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Getting close, letting go, becoming real: civic engagement with preservice art teachers at the House of Hope

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GETTING CLOSE, LETTING GO, BECOMING REAL:
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT WITH PRESERVICE ART TEACHERS
AT THE HOUSE OF HOPE

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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To all my friends at the House of Hope,
thank you for welcoming us into your wonderful home.

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative, mixed-methods study that focuses on the dispositions that preservice teachers bring into teacher education programs in regard to homelessness. Teacher education programs play an important role in providing preservice teachers experiences teaching that prepare them for working with diverse populations of students. Students enrolled in an elementary art methods course and participated in a civic engagement experience, teaching children after school who were living in a transitional housing program. The results of this study showed evidence that working in community settings with diverse students can alter preservice teachers' notions and awareness of impoverished and homeless children. As a researcher, it is my hope that this alteration will significantly impact the way that preservice teachers interact with all of their future students.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, my husband and I moved into a new house in a blue-collar neighborhood near the university where I had recently accepted a teaching position. As we walked our dog through our new neighborhood, I was taken aback by the stark emptiness of an old elementary school that had been abandoned by the city more than five years before. It stood alone and neglected on a large block of land that seemed to speak to me of its potential.

I imagined taking this old, abandoned school and turning it into a transitional housing program for moms and their children to live safely in while learning to live independently. I envisioned a large community garden on this block-long lot that would offer the opportunity for the families to cook nutritious meals and learn to can and preserve the produce. I saw a library and a study center for families, as well as a playroom for moms to spend time learning to play with their children. I dreamt of classrooms for students from the university to come and teach art and literacy and of a place for social work students to assist families. I imagined a staffed nurse's office to provide basic health care needs like flu shots for the families.

I currently have a dream that there are not 68 families on the waiting list for housing in my community. My vision concerns homelessness, a growing social problem that almost all communities struggle against. Like many communities throughout the United States, the community where I live is populated with a diverse group of people, many of whom are homeless or on the verge of becoming another statistic in this critical social problem.

Rationale of Study

This dissertation focuses on ways in which civic engagement can help preservice art teachers develop effective strategies to teach and engage homeless children. My research takes place in an after-school community setting, The House of Hope transitional housing program. This experience offered preservice teachers ample opportunities to work with students who varied in age, ability, race, and socioeconomic background. The children at The House of Hope have been exposed to stressful life events such as domestic violence, parental mental health difficulties, and family breakdowns.

Statement of Problem

I embraced this project because I felt preservice teachers, who are typically White, middle class females, often bring preconceived notions of children whose lifestyles differ greatly from theirs into their classrooms (Sleeter, 2001). Before they enter the classroom, preservice teachers need to combat stereotypes of homelessness and poverty, better understand issues in our communities that affect the children they will teach, and develop empathy in order to implement strategies to ease the difficulties these children face. Teacher education programs do not provide enough experiences in urban areas to properly train preservice teachers how to reach the increasingly diverse population of children they will teach (Baldwin et. al., 2007), (Guyton, 2000). Civic Engagement is one way to help fill this gap of experience that education students need in order to learn first-hand the skills necessary to teach students who are culturally and economically different (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009).

Purpose of Study

Currently, there is a push in higher education for civic engagement in the liberal arts. As a result, the frequency of civic engagement in higher education is growing rapidly. Universities that were historically populated by a homogeneous group of students who shared similar values and backgrounds are now filled with a multitude of non-traditional students, veterans, minority students, and immigrants, along with traditional college students (Zlotkowski & Duffy, 2010). Because our nation is more technologically advanced and our academic departments are much more specialized than before, colleges and universities have had to adapt their missions to effectively address the diversity of their school populations.

Through the creation of higher education consortiums like Imagining America, Campus Compact, and The American Democracy Project, among many others, universities and colleges are banding together to increase awareness, expand resources, and teach students to become more civically responsible and actively concerned members of society. The popularity and reach of these groups, which were first developed in the late eighties and have rapidly grown in popularity over time, now encompass our nation. For example, statistics show that colleges in thirty-five out of fifty states belong to Campus Compact; there are over 1,100 colleges and universities that are members (Kelman, 2012). These groups offer the necessary support for institutions to continue to create service learning opportunities that encourage their students to become more engaged members of their community through service and learning in specific and interdisciplinary fields of study.

Each year since 2002, Campus Compact has sent out annual surveys to determine which types of courses are being offered, how faculty and students are being educated and rewarded for this activity, and which issues are addressed during civic engagement projects and courses. In 2010, the top civic engagement issue that was addressed in the 2009-10 school year was k-12 education, not including k-12 tutoring (Kelman, 2012). This demonstrates that our colleges see the advantage in connecting to k-12 education and building a bridge between college students and public school students. The goal is to have college students serve as mentors and facilitators of knowledge who can help school age children develop relationships at a young age with mentors in higher education institutions. This is especially crucial for disenfranchised students because it can lessen their feelings of intimidation about institutions of higher learning.

Through this experience, college students who serve as mentors, specifically those enrolled in preservice teacher education courses will gain the valuable experience necessary to transfer their real-world experience to their own future teaching. In an annual survey put out by Campus Compact, which discusses the broad impact that civic engagement has on building strong relationships between the campus and the community, Gearman (2005) emphasizes the need to prepare teachers to work in the real world:

> Commitment to community is implicit in the role of higher education in preparing future professionals as well as future community members and citizens in democracy. The foundation of every academic discipline and every profession includes a civic dimension. The engineer cannot plan a building without concern for public safety; the English teacher cannot teach without concern for literacy. Making this civic dimension overt in the education process can help students with transition into professional life (Gearman 2005, p. 34).

Focus of Study

This is a qualitative research study in which my Elementary Art Education Methods students were given the opportunity to work with homeless children who were living in a single parent family in order for the students to gain experience teaching a diverse population of children. My students worked with children after school making art at the House of Hope transitional housing program. These undergraduates would not likely encounter such diversity in a university field experience. There were eighteen children living at the House of Hope, eight male and ten females ranging in age from three to seventeen years. Six of these students were African American, two were biracial, and the remainder were white. All were of low socioeconomic status and were living in the House of Hope with their single mothers.

Students are often insulated at the university level and can be oblivious to some of the diverse types of students they will encounter in the public schools. In my study, the majority of the students are from Iowa, where half of the state's population lives in rural areas. These undergraduates need exposure to diversity and the issues that come with it. Our population is growing and changing, and it is estimated that by the year 2023, children currently labeled as minority children could become the majority:

> Demographer William H. Frey said unexpectedly rapid growth among Hispanics and Asians is creating a demographic age gap that already is visible in classrooms and playgrounds. The Census Bureau has estimated that most children will be minorities by 2023, but Frey said the landmark would be reached years earlier. Frey said it also is likely that the nation's population overall will become predominantly minority before the census estimate of 2042 (Washington Post, 2011).

Preservice teachers are not consistently getting the training they need to work with diverse students. Consequently, they are not always able to provide the support these children need because they have not been given the necessary training. Universities need to develop caring, reflective, and empathetic teachers for our diverse population of children.

Significance of Study

The civic dimension for preservice art teachers calls for active engagement in their communities. In order to be effective, art teachers must be trained to be more confident and less biased when working with diverse groups of students from unique cultures. They must also gain first-hand experience dealing with disparate cultural backgrounds so that they can effectively engage with community members, families, and organizations that are part of their teaching and learning experience. In order to make a real and positive impact on students' lives, preservice teachers need to be more prepared for the classroom and should arrive on the first day wearing their metaphorical tool belts filled with strategies to work empathetically and effectively with marginalized populations, including impoverished students.

My Research Questions

My research focuses on three areas: beliefs about homelessness, how civic engagement can affect students' understandings of children's needs, and the use of journaling to make meaning of this experience. My specific questions include:
1.) What dispositions do students bring into teacher education programs as they enter the field of study? How do these dispositions affect teachers in training as they begin their careers?

2.) What are some of the beliefs that preservice teachers hold about homelessness? How can civic engagement help preservice teachers challenge their notions of homelessness and develop productive empathy for children in this complex and difficult situation?

3.) How do the processes of journaling and reflecting help preservice teachers share, understand, and interpret their stories and struggles in diverse settings? How can this process help them make meaning of their observations and experiences in order to be more effective teachers of all students?

Origins of this Narrative: Working with Marginalized Populations

I first developed an interest in working with marginalized populations after teaching art to girls at the Girls State Training School in Toledo, Iowa and instructing women at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women in Mitchellville, Iowa with my professor and adviser, Dr. Rachel Williams. I found that teaching these women and young girls gave me a different sense of satisfaction than I had when teaching typical students in the public school system because I felt that I was providing them with an opportunity to channel their thoughts, feelings, and experiences while also offering them a slice of enjoyment and a chance to escape the endless rules and strict discipline they faced in their daily lives.

My interests deepened when I received a fellowship to attend The Obermann Graduate Institute, which is a one-week interdisciplinary institute in which University of Iowa graduate students from across campus and at any point in their graduate studies explore how civic engagement can enhance teaching, research, and creative work. I was already interested in service learning and social justice art

education, but this week-long workshop motivated me to take my ideas a step further. I wanted to offer my students civic engagement opportunities so that they could experience the same empowerment that I felt while attending the Obermann Institute and while teaching in places like the juvenile home and the prison.

Through this work, I have developed a relationship with the House of Hope, which led me to become a member of the Board of Directors. I feel I can make a difference in the lives of the women living there while simultaneously helping students learn to work with homeless and underprivileged children. In turn, I am deepening my impact on children throughout Iowa as my students take this experience and incorporate it into out into their own teaching practices.

Developing a Partnership

For the last three years, my Elementary Art Methods students have been developing and teaching a small, thematic, after school art club to groups of elementary children at our campus lab school. In the spring of 2012, the President of our university abruptly announced that our laboratory school on campus would be closing at the end of the semester. Like many other faculty, I was upset by the lack of opportunity to voice my concerns about this rash decision and the absence of long-range planning for our students and faculty. Where would all the students, faculty, and partnerships like my art club relocate? The entire curricular design of my Elementary Art Methods course was based on a six-week art club at the laboratory school. My students worked each semester to craft sequential lesson plans for lab school children centered on the theme of a club they had created. I was left without an art classroom and without children to teach. Where would my students practice

and teach their written lessons? I forced myself to wade through all the chaos caused by the president's decision and come up with an alternative plan for my students.

With the closure of the Malcolm Price Lab School, faculty members were asked to refrain from working within schools to allow more field experience placements. I realized then that I needed to find a location outside of the public school system that needed our services just as much as we needed their organization to meet our needs. In this search for a reciprocal relationship that was essential to building a civic engagement opportunity for my preservice teachers, I focused on the needs that I had for my students to teach a diverse range of children in the community.

At this time, my husband, a teacher of gifted and talented middle school students, had developed and was implementing a service-learning project in our community in which he and his students engineered a donation drive for books, games, and toys for a transitional housing program called the House of Hope. They planned a game night in which they delivered all the donated books, games, and toys to the shelter and spent the evening playing games and reading books with the younger children.

