instructional practice in general.

Jessica: Like when Mr. Anderson started that like I really think I jumped on board with that idea [rigor and relevance]. It was something that I really wasn't- I guess I knew like rigor and relevance- but for him to phrase it that way and have our first inservice for the year, and he showed us a bunch of motivational clips from movies like *Remember the Titans*, and a lot of teachers were doing other work, and maybe I'm just kind of dorky, but I kind of got into it. (Laughs). I'm like alright. I'm going to do this. You know.

Megan: So you sort of bought into it.

Jessica: I did. I pretty much just buy into everything he says just because- I didn't buy into anything last year. So it's nice.

Megan: Why do you think he's such a powerful leader because it sounds like he really is?

Jessica: He just really wants to improve things, and he's very educated. He just got his doctorate. He's just really pushing himself to the limit. He went to the hospital a couple months ago just because he was so worn out cause he does so much with this building. He has three really young kids like four to seven years old. He has a young family, but he's so dedicated to this building. Anything you need he's here 100 percent. He checks in about senior class stuff a lot. He gives a lot of freedom but at the same time anything that we have issues with, he's there to help us address it, which is really nice. It was funny because I had to ask him a question about grad school. There was something that I was

confused about and I wanted his perspective. And he actually said, 'Wow! I miss being in class.'

Megan: Oh really?

Jessica: Yeah. And it was kind of like wow! You are really here for the right reasons. You know he's really trying to better himself and this building and it shows.

Not only did Jan and Jessica express similar opinions about the leadership abilities of Mr. Green and Mr. Anderson and the amount of freedom afforded to teachers under the leadership of these two principals, their involvement in the school during the past two years changed depending on the principal who was at their school. Jan was actively involved in the school context under the previous principal, Mr. Anderson, and less involved under the leadership of Mr. Green. Jessica became even more involved in the school context under the direction of Mr. Anderson.

In sum, it appeared that in a school context guided by a strong administrative leader, teachers were given the freedom to make decisions and therefore had a strong voice in the larger school context. Therefore, it can be concluded that under this type of leadership, teacher morale tends to be higher and teachers are more likely to make productive negotiations and to become more involved in the school setting. Under limited leadership, it is more likely that teachers will become more isolated and will choose not to be involved in the larger school context for fear that their thoughts will not be heard, respected, and considered. This finding has implications for the rethinking of the training of principals, for future principals need to learn and implement effective leadership skills and cultivate a certain disposition that will encourage teachers to be actively involved in school and curricular leadership and decision-making.

217

7.3   DIFFERENCES IN FINDINGS ACROSS THE THREE PARTICIPANTS

7.3.1   Content of beliefs

The content of the three teacher participants' core general teaching beliefs and their core discipline-specific beliefs varied across participants. Jan's core general teaching beliefs focused primarily on the need to teach students responsibility, and these beliefs were rooted deeply in the philosophy of Ayn Rand. Rebecca's core general teaching beliefs focused primarily on the type of learning environment that she created in her classroom and on her role in creating that learning environment. Jessica's core teaching beliefs focused primarily on the learning needs of her students and on assessment.

As discussed earlier, Jan and Rebecca held similar discipline-specific beliefs about the teaching of literature while Jessica verbalized her beliefs about the teaching of literature only on one occasion, and these beliefs were connected primarily to learning. In addition, beliefs about the teaching of writing were not mentioned by Jan and Jessica, and I observed writing instruction on only one occasion in Jessica's classroom and never in Jan's classroom. Rebecca, on the other hand, verbalized her beliefs about the teaching of writing, but she voiced these beliefs only when directly prompted in an interview, and these beliefs were not her core beliefs across all of her belief systems. Not only did these three teacher participants' beliefs vary in content according to the level of disciplinary focus, there also was a limited amount of beliefs specific to the discipline of writing, a critical aspect of the English Language Arts classroom. Perhaps this limited focus on writing instruction can be attributed to the emphasis on standardized state assessments, where in the state of Pennsylvania, the writing portion of these assessments does not count toward Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Perhaps the three teacher participants' teacher

218

education program was another reason for the limited discipline-specific beliefs related to writing, for in the case of Jessica, Jessica was certified in both English and Special Education; therefore, it is possible that she took fewer English classes during her dual certification program. Rebecca was enrolled in a four-year undergraduate program and took approximately half of her classes in Education and half of her classes in English. Jan went back to school, after earning a master's degree in International Affairs, to earn a teaching certificate. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the effects of these three teacher participants' teacher education programs and other causes for their limited beliefs about the teaching of writing, but it was apparent that writing was not a focus of Jan and Jessica's beliefs or instruction, showing further evidence of the diversity in content of the three teacher participants' belief systems.

Through the identification and analysis of the individual beliefs and belief systems the three teacher participants held about teaching, learning, and their students, I recognized the diversity of belief systems about teaching, learning and students that these three teachers held within the profession of teaching. Teaching has been shown to be a complex social practice, and as such, each teacher holds many different *kinds* of beliefs about teaching. Teacher belief researchers and teacher educators may often incorrectly assume that teachers have a coherent belief system about teaching when, in fact, teachers may only be consciously aware of and highlight certain beliefs, such as beliefs about students and their families, or beliefs about reading.