He came home and shared this wonderful experience with me. His warm description of the house, the children, and the needs of the program inspired me. The House of Hope seemed like a place that could use our services, and I knew that we could learn a great deal in return. This experience could be an opportunity for students to explore concepts of poverty, homelessness, and teaching art through

civic engagement. The experience could offer valuable opportunities we could not get at our lab school, which was populated with the much more privileged children of university faculty and other affluent community members. Although the lab students were bright, talented students who understood how to talk to adults and navigate their way through school, they also seemed bored with us and unable to be excited about yet another enrichment activity. They took for granted that these opportunities were available and, at times, demanded to have their personal needs met before they would produce art. For example, students often would ask to use my cell phone to make a call before committing to staying for the workshop.

This program was a solid opportunity for the university students to make art with children, but it was not a representative cross section of public school children and their wide range of needs. I decided that we needed to work with children who have not had these enrichment experiences, had little time with caring adults, and enjoyed very few opportunities to create art about their life and experiences. Before I even drove over to the House of Hope to meet Nina that warm afternoon in May, I knew this was where my students would benefit most.

Meeting Our New Partner

Pulling up to the House of Hope, I was surprised by how welcoming it was. Nestled in the heart of the east side of Waterloo, notorious for being the "bad side of town," the large, brightly-colored house that was built in the early 1900s stood out from its surroundings because of its spacious, welcoming porch and bright turquoise color. Other old houses surrounded the house; some were undergoing revitalization, while others appeared to be awaiting demolition. Across from the

house, a senior center bustled with people. Residents were coming in and out, sitting outside talking or working around the yard. The Boys and Girls Clubs and East High School are located right next to the House of Hope, and several churches are sprinkled around the vicinity. I entered the house and walked into the office ready to pitch my art club. I was eager to make a new partnership and to change the lives of my students and have a positive impact on the families living in this great turquoise house on Walnut Street.

When I first met Nina, the warm and relaxed but straightforward woman who directs the House, I could tell that she was 100% devoted to her job. Her office was extremely tidy, but she had a bulletin board overflowing with pictures of babies and children. She had hung them all together like a grandmother proudly displaying her brood for all to see. She welcomed my art education program to the House of Hope but seemed puzzled as to why an art professor would want to spend time at a shelter. It took some time to explain my role as an educator and my goals for preparing students to teach. I explained that great experiences like this one could help my art education students develop into strong teachers who understand the troubles that families face in our community. I emphasized that this would help offer them the opportunity to develop empathy and become advocates for children.

Making Art With the Moms

Through our conversations that May, Nina and I decided that it would be best to first teach an art workshop to the moms at the shelter so they would become comfortable with our being at the House of Hope. It would also give me a chance to get to know them and learn how to teach their children more effectively. Nina

disclosed that the moms were interested in such art activities as making greeting cards, scrapbooking, and crafting a memory box.

With Nina's encouragement, I decided to teach the mothers how to make memory boxes and went home to plan out the class. The next week, I returned to advertise the class by posting flyers that contained numerous examples from the Internet of sweetly painted boxes with infant photos, hospital bracelets, or baby booties nestled inside a variety of pastel painted boxes. These boxes framed precious memories of babies being born, first steps, and other moments cherished by moms. I bought 10 small wood shadow boxes and lots of other ephemera from Hobby Lobby and then created an example. It was fun to make, but I worried about how a picture of my husband and me together with my newborn son would "sit" with them. I was unsure of the baggage they brought to the shelter and felt worried that they would resent me because I did not share the same experiences they have with the men in their lives. I decided to show it to them and hoped that it would reinforce positive relationships.

Two of my former art education students and I arrived at the House of Hope at noon to prepare for the 1:00 p.m. class. Both had taken my Social Justice Art class and were extremely interested in volunteering. We set up our supplies on the beautiful porch and waited for the moms and Nina to arrive. As 1:00 p.m. came closer, Nina began calling each mom or calling out to them as they got into their cars to leave for the afternoon. It became evident that we were not going to have any mothers for this memory box class. At the last minute, an extremely young, pregnant

mom with a child came delicately up the steps, holding the railing and asked if this was the class she was signed up for.

Three hours later, Nina, her high school aged daughter, my two students, and the young mom had created a memory box and had a wonderful time exploring materials and simply talking. As disappointed as I was that only one mom came, I was thankful for the opportunity to get to know Nina and at least one mom and to get a feel of what it would be like to teach there. Because it was obvious that there was very little space for art making at the House of Hope, my students planned simple but meaningful projects with the children. I also noted that I needed to purchase some traveling tables for art making.

We repeated our art class for the moms in August, and I had a much better response. I realized that I might not be instantly accepted because I was an outsider, and I couldn't assume that everyone would drop everything to participate in an art class. Nina helped the process tremendously by allowing this group activity to be a part of their Tuesday night educational sessions. This seemed like a great way to spend an assigned evening, so I relaxed. I had to tell myself that the moms might find this intimidating because I was coming from the university. Even though I was teaching a craft class about making memory boxes, which was what the moms had asked for, I still had to compete with jobs, night classes, kids' activities, or the little bit of rest and relaxation after a hard day of work for these single moms.

Moving Beyond a Volunteer

By August, Nina had already asked if I was interested in joining the Board of Directors at the House of Hope. I explained that I was extremely interested but that I

was finishing my last year of graduate school and wasn't sure how much I could offer at this time. After my class was over, one of the board members, a lawyer in Waterloo who works with criminal offenders, came to meet me, discuss my interests in the shelter, and talk about the possibility of joining the board.

We agreed to meet again after I had received more information because I needed time to read and think about the board. She explained that board members receive training to understand how non-profit organizations like the House of Hope are run and that the next training session was in a few months if I was interested. When she explained that expanding the House of Hope past the two houses was an important discussion they were having, my dream of a refurbished neighborhood school instantly came to mind. This simultaneously excited and scared me as I realized this had transcended a class project and was becoming a permanent part of my life.

Looking at Homelessness: Through the Eyes of Children

I began to prepare my students for this experience of teaching art at a homeless transitional housing program. There were many things to consider before we began. I started with what I thought was the most important issue for students: seeing homelessness through the eyes of the children. In order to accomplish this, I went to the Youth Library on campus and checked out enough books on the subject of children and homelessness for each of my students to have one. I was eager to hear how students would respond to the children in these books.

Journaling as a Component

I began to plan journal prompts to help my students reflect on the readings, their personal experiences, and teaching at the shelter. I then chose several articles that pertained to the plight of homeless children and how teachers can assist them. I wanted my students to be informed on the many issues, such as depression, embarrassment, loss of possessions, and family connections, that plague children in this situation. I also wanted them to read about the causes of homelessness in order to help them become less judgmental and more understanding of how families end up in crisis and to show them that they could make a difference in children's lives when they became teachers.

Learning to Teach Children in Poverty

After I planned the academic components, I began to think about how to prepare my students to teach children who lived in extreme poverty, some of whom were homeless. In my research, I came across an article entitled, *Understanding the Students We Teach: Poverty in the Classroom,* by Missy M. Bennett (2008), an Education Professor from Southern Georgia University. While her students were out in the public school participating in required field experience, they shared with her the feeling of being disconnected from the students with whom they were working. These feelings were not based on race or ethnicity but on poverty and arose because they had never worked with poor children.

The state of Georgia requires all education majors to take a course on teaching students with special needs. In Georgia, 12 percent of the students they will encounter will bear this label. However, there is no requirement for preservice

teachers to learn how to teach impoverished students, which make up almost 20 percent of the school district in Georgia. To respond to her students' lack of understanding toward children in poverty, she developed an assignment that required her preservice teachers to drive and tour the neighborhoods that the students from their field experiences lived in and observe, discuss, and reflect on this experience. She writes, "[a]lthough college students describe their current living situations as less than ideal, and some even describe themselves living in poverty, after the driving tour most students realize that life's basic necessities vary from many community workers whom they live and work; the idea of poverty takes on a different meaning" (p 252-3).

In reviewing the statistics for the state of Iowa, I found that Iowa has the same requirement for students to take a course in teaching special education students and also lacks course requirements related to poverty. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Iowa's special education population makes up 13% of our schools' enrollment, while, according to the 2010 report put out by The National Center on Family Homelessness, children living in poverty in Iowa comprise 15.9%.

Our Driving Tour of the Neighborhood

I decided to borrow Professor Bennett's driving tour assignment, and with credit attributed to her, I created the Waterloo Driving Tour assignment for my twelve Art Education majors. In my assignment, I explained that we would be teaching at The House of Hope and, to help the class better understand the issues of

poverty and homelessness, they would be taking a tour of the east side of Waterloo in small groups.

In my assignment, I provided them time to get into groups, and then they had to report back to me about when they were meeting to take their tour. I gave them guiding questions to discuss on the tour, which were based on some of Professor Bennett's questions that I crafted to fit the Waterloo area and my class assignment. The students were to think about and discuss the following questions while driving to the House of Hope:

1.) Were the homes in the neighborhood rented or owned by families? How could you tell from your observations?

2.) What time of day did you take your tour? Were people home? If so, what does that tell you about their employment?

3.) What kind of transportation was visible? If there wasn't any visible method of transportation, what other evidence of transportation could be obtained?

4.) Was the neighborhood heterogeneous or homogeneous by race, culture, or age? What might this tell you about the neighborhood?

5.) What was your overall impression of the neighborhood? Were there signs of community in the neighborhood? Share some observations.

6.) Were there any signs of problems in the neighborhood? What were some of the indicators?

7.) How comfortable were you in the neighborhood? Compare this experience to your own neighborhood growing up. What commonalities and what differences did you see?

Guidelines

Professor Bennett offered excellent guidelines to encourage students to make good decisions and to encourage reflective insight while touring the area of interest. I used several of Bennett's reminders in addition to adding some of my own guidelines:

- Students should take the driving tour together in small groups of 2-4 in order to discuss the questions and share their initial views.
- Students should take notes and make careful observations but should be considerate and not gawk.
- Students were required to take the provided map and go during daylight in order to best see the neighborhood.
- Students were told to make good decisions about where to drive and were asked to call me if they got lost.

The driving tour assignment was to be completed between Thursday and Tuesday, and the paper was due the following Thursday.

I asked them to divide their papers into the following three sections:

1.) Begin with a brief description of your childhood neighborhood. Discuss some of the commonalities and differences you noticed when touring this neighborhood.

2.) Next, describe the living conditions that you observed on your tour. Reflect on how these conditions might impact students' performance as they attend school. Think about how socioeconomic differences can affect students.

3.) Finally, respond to the following questions: How might this impact your teaching at the House of Hope? How might this affect your teaching philosophy?

Sharing Insights and Planning With New Knowledge

On the day we were to discuss our driving tour, the university's volunteer fair was being held on campus and the House of Hope was there to promote their organization. I asked Nina if we could meet with her after the fair during our class time so she could share information about the House of Hope with my students. She agreed, and we met her in the student union after the fair ended. Nina explained what the House of Hope actually is, where the funding comes from, and how it is managed. She explained that the House of Hope is funded exclusively by donations, grants, and local United Way funding and receives no money from the federal government. She shared how she came to the House of Hope first as a mother with two children in need of a place to live and then returned many years later to help other women in her role as a case manager. She hoped her experience would allow residents to see that she can relate to their situations and to believe that they can also move through this difficult time in their lives. This was a very powerful moment for my students. They saw that homelessness was something that is possible to recover from, and they realized that this could happen to someone that they knew personally.

The students asked very insightful questions and, with Nina's help, we began to plan art club by dividing the preservice teachers and the children into three groups by age. We also decided on when to separate or keep siblings together. Nina's insight into the needs of the children made our planning much more efficient. The students seemed much more at ease after meeting with Nina and planning out art club. They learned about what the mothers go through during their experience

living at the House of Hope. She was honest in her description of the struggles and in her discussion of the admission and dismissal requirements for families.

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

As my students began to journal this semester, I noticed that they started out reflective in their thoughts and ideas regarding homelessness. They seemed able to discuss the issues around homeless children and explored their initial assumptions about homelessness and their ideas about the strategies they learned from the article. I also shared information with them about supporting the children in this situation. However, they did not seem to have that same reflective approach when they wrote about their teaching. When I asked for several journal entries about their lesson ideas, plans for icebreakers, and other strategies to start our after school art club, students wrote thin entries that often didn't even answer the questions completely. This surprised me because they had been participating in reflective exercises throughout the semester. I felt like my instructional activities such as reading the children's books, putting themselves in the shoes of homeless children, the driving tour, and the reflective mapping project where they were asked to create a visual map of their childhood neighborhood were powerful exercises because they required the students to make personal connections from their own experiences growing up to these new experiences I planned for the students in my class.

Before we could begin journaling about our time at the House of Hope, I decided to really focus on what a reflective practitioner looks like. I *literally* cut up an article from the online journal called *e-journal for Student Teachers and New Teachers* titled *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner as a Preservice Educator.* It was

written by Dr. Tom Sweigard (2007), an assistant professor in the Education Department at Cedarville University. By cutting up this article, I was able to give students snippets of it, which allowed them to focus on just one suggestion from the research. Each student read and reflected on their piece of the article in relation to the class and then shared their summary of it. They added an example of how that could apply to our journaling. A rich conversation took place about the importance of not only reflecting before, but also during and certainly afterward. Students discussed how this would not only enhance their teaching at the House of Hope but also improve the lesson unit they were creating for class. I told students that they could embed pictures into their journals and gave each group a digital camera to use during our six weeks together on site. After deciphering the difference between an unproductive journal and a productive journal, they seemed much more prepared.

We ended the class by going over the following six strategies (Eby/Kujawa, 1998, p.6) of a reflective practitioner:

1. Reflective Practitioners (R.P.s) are **active** – search energetically for information and solutions to problems that arise in the classroom.

2. R.Ps are **persistent** – committed to thinking through difficult issues in depth and continue to consider matters even though it may be difficult or tiring.

3. R.Ps are **careful** – concern for self and others, respect students as human beings, and try to create a positive, nurturing classroom

4. R.Ps are **skeptical** – realize that there are few absolutes and maintain a healthy skepticism about educational theories and practices.

5. R.Ps are **rationale** – demand evidence and apply criteria in formulating judgments rather than blindly following trends or acting on impulse.

6. R.Ps are **proactive** – able to translate reflective thinking into positive action (Eby/Kujawa, 1998, p. 6).

After reading and discussing these six strategies pertaining to reflective practice, I created small bookmarks with this information on it for my students to keep with them as they continued to journal throughout the semester. I wanted this to be an accessible reminder to them as they wrote about their experiences each week to be active, persistent, careful, skeptical, rationale, and proactive as they reflected on their teaching at the House of Hope.

Finally, we began our teaching experience. What follows is an account of our experiences and a deep reflection of teaching that emerged through the data I collected and analyzed. This dissertation provides answers to my initial research questions and is organized as follows: The Review of Literature follows this Introduction; my Methodology and Analysis of Data follows my Literature Review; and I end with a Conclusion that synthesizes my overall learning and offers a view of the larger impacts this study has had and will have on teacher education.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Homeless Families and their Children

Beginning around the Great Depression, homelessness was considered a problem that primarily affected single males who had mental illness or substance abuse problems (Choi & Snyder, 1999; Harms, Ray, & Rolandelli, 1998). Referred to as vagrants and hobos in the common vernacular, these men were not actually homeless; instead, they lived on skid row in urban cities and occupied single room efficiencies, often in run down hotels (Vostanis & Cumella, 1999). By the mid-1980's, the face of homelessness began to change dramatically. The number of homeless families increased as affordable housing decreased (Choi & Snyder, 1999, p. 4) (Harms et al, 1998, p.4). Many families in the 1980s could no longer afford the increase in housing prices since the annual income level had stagnated while the federal government simultaneously cut funding for public housing (Harms et al, 1998, p.6). This combination of issues caused families to have difficulty acquiring permanent housing, thereby increasing the percentage of homeless people and creating a large new homeless population- the homeless family.

Some federal efforts have been made since then to assist homeless families in the United States. In 1987, the Mckinney-Vento Act was established to provide assistance to homeless persons. This act offered emergency and transitional housing and food along with other services such as job training for veterans. However, the Mckinney-Vento Act focused primarily on treating the symptoms of homelessness rather than offering a solution. These services provided by the McKinney-Vento Act

are essential to helping families survive, but they are not enough to allow families to succeed (Choi & Snyder, 1999, p. 24-28). The federal government seems to treat homelessness like a temporary situation, reacting to the problem but not being proactive by looking for long-term solutions to homelessness (p. 31). In the introduction to her 2001 book, *Homelessness and its Consequences: The Impact on Children's Psychological Well-Being,* author Rosemary Theresa Downer discusses the problems that homeless families face in terms of how they are viewed by government officials. She writes, "[m]ost policy makers and service providers view homelessness as a solely economic phenomenon while they ignore the clinical bases and effects of this negative experience" (Downer, 2001, p. *vxii*). This leads to governmental neglect of larger and often more long-term issues that children face without the ongoing support from programs. These issues include access to medical and mental health care, nutrition, transportation to schools, and a multitude of others.

A Look at Contemporary Homelessness

Homelessness among families continues to grow. Currently, 41% of the homeless population in the United States is comprised of families. In 2010, 6.2 million households spent more than fifty-percent of their income on rent (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012), However, while it is evident from my readings, observations, and work that poverty plays the greatest role in homelessness, other factors play key roles as well. The myriad issues of domestic abuse, substance abuse, violent neighborhoods, mental illness, lack of social support, and lack of federal support for adequate housing lead many people to become homeless, often more

than once in their lifetimes (Choi & Snyder, 1999).

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), single mothers head 84% of homeless families. These mothers have often experienced violence and abuse as children and as adults, are likely to be a member of a minority group, are more likely to depend on welfare, have on average two children, and are often younger than housed single mothers (Choi & Snyder, p.5, Downer, p. 2). Statistics show that among homeless families: 43% are African-American, 38% are non-Hispanic White, 15% are Hispanic, and 3% are Native American (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2010). Unlike single homeless individuals, homeless families do not typically live on the streets. They tend to "double-up" first with family or friends, often putting a large financial stress upon this family, before ending up in a homeless shelter as a last resort for housing (Harms et al, 1998, p. 17).

Domestic Abuse and Homelessness

Domestic abuse is considered one of the leading causes of homelessness among women and their children. According to The National Alliance to End Homelessness, there is strong evidence that domestic violence and homelessness are interconnected:

> Studies suggest that many women experiencing homelessness are survivors of domestic violence. One study in Massachusetts found that 92 percent of homeless women had experienced severe physical or sexual assault at some point in their lives, 63 percent had been victims of violence by an intimate partner, and 32 percent had been assaulted by their current or most recent partner. Such studies suggest a correlation between domestic violence and homelessness (The National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2013).

According to the National Coalition against Domestic Violence, "an estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year." 85% of domestic violence victims are women. Unfortunately, the mother and victim is often forced to flee her home with her children to escape domestic violence. Leaving an abusive relationship is extremely difficult for these women, who often feel guilty for breaking up their families--their children sometimes losing connections with their fathers--and uprooting their children from their friends, family, school, and home. These women can feel that their safety and the safety of those family members close to them is threatened, so instead of seeking help and moving in with someone they know or doubling-up, they must go to a homeless shelter instead, in turn losing their support networks and connections to familiar resources (Vostanis & Cumella, 1999).

How Domestic Violence Affects Children

Children are often trapped in the middle of abusive families. This leaves them living and suffering in homes infested with violence. The Domestic Violence Resource Center, a non-profit organization working to end domestic violence, suggests that between 3.3 and 10 million children witness some form of domestic violence annually: "In a national survey of American families put together by The Domestic Violence Resource Center, fifty-percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children" (Domestic Violence Resource Center, 2012). What triggers so much violence in families, especially families with such young children? Pregnancy and young toddlers can bring new stresses to a household, and if there is already stress due to poverty, drugs, or

mental health issues, this new stress can easily lead to violence. Not being able to make enough money to support a new child or infants and toddlers' acting out during stressful times can also spark violence.

The over 3.3 million Children who witness domestic violence annually can lead to a cycle of violence by caretakers and partners. Young boys see how fathers treat their mothers, or fathers *teach* their sons how to "keep women in line" (p. 27). The National Coalition against Domestic Violence states, "[b]oys who witness domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own partners and children when they become adults" (National Coalition against Domestic Violence fact sheet, July, 2007). In other cases, children try to protect their mothers and end up getting hurt or they or blame their mothers for doing what upset their fathers in the first place. Sometimes, children go as far as trying to get their mothers to move back home on the promise that their father won't abuse the family again (Harms et al., 1999, p. 26-27).

Impacts of Homelessness on Children's Health

Today, 1.6 million or one in 45 children are homeless, with forty-two percent of them being under the age of six (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2011). This has a devastating effect on a child's development through physical, developmental, and emotional issues they experience as they become or remain homeless. Children are uprooted from their homes and are often placed far from their healthcare providers. As a result, they tend to lack insurance or access to the transportation needed to continue with immunizations and check-ups (Harms et al., 1998, p.90). They can miss months of school, lose contact with family and friends,

and often must leave behind all of their belongings. Children may be forced to leave their home in the middle of night, with nothing but the clothes on their backs. As a result, children often exhibit multiple mental health issues such as: anxiety, excessive fears, depression, self-harming behavior, and separation anxiety. Other symptoms that may occur alongside these issues are bed-wetting or soiling, sleep disturbances, and eating problems (Vostanis & Cumella, 1999, p.43).