7.3.2 Differences in belief system cohesiveness

I also found differences in the level of cohesiveness of the three teacher participants' belief systems. What I mean by cohesiveness is the extent to which the individual beliefs were

219

connected *across* belief systems and the depth of the teacher's level of consciousness of individual beliefs and connectedness of beliefs. Rebecca possessed numerous general teaching beliefs but none emerged as *core* beliefs within her general teaching belief system. On the other hand, Jan's core teaching beliefs were firmly centered on the philosophy of Ayn Rand and seemed to influence most of her other, more peripheral beliefs. Jessica held a core set of beliefs about assessment but did not have as strong of a belief system about teaching or specifically teaching English. By identifying the teacher participants' beliefs and calculating frequency counts and levels of connectedness within and across belief systems, it became apparent that variety existed not only in the content of the beliefs the teacher participants held but also in the cohesiveness of the belief systems themselves. The differences in level of cohesiveness of the belief systems across teacher participants suggests that the level of cohesiveness of teachers' belief systems may be influenced by their teaching experiences, specifically the number of years of teaching experience, and the teacher's association and involvement with a university teacher education program. Jan, having taught for over fifteen years and being further removed from her certification program than Jessica and Rebecca, may have had the opportunity to formulate her personal beliefs more extensively – developing beliefs that were specific and connected across belief systems – during her fifteen years of teaching. Jessica and Rebecca, both teaching for five years and enrolled in master's programs in education, may have had less time to develop their personal beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students and, perhaps, were more likely to voice the beliefs of the educational program in which they were immersed. The variety in cohesiveness of belief systems across these three teacher participants illustrates how some teachers may be less conscious of their beliefs and of the relationships of these individual beliefs

across belief systems or may still be in the process of developing their beliefs regarding certain aspects of teaching.

7.3.3   Different levels of misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice

There also was some variety across the three teacher participants to the extent to which their beliefs aligned with their instructional practice. According to belief theory (Abelson, 1968; Nespor, 1987), it would be expected that Rebecca, without a core belief system about teaching, would experience numerous misalignments between her beliefs and instructional practice. Yet, Rebecca had numerous alignments between her instructional practice, and in some instances, her less core beliefs – those that were infrequently mentioned across the five interviews and those that were mentioned only when prompted by an interview question – were frequently strongly aligned with her instructional practice. On the contrary, Jan held beliefs that were deeply rooted in the philosophy of Ayn Rand, yet there were numerous misalignments between her beliefs and instructional practice. The differences in the connectedness and alignment with instructional practice of Rebecca and Jan's beliefs suggests the complexity of studying teacher beliefs and the challenges researchers face when relying on self-reporting instruments (such as interviews) as the primary mode of identifying beliefs since these instruments can reflect participants' bias and inaccurate representations (Gill & Hoffman, 2009; Kagan, 1990; Richardson, 1996). It also reveals possible limitations of locating core beliefs by identifying high frequency counts and high levels of connectedness. For example, there were frequent alignments between Rebecca's less frequently stated beliefs and her instructional practice. This finding reiterates the importance of a methodology that provides the researcher with the tools for locating and accounting for less

conscious beliefs and those beliefs that may not be explicitly voiced by the teacher, a point I return to in the implications section of this chapter.

7.3.4   Isolation versus becoming more involved

When examining the negotiation strategies of the three teacher participants, it was evident that there were similarities in the negotiation strategies of Jan and Rebecca while Jessica took a very different approach to negotiating the possible tensions in her school context. Both Jan and Rebecca utilized a similar negotiation strategy of isolating themselves in their classrooms. However, there were differences in how this strategy was used by each of these teachers. Jan used this strategy as a means of going on strike; she felt that she knew the correct and best way to teach reading and that her administrators, other teachers in the building, and the curriculum were going against this. Rebecca also disagreed with a few teachers in her building as to best practices in teaching but Rebecca viewed isolation as not a way to go on strike or to make a statement against these teachers but rather as a way to maintain her beliefs and to avoid any unnecessary conflict. Rebecca also did not isolate herself from the rest of the school context since she admitted that she mainly agreed with administrative decisions. Conversely, Jan decided to no longer serve the larger school context as the literary coach and 4Sight Testing coordinator. In sum, although both Jan and Rebecca retreated to their own classrooms and saw that they had agency within their classroom, Jan retreated as a means of making a statement and rebelling against a principal whom she deemed ineffective while Rebecca retreated to her classroom to avoid any potential conflict with teachers whom she believed had a different approach to teaching.

Jessica, on the other hand, chose to become more actively involved in the school context when faced with changes in the school curriculum. It is important to note, however, that it is impossible to conclude whether or not Rebecca would have adopted this particular negotiation strategy if she had been faced with a changing school curriculum. During this study, there were no curricula changes that were occurring at Rebecca's school. Therefore, there was no opportunity for her to become involved in making changes to the curriculum even if she chose to. However, there were opportunities for Jan to become involved in writing the curriculum. Jan did not feel that she would have a strong teacher voice and that her ideas would not be respected if she chose to serve on the curriculum writing committee. Therefore, Jan chose to isolate herself as previously discussed. Jessica, however, chose to become involved in the curriculum writing. This negotiation strategy, however, I posit is not the result of necessarily a disposition of Jessica in which when faced with tension, Jessica wanted to fight for her agency. Nor does it suggest that Jan and Rebecca had a disposition different from Jessica. Rather, it suggests that the extent to which the school leadership views teachers as subject-matter and curricular experts and thus involves teachers in decision-making will influence the extent to which teachers in any given school context will be motivated to contribute to the larger school context. Therefore, in schools with strong leadership, teachers seem likely to be involved in the school at large, and this involvement may lead to more positive attitudes of teachers.