Homeless children also often experience developmental delays. Many studies have shown that lack of outdoor play areas in shelters delay young children's gross motor skills. These studies, also point to the fact that parents often restrain children to strollers due to unsanitary conditions or safety issues related to shelter living (Vostanis & Cumella, 1999, p. 35). Delays in language and academic development of homeless children have also been noted. One important study, which was conducted by Ellen Bassuk from Harvard University, tracked 156 children living in 14 Boston shelters. In her study, Bassuk found that:

> 43% of these children had failing or below grades in school, 25% were in special education, and 43% had already repeated a grade. Among 81 preschool age children whom Bassuk tested, 47% exhibited at least one serious impairment in either language, social skills or motor development, as measured by the Denver Developmental Screening Test (Harms et al., 1998, p.11).

Homeless children are sick at twice the rate of other children. They suffer twice as many ear infections, have four times the rate of asthma, and have five times more diarrhea and stomach problems. Homeless children go hungry twice as often as non-homeless children. Homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade compared to non-homeless children. Homeless children have twice the rate of learning disabilities and three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems

of non-homeless children. Half of school-age homeless children experience anxiety, depression, or withdrawal compared to 18 percent of non-homeless children. By the time homeless children are eight years old, one in three has a major mental disorder (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005). These difficulties begin early. More than one-fifth of homeless preschoolers have emotional problems serious enough to require professional care, but fewer than one-third receive any treatment.

Hunger and malnutrition are also large risks for homeless children. Many shelters have specific rules about not allowing outside food in for reasons like pest control or lack of kitchen space in private rooms for cooking. Donated food or "expired" food may be served to families only at designated meal times, and they have no access to the kitchen for cooking even if someone missed a meal or didn't like what was on the menu. Meals were often found to be unsatisfactory, and young children may experience trouble eating the shelter's food. Many case studies described complaints that children would be hungry at night because dinner was served at 5pm and then nothing more was available until breakfast the next morning (Choi & Snyder, 1999, p.11-12).

Needs of Homeless Families

Parents, mostly mothers, first lose everything, their homes, their belongings, and their partners or spouses, and then they feel powerless when it comes to helping their children meet their basic needs. Independence is lost; daily routines are interrupted; and mothers find themselves abiding by shelter rules that, at times, deny them the ability to care for their children (Harms et al., 1998, p.31; Choi & Snyder, 1999, p.20).

It seems that many of these struggling mothers may not have had a home from the start. They are often released from foster care or institutions or had been living on the streets or with others prior to being officially labeled homeless. Looking at the issues of homelessness for families, it is evident that adequate housing is only one of the things that are necessary to help support families in crisis. The startling statistics show the highly negative effects that homelessness has on all aspects of a child's life. Being homeless not only deprives children of their basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter, but it also takes away the nurturing and stable environment that they need to develop their identity. The environment in which children live and grow helps them develop their self-image and controls how they see and make sense of the world around them. Without a stable environment, children lack the opportunity to create positive, healthy connections to their environment (Downer, p. *xvi*).

Maslow's (1954) Theory of the Hierarchy of Needs places the primary needs of food, clothing, and shelter at the base of the model. Without these essential needs being met, one cannot move up the hierarchy, first to safety, security, order, and stability, next to belongingness and love, then to self-esteem, respect, and success, and finally to self-actualization. Downer writes of the plight of homeless families and their inability to move beyond meeting the basic needs of survival, "[d]ue to the daily struggles associated with homelessness, parents are likely to be less emotionally available to their children. This may have a negative impact on children's development of a healthy self-concept" (Downer, 2001, p. *xvi*). According to Maslow, if one's basic needs are not met, it is highly unlikely that the parents will

be motivated to work to meet the higher-level needs. It is about mere survival at this stage, as parents work to find permanent shelter, food, and clothing for their children. Food restriction not only harms the child's development by denying them the necessary nourishment needed to grow physically and developmentally, but it also takes away the control that parents have over their children to be their provider and caregiver.

How, then, can shelters and schools help families surpass the limitations of their situation and work to help meet the emotional and developmental needs of their children? The following section discusses ways that shelters can develop programs to assist homeless children and their families as they work to become more stable and independent. By being sensitive to children's needs and allowing parents to continue to hold the role of caregiver and provider as they work through this difficult situation, families can develop the important skills that they will need when they are no longer under the support of schools and shelters.

Developing Programs for Homeless Families

In the book, *Preserving Childhood for Children in Shelters,* the authors Harms, Ray, and Rolandelli (1998) provide excellent advice for shelters to help guide families through this difficult time. It is important to ensure that the services that are offered to the parents are "empowering, not paternalistic, and foster the integrity and stability of the family unit" (p.17). This way, parents feel that they are still in charge of their family and have crucial time to be alone as a whole family. Shelters that separate families make it difficult for the family unit to stay intact (p.18).

Children's programming within shelters can be created to assist children as they transition from often-abusive homes or doubled-up living. According to Harms et al., (1998), children living in shelters have common needs that activity programs can help them meet. The needs consist of safety and security, privacy, acceptance and respect, feeling successful, and feeling warmth from others (p.75-77). Through program development at shelters or schools, children can learn to feel better about themselves and see that others care about them while they simultaneously develop new skills and relationships.

When developing a program for homeless children, Harms et al. (1998) provide some guidelines to assist planners. First off, they ask planners to remember to plan small activities that are not dependent on long spans of time because of the transient nature of the population at the shelter. Secondly, program providers must be extremely flexible and open to change, as the ages and ability levels of children are all different (p.75). When providers plan activities, they should not pick subjects, books, or games that may scare children. Children in shelters may fear strangers or dark places and may have been exposed to scary situations already. Rather, to ensure a safe program, providers should try to pick subjects of interest to the particular children whenever possible. For example, they ask providers to remember that separation from parents may be difficult, but it is natural as they develop into healthy adults. If a child has already been taken from one parent or has moved a great deal in a short period of time, they may feel insecure. Planners need to be respectful of these fears and acknowledge them (p. 76).

Homeless children often feel a lack of privacy and ownership. They may not

have many belongings that they can call their own or even a space in the shelter or temporary housing that is all theirs. By having a small area or tote to store their projects as part of the program, children may feel a sense that they have something all their own. A place to display work made by children can show they are valued and their work is respected. Even more simply, by using a child's name in conversation, complementing them or listening to them talk--just providing that one-on-one time with a child-- lets them know that they are accepted. Often children coming into shelters and transitional housing have witnessed or experienced abuse or neglect. They need to feel the warmth of a caring individual and see that others care about them and respect what they have to say (p. 77).

According to a study in a Boston shelter, half of the children showed signs of language impairment, underdeveloped social skills, and trouble with motor skills. It is important to plan activities that promote the development of these skills when working with children in shelter programs (Bassuk & Rubin 1987, as cited in Harms et al., 1998). It is helpful to keep activities short at first because often young children, and especially homeless children, have short attention spans. In order to help them feel successful, start off easy and gradually add more challenging steps.

Allow children to try new materials and games in a safe and warm environment to help them feel good about themselves as they play (p. 77). Staff at shelters and housing programs can teach parents to "play" with their children, interact, and engage in developmentally appropriate, educational, and loving playful time. Often times, mothers need others to model this behavior because they were not given this kind of attention as children or may have come from abusive

situations. Shelters can provide a soft play area for young children and mothers to play together in a safe and comfortable environment (p. 37).

School Support for Homeless Children

Schools can assist homeless children in numerous ways. However, safety is a large concern that sometimes prevents children who are homeless from attending school. Mothers can be hesitant to send their children to school for fear that their estranged, abusive partners will come to school and abduct their children out of revenge. The school district can help by arranging safe transportation from the shelter to the school. Since children's school records are accessible to the public, batterers can locate the mother and children. Consequently, schools need to be aware of this issue and work with the mother and shelter to ensure the safety of the family seeking refuge in the shelter.

Educators also need to be aware of the daily battles these children are facing in order to be empathetic and support them as they learn to deal with homelessness and family issues. Teachers should not extinguish the child's survival strategies; they may need these as they continue to struggle in their day-to-day situations at the shelter. Instead, the school can help children openly and effectively communicate their needs by providing a safe place for the children to work, play, and express themselves. Children need to develop these skills in order to grow and to break the cycles of violence they often see at home. By having a trusted teacher at school, children can learn to share what is on their minds and get the help they need. These children often feel shame about their situation or anger towards their family for the problems they are encountering, so teachers can help relieve some of the

children's everyday hardships by allowing them to *just be children* at school. Teachers need to be sensitive, caring, and patient adults who are there for them.

Homelessness is more than an economic phenomenon. This growing problem is devastating for families financially, emotionally, and developmentally. Homelessness causes strain on family and friends and can prevent children from growing into healthy adults. There are actions that schools and shelters can take part in to support families as they work to become independent. The most important part is to help the family continue to be a family and learn ways to provide the necessary care, both physically and emotionally, that they need in order to become stable and gain more permanent housing.

Civic Engagement: Taking Action to Make a Difference

Civic engagement is an extremely popular phrase in education today. Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE (the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Education and author of the 2007 book, *The Future of Democracy: Developing The Next Generation of American Citizens*, defines civic engagement as, "[a]ny action that affects legitimately public matters (even if selfishly motivated) as long as the actor pays appropriate attention to the consequences of his behavior for the underlying political system" (Levine, 2007, p.13). Levine discusses the links between educational success and civic engagement saying, "civic engagement increases student's attachment to their schools and their sense of purpose, thereby helping them to succeed in learning" (p. 26), and he points out that "habits of service and leadership in adolescence last for many decades afterward…thus it is possible that teenagers who are encouraged to participate civically do better in school, which

partially explains why better educated adults are more engaged in civil society" (p.27).

Levine makes powerful connections between civic engagement in education through lasting effects on students that can continue into adulthood. As preservice teachers are moving between the identity of college student and teacher, this is a prime time to introduce them to ways that they can benefit from civic engagement as well as help them uncover the benefits of incorporating civic opportunities into their own classroom teaching. Students need to learn at an early age that their actions can help shape their community and strengthen their future. Civic engagement is a key part of this study. Civic engagement among preservice teachers helps develop more invested and productive teachers committed not only to teaching but also to responding to the diversity of their students through more personalized experiences (Cone, 2012; Baldwin, Buchanan,& Rudisill, 2007).

Although there are numerous definitions of civic engagement, I have chosen one that best fits my personal beliefs as an educator and that aligns as closely as possible with what I feel is the core mission of civic engagement. Tomas Ehrlich, author of *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (2000), writes:

> Civic Engagement means working to make a difference in the civic lives of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes (Ehlich, p. vi).

This definition mirrors my efforts to inform my preservice teachers of the struggles that children in our community are facing and to engage my students in an experience that will help them develop important values that teachers need in order

to see productive ways to help their students and to motivate them in their classrooms.