7.4   IMPLICATIONS

7.4.1   Implications for teacher education

This research study suggests that one focus of teacher education programs should be on helping preservice and inservice teachers formulate their general and discipline-specific beliefs about teaching in an environment where these teachers are asked to reflect on these beliefs and critically analyze their instructional practice, seeking to build better alignment between their beliefs and instructional practice. Based on the findings of this six-month research study, I make the following recommendations as to how teacher education programs can cultivate productive, reflective practices and dispositions of teachers.

First, teachers should be taught how to formulate and identify their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students. It appears that perhaps teachers – depending on their particular life stage – may have more deeply developed beliefs – meaning that these teachers are conscious of their beliefs and these beliefs are deeply connected across belief systems – while other teachers may be in the process of developing their beliefs. In addition, this research study suggests that some teachers struggle to develop discipline-specific teaching beliefs. Furthermore, the framing of the belief itself – whether this belief is worded in such a way to reflect instructional practice and learning outcomes – may also influence the teacher's ability to directly align a belief with instructional practice. Therefore, I propose that preservice and inservice teachers are given the opportunity during their teacher education programs to not only to develop their beliefs, but to learn how to create beliefs that are specific, flexible, and framed in reference to instructional practice and learning outcomes. By focusing on one domain of beliefs at a time (e.g., literature discussions, feedback on student writing), teachers can begin to think about the

beliefs they have about a particular domain of teaching, how these beliefs align or misalign with current educational research and theories, and how these beliefs might be framed as instructional practice.

Second, teacher education programs should provide teachers with the analytic tools to critically examine their instructional practice for alignments and misalignments between their beliefs and instructional practice. Often in preservice classes and professional development sessions, English Language Arts teachers are taught instructional strategies and educational theories, but these same teachers may not be taught how to assess whether they are effectively implementing these strategies in their classrooms. Furthermore, teachers may not be asked to assess whether *what* they are doing in their classrooms is what they *aim* to do in their classrooms according to their beliefs. Therefore, teachers should be taught ways to critically reflect upon their own beliefs and instructional practices. What I mean by *critical reflection* is the ability for teachers to identify their learning goals, to recognize patterns in student learning and understanding in relation to these learning goals, and to revise their instructional practice in order to better reach these learning goals. Similar to what John Dewey (1933) calls reflective thinking – "the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration" (p. 1) – critical reflection occurs when teachers examine their beliefs and instructional practice from multiple perspectives, are open to new ideas, and are able to propose next steps in order to improve their instructional practice.

In order to help teachers to develop the capacity for critical reflection, teacher education programs can provide teachers with the opportunity to study theories of critical reflection and to explore the meaning of this term. Teacher educators could then model critical reflection to preservice and inservice teachers by presenting excerpts from their own instructional practice

225

and participate in think alouds in which the teacher educators reflect on their own beliefs, instructional practices, and any alignments and misalignments between these beliefs and instructional practices. By reflecting out loud and then demonstrating how to apply a rudimentary coding scheme to the transcript of their teaching, the teacher educators can model the dispositions of a reflective practitioner. Then, the preservice and inservice teachers enrolled in the class can engage in the critical analysis and coding of sample classroom discourse excerpts from other teachers' classrooms, an analysis and coding process the teachers can then try out on their own teaching transcripts once they feel more comfortable using this type of analysis technique. This gradual progression of reflection could alleviate some of the discomfort and anxiety that teachers may face when asked to examine their instructional practice. A recent research study conducted by Kucan (2007) revealed the positive results of having preservice teachers examine transcripts of their teaching and apply a rudimentary coding scheme to this teaching. Ultimately, by helping preservice and inservice teachers to develop and identify their discipline-specific beliefs about teaching and by discussing, modeling, and providing opportunities for critical reflection on both beliefs and instructional practice, teachers will begin to cultivate the habits of thinking of reflective practitioners and will seek to better align their beliefs with their instructional practice.

Once teachers have been given the opportunity to understand what it means to critically reflect, teachers may be more prepared to discuss tensions that emerge among their beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts. One approach to helping teachers identify and resolve tensions could be to present teachers with example case studies, to have teachers examine their school's curriculum and policies in comparison to their beliefs, and to explore the beliefs endorsed by standardized assessments. By helping teachers to critically examine these

226

texts and to propose possible negotiation strategies, teachers may begin to cultivate the habits of thinking necessary for productive negotiations. Furthermore, when faced with a contextual tension, perhaps it is necessary for teachers to change their frame of reference, for if a teacher is looking at the context from the perspective of one belief system and/or domain of beliefs, tensions may be more evident. But, if a teacher was to acknowledge multiple beliefs and instructional practices when examining a specific educational context, perhaps some similarities can be viewed rather than simply just the disconnects and tensions. Therefore, during preservice and professional development classes, preservice and inservice teachers should have the opportunity to discuss the tensions that may emerge between their beliefs, instructional practices, and educational contexts and to think about possible negotiation strategies because these discussions have the potential to help teachers to resolve these tensions in productive ways. If teachers understand that constraints exist in any context – perhaps even more so today under the current policy context of No Child Left Behind – they can begin to think of different ways to approach and solve any situation.

In sum, what the findings of this research study suggest is that preservice and inservice teachers need opportunities for the ongoing development of their beliefs, with the goal of creating flexibility in certain beliefs – developing the willingness to rethink and revise these beliefs; building specificity of beliefs in order to reflect discipline-specific beliefs and instructional practice, specifically how the belief will be accomplished; and creating alignment between the beliefs and current research on teaching. Teachers also need opportunities to critically reflect on their instructional practice and educational contexts with the goal of viewing their instructional practice and educational contexts from multiple perspectives and engaging in a dialogue about how both their instructional practice and educational contexts can be revised and

refined in order for there to be alignment between the learning objectives and the student outcomes.