Service Learning as a form of Civic Engagement

Service learning is a form of civic engagement that is rooted in educational practices. The National Service-Learning Clearing House defines service learning as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2013). It is one way of making a difference in our civic lives because it entails developing a reciprocal partnership in the community, working to meet the community's needs while educating the participating students through multiple modes of connecting to the curriculum, developing relevant skills related to the community, and working to reflect on how this partnership benefits both parties. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) state:

> We view service learning as a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way to gain further appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Unlike extracurricular voluntary service, service learning is a course-based experience that produces the best outcomes when meaningful service activities are related to course material through reflection activities such as directed writings, small group discussions, and class presentations (as cited in Saltmarsch & Zlotkowski, 2011, p.98).

Marilynne Boyle-Baise (2002), author of *Multicultural Service Learning,* adds to the definition for preservice teachers:

> Teacher educators and community representatives collaborate to organize service and learning activities that respond to local needs and help future teachers learn about culturally diverse and low-income communities. An "assets" model ensures a focus on the community capacities and resources.

> Reflection on the experience includes community representatives, highlights local concerns, and considers issues of equality and equity. Preservice teachers should gain further understanding of course content, a broader grasp of the social economic contexts for the community concerns, and an advanced sense of teaching as service to a culturally diverse public and as advocacy for educational quality and excellence (p.10).

My credit-bearing course that engages students in the urban community of Waterloo is an example of service learning according to Boyle-Baise's description. However, this research study goes beyond a service and serves as a lens through which to better understand community issues of poverty and homelessness and how they affect children. The course serves as a tool that allows students to develop new strategies to help children, and it has become a reflective process to sort through this enormous experience in preservice teachers' lives.

Service learning, at times, has been characterized as an act of "doing for" the community, rather than "doing with" the community. When planning a service-learning project, the community needs become one end result and the students receiving credit for the course becomes the other result. In this scenario, the "doing for" the community to receive a passing grade is what occurs. Students may learn real-world experiences from this opportunity, but the partnership that develops is not the "doing with" that enriches the experience. It is crucial that we keep in mind that "[m]utuality and reciprocity are the cornerstones to service learning that is focused on doing with" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). The "doing for" model of service learning perpetuates the image of the university being the powerful institution that bestows her knowledge and service upon the community in need.

Founding director of Bentley Service learning Center and editor of the 21-volume series on service learning in the academic disciplines, Professor Edward Zlotkowski states,

> The term "service learning" has begun to seem inadequate to what the movement [has] needed. We refer here not to the still unresolved debate about the connotations of the word "service." but the need for a term that would open the door to a wider range of options for civically engaged work, Hence the current preference for the "civic engagement" as a way of characterising what it means for both individuals and academic units to focus on knowledge production for the common good (Saltmarsch & Zlotkowski, 2011, p.5).

In a study by Professor Kelly Ward of Washington State University and Professor Lisa Wolf-Wendel of the University of Kansas, service learning is analyzed and explored as a way of making it more community-centered. The authors note that "[i]n order to move to service learning to be the solution to troubled times in the academy and its constituent communities, it must be focused on empathy and empowerment" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, p.775). Ways to incorporate empathy and empowerment into service learning are to create common connections amongst both groups (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Blurring the lines between the campus and the community through co-teaching encourages relationship building and making students "aware of their own power and position" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, p. 775).

As teachers, we need to move beyond just providing a service in the community. We also need to help our students see what it means to be civic-minded people who are devoted to making their world a better place to live in and who recognize ways that they can use their own skills to begin this change.

Important Components of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement projects, particularly community-based service learning, can be divided into several main components. The first part entails exposure to real-world experience with diverse populations of people in the community. This authentic experience "pushes preservice teachers outside of their comfort zones into spaces where new realizations are possible"(Boyle-Baise & Kilbane 2002, p. 55). A second piece is the reciprocal process in which the community or organization benefits along with the students participating in the activity. It is crucial for there to be a balance of benefits and responsibilities on both sides (Saltmarsch & Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 99). The academic institution is traditionally seen as the expert, so this shared ownership of understanding is essential and can take some work. Zlotkowski explains that the community lays claim to its own kind of expertise- an expertise the academy is bound to acknowledge and respect (p. 99). A third aspect of civic engagement is the reflection component. Without the process of reflection throughout the project, deeper learning cannot truly occur. Students often are so immersed in the experience that the realization and appreciation, along with the deeper learning, do not transpire until the reflection process is accomplished through writing, discussion, and presentation (Saltmarsch & Zlotkowski 2011, p. 98-99).

Curricular Benefits

Students enrolled at UNI are mostly Iowa natives, including a large majority from rural settings. My students seem to connect to the small community feeling that the university campus cultivates and often do not seem willing to venture out

past local shopping areas when leaving campus. This isolation causes them to perceive the world as it is on campus, which, as the latest student demographics show, is severely monochromatic.

In the fall of 2009, there were 13,080 students attending the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), and 91% were Iowa residents. Of those students: 453 were international students, 377 were African-American, 282 were Hispanic, 136 were Asian Americans, and a mere 23 were American Indians (UNI factsheet, 2012). These statistics demonstrate the need to expand the experiences that preservice teachers have with diverse populations outside of the safety net of Cedar Falls and UNI. In realizing the utter importance of getting my students out into the community, I began investigating ways to do this while maintaining the important components of authentic experience, development of a reciprocal relationship, and deep reflection throughout the project. The population of the majority of the community outside our campus, according to the 2010 census, includes a 25% percent non-white population, which is much more racially diverse than UNI's campus (US Census Bureau, 2012).

Some argue that civic engagement partnerships pull teachers away from teaching the important technical skills that students need to learn. I would argue that civic engagement is frequently more authentic and useful. For instance, students learn real-world skills as well as numerous technical skills as the project unfolds. It is true that the skills students learn cannot always be predetermined. I understand this argument and in turn point out that my students take many art studio classes during their time at the university to become skillful artists and

knowledgeable teachers of many disciplines of art. Consequently, I am able to focus less on art making skills taught in traditional methods courses in order to narrow my focus more narrowly to concentrate on teaching skills to the variety of students they will encounter. Zlotkowski (2011) writes about the work assigned during civic engagement projects and noted,

> assignments may or may not improve a technical skill set related to a particular discipline or interdisciplinary area…service learning shifts attention away from our widespread preoccupation with education as a private gain and seeks to balance that concern with a focus of common good (Saltmarsch & Zlotkowski, 2011, p.107).

I agree with the idea that civic engagement pushes beyond the technical skills to embrace larger teaching concepts such as empathy, collaboration, relationship building, organization, and planning skills. I can teach my students the technical artistic skills through our class assignments, but the other, aforementioned skills are best "learned" through experience working authentically side by side with diverse students. I needed to be cautious as we began our experience working in the community with underprivileged children. This type of teaching outside the classroom was new territory for my students, and I was aware that it could cause discomfort and uncertainty for students who were learning new teaching skills.

American author, feminist-activist, and professor bell hooks (1994) shared an experience during her teaching of inequality of diverse populations, which demonstrated this need for caution:

> Students taught me that it is necessary to practice compassion in these new learning settings. I have not forgotten the day a student came to class and told me: "We take your class, we learn to look at the world from a critical standpoint, one that considers race, sex, and class. And we can't enjoy life anymore." Looking out over the class, across race, sexual preference, and ethnicity, I saw students nodding their heads. And I saw for the first time that

> there can be, and usually is, some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and learning new approaches (1994, p. 43).

The "pain" that hooks describes is the personal growth that happens as students learn to work with *children* and not just *teach* academic subjects to children. They have the realization that the world is full of hardship and inequalities. Their eyes are opened to the realities of what students can face daily and how as teachers they will need to know how to deal with these needs and approach each child individually. They realize that even children suffer unfairly due to social oppression. However, acknowledging and seeing this is enriching for preservice teachers.

Another curricular benefit to civic engagement projects I have found relates to the development of essential 21st century skills that need to be embedded in all lesson planning. Students need to think creatively, demonstrate flexibility with time, and communicate well with their partner and the organization they are serving. By teaching through civic engagement, preservice teachers learn to differentiate for varied skill levels, check for understanding, and access prior knowledge through problem solving and troubleshooting in their lessons before, during, and after teaching. When planning and teaching in the community,

> [t]here are few "right" answers in responding to community settings; students have to make inquiries, try multiple solutions, and persevere. Such an option may be especially important for learners who are less successful in dealing with the structures of a traditional classroom environment, where the skill of performing flexibility may or may not be addressed (Zlotkowski and Duffy 2010, p. 37).

Service learning has become an essential component in k-12 education. It is endorsed by our state education officials on the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) website, which provides teachers with ideas about the curriculum and

emphasizes the components of service learning as well as offering helpful steps and evaluations. The website provides resources, training, and research, along with links to help teachers implement service learning. In fact, the website also notes that Iowa has the second-highest volunteer rate in the country. According to the 2008 report published by the Corporation for National and Community Service, 38.7 % of Iowans devote time to help others (IDOE, 2012).

The Iowa Department of Education also states:

> Through Service learning, the doors of communication open between students, teachers, and administrators. They all work together to set goals, designate responsibilities and create strategic plans.... The teachers act like facilitators of the ideas generated by the students. Administrators continue the communication process by interacting with students on a one-to-one basis. The communication and interaction creates an environment within the school that is caring, positive, and beneficial to everyone involved. Stronger, more understanding relationships are formed between students and teachers. Administrators and community leaders see youngsters doing things that benefit society (IDOE, 2012).

What a benefit for preservice teachers to see that they can deepen their relationships with their own students, help others in the community with their needs, connect to the 21st century skills, create interdisciplinary art lessons, and support the mission of the Iowa Department of Education through civic engagement. Service learning needs to be part of the k-12 curriculum, and I see the benefits of civic engagement extending far beyond the relationship-building between school faculty and students that the website discusses. I am confident that the real value comes from the relationships that develop between the school and community. When students feel part of their community, they are more invested in what happens around them and feel more empowered to make a difference in their own community.

Getting preservice art teachers involved in civic engagement provides them with tools to develop stronger, richer, and deeper art programs when they enter the field. Teachers who are involved in civic engagement are able to teach students art by using the community as a springboard for ideas and a relevant situation for students to learn. Preservice art teachers can add more depth to their curriculum while also fulfilling a need in the community.

Examples of Civic Engagement Among Art Educators

Professor Pam Taylor created a community-based service learning opportunity for her preservice art teachers through a project in which the preservice teachers helped children with homework and helped them make art at a local non-profit community organization that assists low-income families. They used the idea of Empty Bowls to raise money to help feed the families who are part of this organization. Taylor (2002) writes:

> Understanding and incorporating a sense of civic responsibility was the fundamental reason for the art education students' involvement in this program. Although the art education students were in essence "feeding the souls" of the children with art, they recognized that the young children's bodies were in need of proper nutrition that their art classes could not fulfill (p. 49).

Taylor's students saw that in order to teach the children about art, the children's basic needs must first be met. The students were able to raise money for families in need. This idea allowed art to function as more than an aesthetic piece because it served a social purpose as well. The students learned skills to create art as a social tool to promote awareness of hunger in their community.

An example of civic engagement appears in an article entitled, *Hand-in Hand, Building Community on Common Ground.* This article focuses on preservice teachers

who worked among homeless people in Charlotte, North Carolina where Professor Pamela Harris Lawton (2010) developed a service learning program "in which participant's perceptions of homelessness and community were examined through quilt making and collecting oral histories" (p. 7). There were three main purposes for this project. The first was "to reach out to the community" as artists and art teachers. The second was to help students overcome their biases and to "dispel stereotypes" of the homeless, building relationships between the art program and the participants at the shelter. The third goal was to "promote lifelong learning" for her preservice students, demonstrating that art making can happen anywhere and should not be "confined to the academic institutions" (p. 7).

Harris Lawton advocates the premise that art making should be part of life and not separated from it. School needs to be more contextually authentic, and Lawton puts this into practice by taking her preservice teachers outside the classroom for "real" learning. She shares this disposition with authors Anderson and Milbrandt (2005), who wrote the book, *Art for Life.* In this book, they argue that "art is something that should be engaged in, not isolated from" (p. 3). The book shares the stories from individual lives and communicates the everyday issues happening in our world. Art is about "human experience," and in order to really understand and teach art, one must be integrated into the world. The classroom, then, must extend outside of the organized, prescribed confines of school to help preservice teachers become global citizens (p. 3).

Art projects that are created out in the community with a marginalized population go beyond art for art's sake. They engage the participants and the

community and, through art making and oral history, make them more aware of the injustices around them and allow them to develop empathy for populations such as the homeless. Putting a face on an important issue like this has a much deeper impact on the preservice teacher participants and helps them incorporate newfound empathy into their teaching (Harris Lawton 2010, p. 7). This opportunity for preservice teachers to work alongside the homeless people from the shelter allowed them to re-examine their own beliefs about homelessness and helped them see that "homelessness is a condition, not an identity" (p. 9).

Reflecting on these civic engagement projects based on hunger and homelessness, I have come to several conclusions. First, there is a great need for art educators to join the community in order to share a message about the inequities that surround us. Second, through civic engagement projects, these issues can be addressed at various levels. There is the direct impact reached through art creation and fundraising, but there is also the shared vision and action that leads to the creation of an awareness of issues, the sharing of stories and the art of the homeless. Beyond the immediately practical applications, I hope that providing education, experience, and inspiration for future teachers will help them develop empathy and compassion for those in their community. I hope they see art education as a tool that can be used inside and outside of the classroom to promote "personal growth, social progress and sense of global community" (Anderson & Milbrandt 2005, p. 3).

Developing Caring, Reflective, and Empathetic Teachers

Developing a sense of care and empathy must happen through experience. The act of discovery and making meaning based on experience is

discussed extensively by American psychologist, Jerome Bruner (1979) in his book, *On Knowing, Essays for the Left Hand*. Bruner defines the act of discovery as rarely happening "in the form of islands of truth in an uncharted sea of ignorance" (p. 82). Instead, he explains that the essence of discovery comes from "a matter of rearranging or transforming evidence in such a way that one is enabled to go beyond the evidence so reassembled to new insights" (p. 82-83). This transformation of evidence doesn't rely on new information, but instead requires the student to be more present in the learning.

Bruner discusses two types of teaching. The first is called the *expository mode,* where the teacher is the traditional lecturer and bestows the information upon the listening student. The second type of teaching he labels the *hypothetical mode.* Bruner describes this mode as, "the teacher and the student are in a cooperative position... the student is not a bench-bound listener but is taking part in the formation and at times play the principal role in it" (p. 83). This heuristic act of learning leads students to deeper problem solving and encourages them to use their experiences to gain new insight that they can apply to their future experiences. This kind of learning cannot come to fruition by learning in the expository mode; it transpires when the act of discovery is guided by the teacher through the encouragement of reflection and deep engagement in the experience.

Bruner writes,

> I believe that education is the fundamental method of social change. Revolutions themselves are no better and are often less good than the ideas they embody and then means invented for their application. Change is swifter in our times than ever before in human history and news of it is almost instantaneous. If we are to be serious in the belief that school must be

> life, then school must reflect the changes through which we are living (1979, p.125).

Engagement and Reflection

In her book, *Teaching to Transgress, Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), bell hooks shares her visions of how educational practices need to transgress toward a more reciprocal and multicultural approach to teaching that engages all students in the university classroom:

> Teaching is a performative act. And it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage "audiences," to consider issues of reciprocity. Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle. Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning (p. 11).

By taking my students to the House of Hope to teach children living in poverty and homelessness, the engagement becomes active participation through learning, and the traditional role of the professor has shifted to facilitator. Students are engaged in the learning but still must pull from this experience and reflect on it to gather meaning. hooks shares the importance of bringing the student voice into the classroom and altering the traditional role of the professor to create a more reciprocal relationship between the teacher and students. She promotes this teaching style in several ways:

> Hearing each other's voices, individual thoughts, and sometimes associating these voices with personal experiences makes us more acutely aware of each other. That moment of collective participation and dialogue means that students and professor respect- and here I invoke the meaning of the word, "to look at" - each other, engage in acts of recognition with one another, and do not just talk to the professor. Sharing experiences and confessional narratives in the classroom helps establish communal commitment to learning (1994, p. 186).

Another example she shares is:

> In my classroom, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material (1994, p.21).

Both of these pieces show how hooks not only values the personal voice of her students but believes that only by sharing and participating in the open dialogue will she truly free her students from the traditional role that professors play in learning: the deliverer of knowledge. Students must join together in communal conversation to create a diverse discussion that allows everyone to gather multiple perspectives.

Although the experience in my own classroom is different than hooks' situation, I take from her the importance of student voice and the necessity of time for all to share their thoughts in class in order to develop multiple perspectives. Like hooks, I believe that building community in the classroom requires acknowledging the value of each individual voice. In my classes, students keep journals and often write ideas during class that they share with one another. hooks describes the way she encourages everyone to read small pieces of their writing, even in classes of 60 - 100 students, in order "to hear each other (the sound of different voices)… and to listen to one another. This is an exercise in recognition and it ensures that no student remains invisible in the classroom" (1994, p. 40-1).

I found this to be an essential component in teaching at the House of Hope this semester for multiple reasons. First, no one is invisible in my classroom. My

syllabus states that discussion is a key component and that it is essential that everyone fully participate in order to gather the most complete understanding of our shared experiences in the course. I want my students to see how homeless people are often invisible. Without a permanent address or basic necessities, they can go undetected by schools and communities. hooks validates an important part of education: freedom from oppression and invisibility. Lastly, hooks emphatically states that we must all listen to one another to fully understand the diverse beliefs that we have in education and how, through our own experiences and interactions with others, our understandings grow.

Notions of Teaching the Homeless

In watching my students open up and share their preconceived notions of homelessness, poverty, and urban issues, I saw students' perceptions of these situations change. When they saw first-hand what school-aged children may be going through, their empathy and compassion seemed to heighten. Many students revealed how naive they were about the problem of homelessness in their community of origin and the community they are now a part of as college students. Melanie wrote in her journal:

> After working with the women and children at the House of Hope I have become much more aware of the issue of homelessness and the presence of it in our own communities. I have come to believe that although homelessness is a huge issue in my own community and throughout America, it can only be fought if there are people who are willing to believe in people who are impoverished and are willing to give support and guidance.

Another student, Libby shared:

> After seeing the state of the [House of Hope] neighborhood, I've come to reconsider my opinions on how I would teach the underprivileged and homeless (which to be honest has been mostly ignoring the issue and hoping I end up in that magically perfect school where every kid is affluent and eager to learn). Seeing the neighborhood as the children see it every day of their lives brings a whole new perspective. Life isn't always peachy outside of the classroom, and not every student goes home to a relaxing dinner in front of the television. Not every student has a home to go to after school.

A third student, Shelly, described her initial feelings about homelessness and how it changed over time when she described how people around her community discussed homelessness. She wrote,

> House of Hope and this class have helped me change my perspective on homeless people greatly. No one has ever sat and talked about the reality of homelessness or poverty in general with me. Not even in my education classes, besides a two-minute lecture on how homeless children may have different risks and needs compared to "normal" students. Most of the things I would hear throughout my community were things such as, "They choose to be homeless. Why don't they go get a job?" and other snarky remarks like that. Also when I thought about homeless people, I would always think about the extreme homeless people. The people that walk around with a shopping cart, dig through garbage, or may even beg for money.

Some of my students shared that they were unaware of the problems homeless people face or chose to believe that they would not encounter that in their teaching. Others initially held stereotypical images of what homelessness looked like. They often want to believe that they will not have to experience difficult situations or that they can simply ignore problems like homelessness because it will not affect them as teachers in Iowa. This experience helped my preservice teachers see a more realistic picture of the difficulties that children experience.

Empathy Verses Pity

Teaching my students to develop compassion for the children and their mothers at the House of Hope was a large part of my curriculum. However, I didn't want them to feel responsible for remedying a situation beyond their control or to get overwhelmed by pity. One of the first things that I noticed when describing the situation in which we would be working in to my students was that they immediately wanted to personally save the children. They would say, "how can we help them get everything they need, such as Halloween costumes, the right school supplies, or clothes for the new baby that is arriving?" Although it was heartwarming to see students immediately showing concern for the well being of families in need, this savior approach can easily be disempowering for families because it is important for families to be able to define their own resources and needs. This attitude could also offend the family by leading them to believe that others may think they are incapable of providing some of these things for their family. The House of Hope was designed to provide a safe place for mothers to become independent and to empower them to get back on their feet by developing

skills in order to provide a better life for their children.

In their book, *Teaching Toward Democracy: Educators as Agents of Change*, Ayers, Kumashiro, Meiners, Quinn, and Stovall (2010) discuss the history of housing project developments like the House of Hope that assisted families in need. Chicago's Hull House, which was founded by Jane Addams, was a place for families to go when in "crisis and need" (2010, p. 6):

> Settlement houses were important reform institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Chicago's Hull House was the best-known settlement in the United States. Most were large buildings in crowded immigrant neighborhoods of industrial cities, where settlement workers provided services for neighbors and sought to remedy poverty (Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2004).

In describing the relationship between the Hull House volunteers and workers and the residents or people in need, these authors describe this process as, "acting in solidarity with- rather than in service to- the people with whom they work" (Ayers et al., 2010, p.7). This was my mission at the House of Hope; we were not there to feel sorry for these children and families but to support them through the arts and, in turn, use this as a teaching experience for my students to learn while simultaneously providing an opportunity to be involved in a community organization that was built to empower single mothers facing poverty and homelessness.