7.4.2 Implications for future research on beliefs

In order to collect data on teachers' beliefs for the purposes of this six-month research study, I relied heavily on self-reported data in the form of interviews. Although for the analysis portion of my study I also located beliefs that were more tacitly held than overtly held, my analysis focused primarily on frequency counts and connectedness within and across belief systems. Therefore, if a teacher only overtly or tacitly expressed an individual belief once, this would be determined to be a less core belief because of the low frequency count and low level of connectedness. However, it is a possibility that a belief verbalized only once might be a core belief and simply was just not verbalized several times throughout the interviews. This research study suggests that perhaps the three teacher participants did not always state their core beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students because these deeply-ingrained beliefs were too obvious to the teachers to be overtly stated. On the other hand, the beliefs the three teacher participants did tacitly and overtly express could have been those beliefs that they were grappling with and therefore were freshest in their day-to-day thinking. In the cases of Jessica and Rebecca who were enrolled in master's programs during the time of this research study, the teachers could have been aligning themselves with the beliefs about teaching and learning endorsed by their graduate programs. Furthermore, the participants' awareness that I was enrolled in a doctoral program and, in the case of Rebecca, that I had previously been enrolled in a graduate course that Rebecca took two semesters prior to this research study, the participants may have been expressing beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students that they believed I wanted to hear.

In addition, perhaps the teacher participants' frequently verbalized beliefs reflected their positionality within the school context, specifically vis-à-vis other teachers. For example, throughout the interviews, it appeared that Jessica wanted to position herself as a teacher who believed in her students and was different from the majority of the other teachers in her school context whom she perceived did not expect much from lower-level students, would frequently show videos, and chose to yell at their students. By frequently verbalizing her beliefs about her students and classroom management, Jessica was able to position herself as different from these teachers, but these beliefs may not have been her core beliefs. Therefore, the notion of positionality needs to be taken into account when researchers analyze teachers' descriptions of their own beliefs and instructional practices. Hypothesizing why some beliefs are frequently expressed and others are not and how frequency of expressed beliefs relates to the level of centrality of an individual belief are important future directions for the field of research on beliefs. My research study highlights the difficulty of locating core beliefs and the further methodological considerations that need to be made when theorizing about and researching beliefs.

Moreover, in future research studies of teacher beliefs, careful thought needs to be given to the data collection instruments and analysis methods in order to account for the less conscious beliefs teachers may hold. Providing teachers with the opportunity to visually map their own beliefs might ensure member checking and might offer additional opportunities for teachers to explain their beliefs. For example, teachers could be presented with beliefs that were overtly and tacitly stated in several interviews and be asked to create a conceptual map illustrating the centrality of each individual belief. Furthermore, this would be an opportunity for the teacher participants to verbalize additional beliefs that the researcher may not have located in the

interview data. This approach would allow for member checking and would provide an opportunity for potentially interesting conversations about beliefs.

Another possible data source that might be helpful in identifying teacher beliefs could be a daily or weekly journal that is maintained by teachers. Teachers may feel more comfortable expressing their beliefs and being honest in the form of a personal, reflective journal rather than during a one-on-one interview with a researcher. In addition, an interview itself can be considered a discourse event in which the researcher's participation in the interview may influence the beliefs that emerge during the interview and may result in the co-construction of a belief. Alternately, asking participants to write in a journal might provide a data source that not only would be useful for the triangulation of data but also would provide a space where the researcher's influence might be minimized. Also, as suggested in some teacher belief research (e.g., Gill & Hoffman, 2009; Muchmore, 2001), it might be helpful to observe teachers in multiple settings, including faculty meetings, department meetings, and graduate classes, to see what beliefs teachers verbalize in these various contexts.

Additionally, the methodology utilized by researchers when studying beliefs should also allow for the careful locating of less overtly expressed beliefs in the interview data. Although James Gee's questions for discourse analysis, which I applied in my coding, are helpful in locating these less overtly expressed beliefs, additional methods of analysis for locating less conscious beliefs need to be further explored in order to ensure that the researcher is locating tacit teacher beliefs and not just those beliefs that are explicitly stated. I recognize the highly interpretive nature of identifying these less conscious beliefs. During my recent job talks and interviews, several audience members asked me how I knew that I had identified all of the unconscious beliefs in the interview and classroom discourse data, especially when there was a

misalignment between beliefs and instructional practice, for these audience members believed that the misalignment could be attributed to an underlying, non-verbalized belief that the teacher participant held about teaching that was subconsciously influencing the teacher's instructional practice. Although I do think it is important to identify in analysis these less conscious beliefs, I also wonder whether an unconscious belief matters as much as what actually happens in the teacher's instructional practice. If the goal of research on teacher beliefs is to help teachers increase student learning, perhaps researchers and teacher educators would see more positive changes if they focused on analyzing teachers' instructional practices and helped the teachers to see the positives of a particular instructional technique. Guided changes in practice, then, might help teachers change their beliefs about teaching, learning, and their students in positive ways – even those beliefs that may be less conscious.

I also would like to acknowledge the challenges of using such terminology such as alignment/misalignment, match/mismatch, consistent/inconsistent when researching and describing the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice. The use of these terms creates somewhat of a dichotomous relationship between beliefs and instructional practice, and it may be more advantageous to examine the *strength* of any alignment/misalignment. I also acknowledge that individuals may interpret the meaning of a belief in multiple ways and therefore this belief may influence their instructional practice in multiple ways. For example, Jan expressed a belief that the interpretation of literature is personal, but how Jan perceived this belief and how she thought it should translate into her instructional practice might have been different from my own conceptualization of this belief. Therefore, when investigating the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice, researchers should encourage teachers to unpack the meaning of their beliefs and how they see their beliefs being enacted in their

instructional practice. Also, creating a scale of the strength of alignment of a belief with instructional practice could help researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice and avoid treating this relationship as a binary.