Even though we had to distinguish these children as homeless to better understand the reasons for living at the House of Hope, I wanted my students to see that homelessness is a situation rather than a characteristic and that it could happen to anyone. I wanted them to see that there isn't one face or race of homelessness and that homelessness doesn't happen for any one reason and therefore can't be fixed

with one solution. In *Teaching toward Democracy*, the authors focus on preparing teachers for the diversity of their classroom and warn new teachers of the "toxic habit of labeling [and]... being seized by the deadening obsession of standardized ways of seeing and knowing" (Ayers et al., 2010, p. 33). Preservice teachers need to understand how to work with the diverse needs in their classroom without using labels to mandate their teaching. Ayers et al. (2010) conversely stated:

> Conscientious teachers ask themselves all the time what it is that they need to know in order to be successful with this kid, or with this one, or this one....looking closely at our students draws us deeper into the contexts and circumstances of their lives-- family, community, culture and on and on-- and we seek, then, greater knowledge of society and the world we're initiating youngsters to (Ayers et al., 2010, p. 33).

By using this class time to investigate the experiences, struggles, and strategies needed to help a homeless child, students can feel empowered to help the invisible population that they will encounter in their future classrooms. They need to see how important it is to get to know the lives of their students and how their actions can be a positive contribution to their students' lives by showing them that the community and school cares about their well-being. By taking the time to examine these issues, preservice teachers can see the complicated role they have and how essential it is to be aware of the injustices and inequalities in our society. This is one of the central themes in *Teaching toward Democracy*. The authors discuss the importance of looking closely at our students' lives to better understand our society.

Ayers et al. state:

> The unexamined teaching life is hardly worth living, but the examined life is full of pain and difficulty- the contexts of our lives include unearned privileges and undeserved suffering, murderous drugs and crushing work, a

> howling sense of hopelessness for some, and the palpable threat of annihilation for others. To be aware of the social and moral universe we inhabit and share- aware too, of what has yet to be achieved in terms of human possibility -is to be a teacher of hope and struggle, of outrage and joy and action (Ayers et al., 2010, p. 33-34).

The word "action" stands out here. It is not enough to develop compassion: tit is necessary to take that a step further and find ways to support those in need. In order to develop productive empathy and turn social justice into action, preservice teachers need to see the hardships that children endure.

The Act of Caring

Teachers must not only learn to get to know their students but they must also be able to show their students that they care for them and that they are an integral part of their classroom. Ayers et al (2010) explains:

> Classrooms are porous places, and kids walk in with their lives in their hands, inscribed on their faces, embodied, in every inch of them: they already know that people are dying unnecessarily; they already know much of the wonder as well as too much of the horror of human condition. What they don't know and what remains to be seen, is how adults in their lives will respond to it (Ayers et al., 2010, p. 60).

As a former elementary art teacher in the public schools, I encouraged my students to share their personal stories with me through our class discussions and through our art making lessons. I worked hard to develop good personal relationships with my nearly 500 students by talking with them in class, at lunch, in the hall, and at recess. I planned many school wide events to build relationships within our schools. Teaching art to children extends far beyond the perimeters of teaching techniques, art history lessons, and art criticism. It is about providing students with the opportunity to know that someone is genuinely interested in what they have to say and what they create.

Children need to know that people care about them and that they are valued members of their school and community. When children feel valued, they will want to succeed. In *Teaching toward Democracy*, the authors advise us to remember that "[t]eaching requires thoughtful, caring people to carry it forward successfully, and we need, then, to commit ourselves to becoming more caring and more thoughtful as we grow steadily into our work" (2010, p. 34).

How do children learn to care for one another? How do teachers help children become compassionate individuals who can accept difference and be empathetic to their classmates and the issues that will surround them as they grow up? In her book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Nell Noddings (1984) writes:

> Our dictionaries tell us that "care" is a state of mental suffering or of engrossment: to care is to be in a burdened mental state, one of anxiety, fear, or solitude about something or someone. Alternatively one cares for something or someone in regard for inclination toward that something or someone. If I have an inclination toward mathematics, I may be willing to spend some time with it, if I have a regard for you, what you think, feel, and desire will matter to me. And, again, to care may mean to be charged with the protection, welfare, or maintenance of something or someone (p. 9).

Noddings shares many ways to look at how one cares for another. In one example, she discusses how caring can lead to hindering another person when attempting to help the individual in need. This leads to the question, is this truly caring for another?

Here, Noddings (1984) differentiates between care and sympathy:

> Suppose I learn about a family in great need, and suppose that I decide to help them, and supply them with necessities of life, I do all of this cheerfully, willingly spending time with them. Can it be doubted that I care? This sort of case will raise problems also. Suppose both husband and wife in this family want to be independent, or at least have a latent longing in this direction. But

> my acts tend to suppress the urge toward independence. Am I helping or hindering? Do I care or only seem to care? If it must be said that my relation to the needy family is not, properly, a caring relation, what has gone wrong? (1984, p. 11).

It is important for teachers to create an environment that empowers their students. In doing this, they must make sure that the care they give to students will support them as they grow. In my experience, when a child feels supported and cared for by their teacher, they are willing to take more risks and take more from their learning experience.

Noddings (2002) states, "[c]hildren are much more likely to listen to adults with whom they have established a relation of care and trust" (p. 5). Noddings writes about the need for more caring in our society and in our educational system and describes how people are aware of the need to care for others but can get sidetracked by other factors. In her book, she describes an obligation that people must feel when it comes to caring for others in need. An "I must" do something arises in them and other times, the "I must" is met with resistance... both are powerful forces that are not easy to tackle (Noddings, 1984). Noddings writes,

> We recognize that others need and we resist; for some reason- the unpleasantness, our own fatigue, the magnitude of the need- we do not want to respond as carers. In such instances, we have to draw on ethical caring; we have to ask ourselves how we would behave if this other were pleasanter or were someone we loved, if we were not tired, of the need were not so great. In doing this, we draw upon an ethical ideal- a set of memories of caring and being cared for that we regard as manifestations of our best selves and relations. We must summon what we need to maintain the original "I must" (2002, p. 13).

To come back to Bruner's belief that school must reflect the changes in our lives in order to promote social change means that we must take up the ideas of Ayers et. al, Noddings, hooks, and Greene together and move forward in our

teaching of children. We need to have more reciprocal teaching in our classrooms and strive to understand students as individuals and embrace the 'I must" in schools and in other places outside the home. Caring, empathetic adults who comprehend their diverse needs and who support them along their educational path is what will lead children to success not only in school but also outside of the classroom.

Teaching Others to Care

As teachers, it is sometimes easy to become "numb" to the innumerable struggles that our students will bring to school such as homelessness, abusive home lives, neglect, poverty, racism, health issues, and many more. The obligation of "I must" can be outweighed by the overwhelming number of issues that children have within a single classroom. Teachers are scrutinized daily over student performance and they are subject to an increasing number of laws and education reform bills. This weight of educational bureaucracy can divide a teacher's sense of concern for students' individual needs. Teachers must not let the myriad issues defuse our ethical caring instincts and ignore the need to care for our students. Without a caring teacher in the lives of these struggling children, they may not experience success in their classrooms or feel empowered to share their stories or show pride in their schoolwork and art projects.

Gender and Caring

Traditionally and still today, the vast majority of teachers are female. We need to work toward more of a gender balance in education in which both male and female teachers assume nurturing roles toward the children they teach and actively demonstrate that both men and women share nurturing responsibilities. As

Noddings notes, this gender imbalance "can lead to exploitation of women to do more of the work as caregiver. Practice is needed for both genders" (2002, p. 19-20). Noddings goes on to note:

> It seems reasonable to suggest that just as we now want girls to have mathematical and scientific experience, we should want boys to have a care giving experience. Boys, like girls, should attend to the needs of guests, care for smaller children; perform household chores, and the like. The supposition, from a care perspective, is that the closer we are to the intimate physical needs of life, the more likely we are to understand its fragility and to feel the pangs of the inner " I must" that stirring of the heart that moves us to respond to one another (Noddings, 2002, p. 20).

Modeling by teachers is the first form of educating about care. Noddings recommends that adults should show children how to care, engage regularly in dialogue with them about care, and provide many opportunities for them to practice caring (p. 41). This is why service learning projects, mentoring programs, and social justice opportunities are important tools for educators. In the curriculum itself, "homemaking is left out of social studies- the curriculum overflows with nation-making, war-making and industry-making, but the art of making a home is ignored" (p. 53). Reintroducing valuable homemaking skills could be one way to integrate the study of caring into already stable subjects in order to promote a more comprehensive study of how humans care for their world.

Feminist philosopher, Sara Ruddick (1989), pointed out that the home is where maternal work is done. It is the place "where children are supposed to return when their world turns heartless, where they can center themselves in the world they are discovering" (p.87, as cited in Noddings, 2002, p. 55). It is the place where, in addition to being cared for, the children learn to care – to care for the other human beings, places, objects, animals, plants and ideas. Traditional roles of the

maternal figure leading the household, perpetuates the belief that women must care for the home, whether the mother works or stays home. Women who work are also looked upon as the central caregiver, placing twice the workload upon them. If the maternal role is not home to model caring, who modeling this? Children may be missing out on vital lessons in caretaking.

Instead, caretakers can share children's encounters with everything in the home with the children. What is learned in the home serves to guide children's lives as they wander forth and begin to reshape the world. Children need to see both mothers and fathers as caretakers in the family to instill these caring traits in children as they grow. When children do not have safe and caring homes to return to everyday, they must rely on school and their teachers and classmates to provide this sense of security and belonging.

> Noddings writes:
> Thoughtful educators exploring the simple topic of home might begin to see that is it is far too controversial a topic. Far from being non-intellectual, non-political, and boring, it is loaded with possibilities for radical social action. When we begin to understand how identity is shaped by places (including homes) and how homes become extensions of our own bodies (Casey, 1993) we see clearly how privileged some of us are and how deeply some are deprived. What happens, for example, to the identity of one who is homeless? Here is a wonderful opportunity for students to extend their investigations into the arena of social policy (Noddings 2002, p. 55).

When children grow up homeless or continually move from one temporary situation to another, opportunities to see care modeled for them or to understand the importance of caring for others, their belongings, and their home can be left out as parents struggle to meet the child's basic needs. Drugs, hunger, and domestic abuse can also deprive a child of the caring environment they need and can negatively affect their identity. Teachers need to see that the far-reaching effects of

homelessness surpass the need to simply provide a physical shelter; they must help students learn the importance of caring for one another and work with children to increase their understanding of themselves as they develop their identity.

From Empathy to Action

Maxine Greene, an American educational philosopher, author, and teacher, concurs that teachers need to see the world through the lens of their diverse students' lives in order to teach them effectively. In her book entitled, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988), she argues:

> Rather than posing dilemmas to students or presenting models of expertise, the caring teacher tries to look through students' eyes, to struggle with them as subjects in search of their own projects, their own making sense of the world. Reflectiveness, even logical thinking remains important; but the *point* of cognitive development is not to gain an increasingly complete grasp of abstract principles. It is to interpret from as many points as possible lived experience, the ways of there being in the world (1988, p. 120).