In addition, future research on teacher beliefs should investigate further the discipline-specific beliefs of participants since based on the data from these three teacher participants, developing and aligning discipline-specific beliefs with instructional practice appeared to be challenging.

7.5   SUMMARY

The research on teacher beliefs continues to gain importance in educational research. As practicing teachers continue to refine their instructional practice to meet the expectations of their school, curricular, and policy contexts, it is apparent that teachers need to be taught how to reflect critically not only on their instructional practice but also on their beliefs and on any tensions that may emerge between their beliefs, instructional practice, and educational contexts. Without helping teachers to gain productive strategies and techniques for critical reflection – the ability to reflect productively on the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice with the goal of becoming more conscious of specific learning goals and students' abilities to achieve these learning goals – and to gain the ability to revise ones instructional practice and to productively negotiate contextual tensions, it is possible that the teaching profession will become more isolated and the turnover rates of teachers will continue to increase.

Although this research study focused only on three teacher participants, it contributes to current theories of teacher beliefs, the relationship between beliefs and instructional practice, and the types of negotiations teachers make when faced with contextual tensions. By recognizing the importance of critically reflecting on both beliefs and instructional practice, identifying alternative methods for collecting and analyzing data on teacher beliefs, and by offering suggestions to teacher educators on how to help teachers become more reflective practitioners, these findings can be further explored in future research studies on larger populations of teachers to see if these findings and implications can be generalized to a larger population of teachers across disciplines and contexts. In the meantime, what can be learned from Jan, Jessica, and Rebecca is the variation that exists in the beliefs teachers hold and how these beliefs translate into instructional practice. Furthermore, the case studies of Jan, Jessica, and Rebecca offer insight into the challenges all teachers face to implement instruction that is aligned with their beliefs about teaching and the need for teachers to feel that they have agency in instructional and curricular decision-making in order to achieve this productive alignment.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview One:

The purpose of this interview is to understand the teacher participant's past and present experiences.

1. Tell me about yourself. What do you like to do in your free time?

2. Tell me about your early experiences with reading and writing.

3. Tell me how you decided to become an English teacher.

4. Tell me about your teaching career. How long have you taught? Where have you taught? What grade levels?

5. What guides how and what you teach?

6. What particular approach do you take when you teach and why?

7. Describe a particularly successful classroom occasion when you knew teaching and learning were going well.

8. How would you describe your curriculum for the class I will be observing?

9. How would you describe your goals for your students in the class I will be observing?

Interview Two:

Building upon Interview One, the purpose of this interview will be to further explore the experiences of the teacher participant in the past and present. Interview One will be reviewed and will determine the set of questions to explore in Interview Two. These questions will be determined by creating questions that elicit stories from the teacher participant's experiences and also those questions that elicit a preliminary understanding of the teacher participant's beliefs about learning, her students, and The No Child Left Behind Act.

1. Build off of Question 2 and 7 to gain better insight into the teacher participant's beliefs about learning.

2. Build off of Question 9 to gain better insight into the teacher participant's beliefs about her students in the particular class I am observing.

3. Tell me a story about an experience you had involving high-stakes testing as a student. Teacher.

Interview Three:

The purpose of this interview is to explore the teacher participant's sense-making of a mismatch found between beliefs/beliefs, beliefs/practice, and/or beliefs/context. The teacher participant will be presented with a teaching episode and a transcript from a interview and will be asked to examine these two items, commenting on her instructional practice and beliefs and explaining the mismatches between the two pieces of data.

Interview Four:

The purpose of this interview is to explore the teacher participant's educational contexts (school, curricular, and policy).

1. Tell a story about your school that helps to describe your school.

2. What do you enjoy about teaching at your school?

3. What do you dislike about teaching at your school?

4. What different roles do you serve at your school? Describe each role. What are the benefits of this role? What are the challenges of this role?

5. Describe the type of relationships you have at this school with other teachers. Administrators. Staff.

6. What is considered to be effective teaching in this school?

7. The mission statement of your school says this (read mission statement). What do you think is the mission of teachers and administrators at this school?

8. How do teachers and administrators generally think of students who attend this school?

9. Describe your curriculum for this class.

10. Describe how the curriculum was developed.

11. In what ways has The No Child Left Behind Act affected the way in which your school spends its time and money?

12. What do you see as the effects of The No Child Left Behind Act on the teaching profession?

13. Describe how your beliefs on learning and teaching compare to the thoughts endorsed by your school building. Curriculum. No Child Left Behind.

<u>Interview Five</u>:

The purpose of this interview is to explore the teacher participant's sense-making of a match/mismatch found between beliefs/beliefs, beliefs/practice, and/or beliefs/context. The teacher participant will be presented with a teaching episode and a transcript from a interview

and will be asked to examine these two items, commenting on her instructional practice and

beliefs and explaining the matches/mismatches between the two pieces of data.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Student Background Questions

    1. How would you describe yourself and as a student? What do you like to do in your

free time?

    2. How would you describe yourself here at this school?

    3. How do you like your English class this year?

Thoughts on School Context

    1. Tell me a story that helps to describe the environment of your school.

    2. How would you describe the students who attend this school? Teachers?

Administrators?

    3. What do you like about your school? Dislike?

    4. If you could change your school, how would you change it? Why?

Thoughts on Curriculum Context

    1. Describe to me the different pieces of literature that you read in this class.

    2. Thinking about literature that you read in class, describe for me what you learned from

a piece of literature? Describe to me a piece of literature that you read where much

learning did not occur.

3. Describe to me the different projects and assignments that you completed this year in this class.

4. What did you learn from completing these assignments?

Thoughts on Policy Context

1. Describe your last experience taking a high-stakes test like the PSSAs.

2. What are your feelings about high-stakes testing?

3. Describe the benefits and challenges of high-stakes testing from the perspective of a student.

4. Describe how you see high-stakes testing affecting your teacher's instruction.

5. How important is high-stakes testing preparation in your school? How involved are administrators in this preparation? Teachers? Students?

ADMINISTRATOR PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background Questions on Administrator

    1. How long have you been working at this district?

    2. Describe to me your responsibilities here at this district.

Thoughts about the School Context

    1. How would you describe your school context? The students? The teachers?

    2. What makes you particularly proud of being an administrator at this district?

    3. What are the challenges you face as an administrator at this school?

    4. What goals do you have for your school context over the next several years?

Thoughts about the Curriculum Context

    1. Describe to me the process of developing curriculum in your school.

    2. Describe to me the curriculum for English Language Arts.

    3. What level of freedom do teachers have when it comes to curriculum?

Thoughts about the Policy Context

    1. Describe to me your thoughts about high-stakes testing? What are the benefits? What

are the challenges?

2. Describe to me how your thinking about high-stakes testing influences the decisions you make as an administrator?

3. Describe to be the place of high-stakes testing preparation in your school?

4. In what ways do administrators help teachers to prepare students for high-stakes testing?

5. What influence do test scores have your school? What policies have been created as a result of these test scores

APPENDIX D

TEACHER PARTICIPANT ARTIFACT INSTRUCTIONS

<u>Description</u>: For the remainder of the study, you will be asked to collect teaching artifacts in the form of lesson plans, classroom assessments, and worksheets/handouts that represent instances of your instruction. The idea behind the collection of these teaching artifacts is to provide me with greater insight into your teaching on the days and periods that I am not present for observations.

<u>Collection Methods</u>: You will be provided with a three-ring binder in which to place your teaching artifacts. When making copies of assessments, handouts, etc. for your students, try to remember to make an extra copy of this document for the teaching artifact binder. Simply place the artifact in the binder in the order in which it is used. If you forget to include some documents, no worries. It is not necessary to include everything that you use. If you prefer a different method for the collection of teaching artifacts, please let me know. I can provide file folders, jump drives, etc.

<u>Collection Dates</u>: Teaching artifact binders will be collected at the last weekly observation of each month of the study. If you have any questions or concerns about this aspect of the study, please let me know.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abelson, R.P. (1979). Differences between belief and knowledge systems. *Cognitive Science*, *3*, 355-366.

Abrams, L.M., Pedulla, J.J., & Madaus, G.F. (2003). Views from the classroom: Teachers' opinions of statewide testing programs. *Theory into Practice*, *42*(1), 18-29.

Agee, J. (2004). Negotiating a teaching identity: An African American teacher's struggle to teach in a test-driven context. *Teachers College Record*, *106*(4), 747-774.

Anagnostopoulos, D. (2003). Testing and student engagement with literature in urban classrooms: A multi-layered perspective. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *38*(2), 177-212.

Applebee, A.N. (1993). *Literature in the secondary school: Studies of curriculum and instruction in the United States* (NCTE Research Rep. No. 25). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Applebee, A.N., Burroughs, R., & Stevens, A.S. (1994). *Shaping conversations: Study of continuity and coherence in high school literature curricula*. Albany, NY: National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning.

Athanases, S. Z., & Heath, S.B. (1995). Ethnography in the study of the teaching and learning of English. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *29*(3), 263-287.

Beach, R. (2000). Reading and responding at the level of activity. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(2), 237-251.

Bednar, M. R. (1993). Teachers' beliefs and practices: Dissonance or contextual reality? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference, South Carolina.

Black, M. B. (1973). Belief systems. In J.J. Honigmann (Ed.), *Handbook of social and cultural anthropology* (pp. 509-577). New York, NY: Rand McNally.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D (1998). Inside the black box: Raising standards through assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *80*(2), 139-148.

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1992). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Borko, H., Shavelson, R.J., & Stern, P. (1981). Teachers' decisions in the planning of reading and instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *16*(3), 449-466.

Brooks, C. (1947). The well wrought urn: Studies in the structure of poetry. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Brousseau, B.A., Book, C., & Byers, J.L. (1988). Teacher beliefs and the cultures of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *39*, 33-39.

Brown, C.A., & Borko, H. (1992). Becoming a mathematics teacher. In D.A. Grouws (Ed.), *Handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning* (pp. 209-239). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Bryan, L.A. (2003). Nestedness of beliefs: Examining a prospective elementary teacher's belief system about science teaching and learning. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *40*(9), 835-868.

Bunting, C.E. (1984). Dimensionality of teacher education beliefs: An exploratory study. *Journal of Experimental Education*, *52*, 195-198.

Calderhead, J. (1981). A psychological approach to research on teachers' classroom decision-making. *British Educational Research Journal*, *7*, 51-57.

Calderhead, J., & Robson, M. (1991). Images of teaching: Student teachers' early conceptions of classroom practice. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, *7*(1), 1-8.

Carspecken, P. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Cazden, C. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd Edition). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F.M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Clark, C.M., & Peterson, P.L. (1986). Teachers' thought processes. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 255-296). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Clarke, M., Shore, A., Rhoades, K., Abrams, L., Miao, J., & Li, J. (2003). Perceived effects of state-mandated testing programs on teaching and learning: Findings from interviews with educators in low-, medium-, and high-stakes states. Boston, MA: National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy.

Cole, A.L., & Knowles, J.G. (2001). *Lives in context: The art of life history research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

Cole, M.(1996). Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Connelly, F.M., & Clandinin, D.J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of education practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Cooney, T.J., Shealy, B.E., & Arvold, B. (1998). Conceptualizing belief structures of preservice secondary mathematics teachers. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, *29*(3), 306-333.

D'Andrade, R., & Strauss, C. (1992). *Human motives and cultural models.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Denzin, N.K. (1997). Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. New York, NY: D.C. Heath and Company.

Diamond, J.B., & Spillane, J.P. (2004). High-stakes accountability in urban elementary schools: Challenging or reproducing inequality? *Teachers College Record*, *106*(6), 1145-1176.

Duffy, G. (1982). Fighting off the alligators: What research in real classrooms has to say about reading instruction. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, *14*, 357-373.

Dyson, A.H. (2003). The brothers and sisters learn to write: Popular literacies in Childhood and School Cultures. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Eick, C.J., Reed, C.J. (2002). What makes an inquiry-oriented science teacher? The influence of learning histories on student teacher role identity and practice. *Science Teacher Education*, *86*, 401-416.

Eisenhart, M.A., Shrum, J.L., Harding, J.R., & Cuthbert, A.M. (1988). Teacher beliefs: Definitions, findings, and directions. *Educational Policy*, *2*(1), 51-70.

Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I., & Shaw, L.L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic field notes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Enyedy, N., Goldberg, J., & Welsh, K.M. (2006). Complex dilemmas of identity and practice. *Science Education*, *90*(1), 68-93.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119-161). New York, NY: MacMillan Press.

Erickson, F., & Gutierrez, K. (2002). Culture, rigor, and science in educational research. *Educational Researcher*. *31*(8), 21-24.

Ernest, P. (1989). The knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of the mathematics teacher: A model. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, *15*(1), 13-33.

Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices, *Educational Research*, *38*(1), 47-65.

Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 70-82). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Firestone, W., Mayrowetz, D., & Fairman, J. (1998). Performance-based assessment and instructional change: The effects of testing in Maine and Maryland. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *20*(2), 95-113.

Forman, E., & Ansell, E. (2001). Multiple voices of a mathematics classroom community. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, *46*(1/3), 115-142.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Galda, L., & Beach, R. (2001). Theory and research into practice: Response to literature. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36*(1), 64-73.

Gee, J. P. (1996). Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses. New York, NY: Falmer.

Gee, J. P. (1999). An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and methods. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gee, J.P. (2004). Discourse analysis: What makes it critical? In Rogers, R. (Ed.) *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp.19-50). Mayhew, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gill, M.G., & Hoffman, B. (2009). Shared planning time: A novel context for studying teachers' discourse and beliefs about learning and instruction. *Teachers College Record*, *111*(5), 1242-1273.

Goertz, M., & Duffy, M. (2003). Mapping the landscape of high-stakes testing and accountability programs. *Theory Into Practice*, *42*(1), 4-11.

Goodman, J. (1988). Constructing a practical philosophy of teaching: A study of preservice teachers' professional perspectives. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, *4*(2), 121-137.

Goodson, I., & Sikes, P. (2001). Life history research in educational settings: Learning *from lives (Doing qualitative research in educational settings).* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Grant, S.G. (2001). An uncertain lever: Exploring the influence of state-level testing in New York State on teaching social studies. *Teachers College Record*, *103*(3), 398-426.

Green, J.L., Dixon, C.N., & Zaharlick, A. (2002). Ethnography as a logic of inquiry. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J.R. Squire, & J. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook on research on teaching the English language arts* (p. 201-224). Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Green, T. (1971). *The activities of teaching*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Hamilton, L. S. (2003). Assessment as a policy tool. *Review of Research in Education*, *27*, 25-68.

Hamilton, L.S., & Berends, M. (2006). Instructional practices related to standards and assessments. RAND.

Harvey, O. (1986). Beliefs systems and attitudes toward the death penalty and other punishments. *Journal of Personality*, *54*, 143-159.

Heath, S.B. (1983). Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Herman, J.L., & Golan, S. (1993). The effects of standardized testing on teaching and schools. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 12*(4), 20-27.

Hoffman, J.V., & Kugle, C.L. (1982). A study of theoretical orientation to reading and its relationship to teacher verbal feedback during reading instruction. *Journal of Classroom Instruction*, *18*, 2-7.

Holland, D. C., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (Eds.) (1998/2002). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Holland, D.C., & Quinn, N. (Eds.) (1987). *Cultural models in language and thought.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Hollingsworth, S. (1989). Prior beliefs and cognitive change in learning to teach *American Educational Research Journal*, *26*(2), 160-189.

Irvin, T.S. (1999). Theory as espoused and practiced by a high school English teacher: Staying with the tried and true. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid South Educational Research Association.

Jennings, J., & Rentner, D.S. (2006). Ten big effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *88*(2), 110-113.

Kagan, D.M. (1990). Ways of evaluating teacher cognition: Inferences concerning the Goldilocks Principle. *Review of Educational Research*, *60*, 419-469.

Kagan, D.M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist*, *27*(1), 65-90.

Karolides, N., Ed. (2000). Reader response in secondary and college classrooms. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Koretz, D.M., & Hamilton, L.S. (2003). Testing for accountability in K-12. In R.L. Brennan (Ed.), *Educational measurement* (pp. 531-578). Westport, CT: American Council on Education.

Kucan, L. (2007). Insights from teachers who analyzed transcripts of their own classroom discussions. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(3), 228-236.

Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *21*, 899-916.

Le, V., & Klein, S. (2002). Technical criteria for evaluating tests. In L.S. Hamilton, B.M. Stecher, & S.P. Klein (Eds.), *Making sense of test-based accountability in education* (pp. 51-77). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Lewis, C. (2000). Limits of identification: The personal, pleasurable, and the critical in reader response. *Journal of Literacy Research, 32*(2), 253-266.

Lewis, C. (2001). Literary practices as social acts: Power, status, and cultural norms in the classroom. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lewis, C., & Ketter, J. (2004). Learning as social interaction: Interdiscursivity in a teacher researcher book group. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in educations* (pp.117-146). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Linn, R.L. (2000). Assessments and accountability. *Educational Researcher*, *29*(2), 4-17.

Linn, R.L. (2003). Accountability: Responsibility and reasonable expectations. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(7), 3-13.

Loveless, T. (2005). Test-based accountability: The promise and the perils. *Brookings Papers on Educational Policy*, 7-45.

Madaus, G. (1988). The distortion of teaching and testing: High-stakes testing and instruction. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *65*(3), 29-46.

Mehan, H. (1982). The structure of classroom events and their consequences for student performance. In P. Gilmore & A.A. Glatthorn (Eds.), *Children in and out of school*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Muchmore, A. (2001). The story of "Anna": A life history study of the literacy beliefs and teaching practices of an urban high school English teacher. Paper presented at AERA.

Munby, H. (1984). A qualitative approach to the study of a teacher's beliefs. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *21*(1), 27-38.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *19*(4), 317-328.

Nisbett, R.E., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human interferences: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Pajares, M.F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and education research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, *62*(3), 307-332.

Parke, C.S., & Lane, S. (2007). Students' perceptions of a Maryland state performance assessment. *The Elementary School Journal*, *107*(3), 305-324.

Pedulla, J.J., Abrams, L.M., Madaus, G.F., Russell, M.K., Ramos, M.A., & Miao, J. (2003). *Perceived effects of state-mandated testing programs on teaching and learning: Findings from a national survey of teachers*. Boston, MA: National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy.

Probst, R. (2004). Response & analysis: Second edition: Teaching literature in secondary school. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Rabinowitz, P. (1992). Against close reading. In M. Kecht (Ed.), *Pedagogy is politics. Theory and critical teaching*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Rand, Ayn (1957). *Atlas shrugged*. New York, NY: Random House.

Rand, Ayn (1989). *The voice of reason: Essays in objectivist thought*. New York, NY: Plume Publishing.

Rex, L.A., & Nelson, M.C. (2004). How teachers' professional identities position high-stakes test preparation in their classrooms. *Teachers College Record*, *106*(6), 1288-1331.

Richardson, V. (1996). The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 102-119). New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Richardson, V., Anders, P., Tidwell, D., & Lloyd, C. (1991). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. *American Educational Research Journal*, *28*(3), 559-586.

Ritchie, J., & Wilson, D. (2000). *Teacher narrative as critical inquiry: Rewriting the script*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Rokeach, M. (1968). Beliefs, attitudes and values: A theory of organization and change. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rosenblatt, L. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Modern Language Association.

Salzman, P.C. (2002). On reflexivity. *American Anthropologist*, *104*(3), 805-813.

Schraw, G., & Olafson, L. (2002). Teachers' epistemological world views and educational practices. *Issues in Education*, *8*(2), 99-149.

Shore, B. (1996). Models in the mind: Cognition, culture, and the problem of meaning. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Sigel, I.E. (1985). *Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Skamp, K., & Mueller, A. (2001). A longitudinal study of the influence of primary and secondary school, university and practicum on student teachers' images of effective primary science practice. *International Journal of Science Education*, *23*(3), 227-245.

Sloan, S. (2006). Teacher identity and agency in school worlds: Beyond the all-good /all bad discourse on accountability-explicit curriculum policies. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *36*(2), 119-152.

Smagorinsky, P. (2001). If meaning is constructed, what is it made from? Toward a cultural theory of reading. *Review of Educational Research, 71*(1), 133-169.

Spradley, J.P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Stecher, B.M. (2002). Consequences of large-scale, high-stakes testing on school and classroom practices. In L.S. Hamilton, B.M. Stecher, & S.P. Klein (Eds.), *Making sense of test-based accountability in education* (pp. 79-100). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Stecher, B.M., Barron, S.I., Kaganoff, T., & Goodwin, J. (1998). The effects of standards-based assessment on classroom practices: Results of the 1996-97 RAND survey of Kentucky teachers of mathematics and writing (CSE Tech. Rep. 482). Los Angeles, CA: Center for Research on Evaluation, standards, and Student Testing.

Vogler, K.E. (2002). The impact of high-stakes, state-mandated student performance assessment on teachers' instructional practices. *Education*, *123*(1), 39-55.

Welleck, R., & Warren, A. (1949). *Theory of literature*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Yin, R.K. (1993). *Applications of case study research*. Newbury Park, London: SAGE Publications.

Yin, R.K. (2006). Case study methods. In J.L. Green, G. Camilli, & P.B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 111-122). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Zancanella, D. (1992). The influence of state-mandated testing on teachers of literature. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *14*(3), 283-295.