She goes on to share that students may not feel the sense of urgency or understand that it is within their power to care for others. Our students need to engage in social situations like civic engagement that will teach them not to become immune to the injustices around them and empower them to want to make a change. Greene writes:

> I am suggesting that there are may be an integral relationship between reaching out to learn and the search that involves a pursuit of freedom. Without being onto something, young people feel little pressure, little challenge. There are no mountains they particularly want to climb, so there are few obstacles with which they felt they need to engage. They may take no heed of neighborhood shapes and events once they have become used to them- even the figures of homelessness, the wanderers who are mentally ill, the garbage-strewn lots, the burned out buildings. It may be that no one communicates the importance of thinking about them or suggests the need to play hypothetical alternatives. There may be no sense of identification with people sitting on the benches, with children hanging around the street corners after dark. There may be no ability to take it seriously, to take it

> personally. Visible or invisible, the world may not be problematized; no one aches to break through the horizon, aches at the presence of the question itself. So there are no tensions, no desires to reach beyond (1988, p.124).

To fulfill the mission Greene advocates, teachers must motivate their students to want to move beyond "the rut of learning" into a more relevant mode of action. This action of caring helps students see firsthand how their work can pay off. Greene writes, "[a]n education for freedom must move beyond function, beyond the subordination of persons to external ends. It must move beyond mere performances to action, which entails the taking of initiatives" (1988, p.133).

Greene reflects on how caring impacts one's thoughts and argues that caring for others begins to shift the importance of caring for oneself into the development of empathy. Placing care on someone else facilitates an understanding of how other's lives are closely connected to our own. She writes, "[w]hen I look at and think about how I am when I care, I realize that there is invariably this displacement of interest from my own reality to the reality of the other.... I must see other's reality as a possibility for my own" (p.14). It is through this act of caring for others, the ability to develop empathy that social action can occur. But it cannot happen without taking time to reflect on the experiences and new knowledge gained.

Reflection as a Tool to Promote Action

Choosing on-line journals as a tool for reflection allowed my students to reflect on their teaching experiences, make connections to their own lives, and look ahead to ways they can improve their time working. My mantra when teaching methods courses, which I learned when working on my National Board Certification, is "a good teacher is a reflective teacher." During this certification experience, I

wrote about my everyday teaching, why I chose to teach a specific way, and how this information could help me refine my methods. New teachers need this type of critical reflection, but it doesn't come naturally to them. It seems that they have a difficult time at first and seem reluctant to admit when things went wrong. They are also often unable to see the reasons why the lesson was unsuccessful. I knew practicing the art of reflection was necessary before we could begin writing about our experiences at the House of Hope.

Dr. Tom Sweigard, Associate Professor of Education at Cedarville University, in his article entitled, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner as a Preservice Educator* (2007) writes:

> With their relative lack of experience, it is important for preservice educators to be able to learn to analyze their teaching and "reflect-on-action" and make any necessary adjustments that will help them to learn and mature from the experience. The first source of informative feedback available to most instructors is themselves (p.1).

In order to be a reflective practitioner, preservice teachers and new teachers alike need to develop a process to analyze and reflect on their lesson plans and teaching strategies along with the myriad events that they could not plan for when teaching. Sweigard writes, "[w]e, as teacher educators, need to be able to help preservice teachers to be able to handle and learn from these daily challenges" (2007, p. 2). It is important that these preservice teachers learn to become reflective practitioners not only to see what their students take away from the lesson, but also how the lesson can be strengthened to further improve.

As a tool of reflection for my class, I chose online journaling as a method of reflection for my students to deepen their learning experience teaching children in

the community. Journaling can strengthen students' reflective skills and enrich class discussions when students take the time to reflect on their experiences. The skill of journaling as a form of reflection must be taught to students in order to reap the full benefits from it:

> Sometimes, teacher educators do not purposefully teach the skill of reflections and what they are looking for in their journals. This can be a challenging task. Teacher educators need to be able to facilitate the transformation of preservice educators into reflective practitioners as they progress from their classes/field experiences into full time teaching (Good, Whang, 2002, as cited in Sweigard, 2007 p.2).

Becoming a reflective practitioner can and should involve a careful analysis of teaching practices. However, it also involves the heart. While we are analyzing our attempts at "reflection- on – action," we are also engaged in an intensely personal and emotional relationship with those we call "our kids!" (p.7).

Through reflective writing, classroom discussion, and the insights gained at the House of Hope, preservice teachers can see students through a lens that is quite different from the one they may previously have brought to class. This experience allows them to move beyond teaching a class of students to recognizing each student's needs in order to help them express themselves and make meaningful art. Noddings writes:

> I am suggesting that we do not see only the direct possibilities for becoming better than we are when we struggle toward the reality of the other. We also have aroused in us the feeling, "I must do something." When we see the other's reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream. When I am in this sort of relationship with another, when the other's reality becomes a possibility for me, I care (1984, p.14).

This relationship between my art education students and the children living at the House of Hope can be the spark that teachers need to be fully engaged in their students' lives, to care for them, and to help them to meet their needs. Teachers need to develop empathy and become advocates for the marginalized populations like homeless children.

As preservice teachers learn to deeply reflect on experiences like this one at the House of Hope, their understanding of the needs of their students can shift. This shift, as Greene (1988) discusses, displaces their reality onto the reality of others. It is this new reality that can strengthen the teachers-in-training's ability to create meaningful teaching experiences. In the act of discovery through experience (Bruner, 1979), students can learn to develop new ways of understanding through civic engagement opportunities. These opportunities can be the guiding moments that preservice teachers need to put aside pity and counterproductive acts of kindness and begin to exercise their development of empathy and care while working in realistic situations and developing new understandings of what children today need. Social action can then transpire when teachers in training become more aware through hands-on learning and authentic involvement in the community.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Method of Study

This mixed-methods qualitative research study is inspired by autoethnography, secondary source literature, semi-structured individual interviews with preservice teachers, student journals, reflective assignments, and my own direct observations and field notes. I begin this section by describing the reasons why I chose this type of methodology to gather, synthesize, organize, and analyze data in order to complete my research study. I chose a qualitative research approach because of its close ties to anthropology and the study of human cultures. The detailed descriptions needed in qualitative research allowed me to develop a better understanding of the situation in which my students were working and the relationships among the groups involved in this study.

In his book, *The Enlightened Eye,* Elliot Eisner (1991) states that qualitative research is the search for qualities and characteristics of our experiences. He shares six features of qualitative research by noting that it: 1) is field focused, 2) is constructed so that the researcher is also the research tool, 3) has an interpretive style, 4) uses expressive language, 5) is detailed in nature, and 6) is persuasive to further human understanding (p. 32-40). These six features helped me to write an account as a participant-observer. I also drew on my own experiences as a teacher and parent. Writing helped me connect my prior experiences to the new experiences with my students during our work at House of Hope. My university students shared their experiences with me as part of this study.

Qualitative research has multiple characteristics. I have highlighted some of the methods that the authors of *Designing and Conducting Research in Education (*2008), Drew, Hardman, and Hosp, describe as qualitative research. According to these authors, qualitative research takes place in natural surroundings, uses observation to watch events as they unfold, explores the reasons a behavior may exist, and has a small sample size (p.185). My fieldwork for this study focused on qualitative research because of the need for a particular and unique approach. Each qualitative study is uniquely formatted, "idiosyncratic... and focuses on the exploitation of the researcher's unique strengths, rather than standardization and uniformity" (Drew et. al., 2008, p.189). Qualitative research works in this context because it allows for flexibility and a menu of options when designing the study. It is often hard to predict how a qualitative study will develop and what will actually come of it. In my case, the transient qualities that homeless families have in some instances made it difficult at times to develop relationships with their children. The unpredictable events that occur on a daily basis at the House of Hope also impacted my study.

Further narrowing my research, I have used ethnography as well as autoethnography "to try and understand the significance and meaning of an experience from the participants' views" (La Pierre and Zimmerman,1997, p.34). Ethnography focuses on getting to know the group that is being studied and the setting in which the research takes place. I did this by first getting to know the culture of the House of Hope by volunteering and teaching art to the mothers. I also joined the Board of Directors in order to better understand the function of the

organization and its needs. I have been teaching college for over five years, so I felt familiar with the needs, behaviors, and desires of my research participants.

Autoethnography differs from ethnography because it embraces rather than limits the researcher's subjectivity. This study draws on autoethnographic methods. I am a participant in the setting of my research, not only as a board member but also as a teacher of students holding a weekly on-site art club. Throughout the six weeks, I not only observed but also modeled, assisted in teaching, intervened in behavioral situations, and worked to get to know the children and their needs and interests in order to deepen their art making and to assist my students in planning lessons and activities.

Carolyn Ellis (2004), professor of Communication and Sociology at the University of South Florida and author of the book, *The Ethnographic I,* describes how ethnographic writers who focus on the artistic aspects of this type of qualitative research can help the reader "put themselves in the place of others, within a culture of experiences that enlarges their social awareness and empathy" (p.30). She describes how stories are a large part of ethnography and explains that through autoethnography, the writer can connect personal stories and their relationships to the culture being studied (p. 37). Ellis describes the form of autoethnography as written in "first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms, short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, scripts, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social prose. They showcase concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality and self-consciousness" (Ellis, 2004, p.38).

Due to my personal connection to the House of Hope and to my art education students, I have used this type of methodology to narrate this experience and to position myself in this experience as having grown up in a small town in the Midwest and as having faced many of the same growing pains that my preservice teachers experienced in this study. Through intersubjectivity, I have connected my experiences and reflections about myself as a teacher, board member, and mother of a young child. I cannot go a day without thinking of what it would be like to be a single mother raising my son without a home and life's most basic needs.

Participants

The participants in this study were students enrolled in my Methods of Elementary Art Education course at the University of Northern Iowa in the fall of 2012. This course is a required course for all art education majors who are seeking a Bachelor of Art in Art Education and licensure to teach k-12 art in public and private schools. This class consisted of 10 females and one male, all of whom were juniors and seniors. They were all undergraduates working towards their first bachelor degree, and the average age was 21 years old. All of the students in this study were from Iowa.

During our volunteer project, participants from the House of Hope consisted of approximately 8-11 families. There were 23 children living between the two locations, with 18 children ranging in all ages that participated. Between the two houses, this program can hold 11 families, but as we began to prepare for this teaching experience, two families were asked to leave because they did not follow the rules of the organization, and one mother had been sentenced to prison. When

my students inquired about the rules, Nina, the case manager, went over the formal regulations and explained that the families who were asked to leave hadn't broken the primary rules. However, she failed to share the reasons why they were dismissed from the House of Hope. I remember well how hard I was hit by the impact that the House of Hope could have on homeless mothers who needed to get off the streets and back into permanent housing, and I was anxious to see how the students would react to this as well.

Time

In order to prepare for our time at the House of Hope, my class spent much time reading and discussing the issue of homelessness before we actually started teaching. After our initial preparation, we worked together for six consecutive Tuesdays, rain or shine. We arrived at our classroom on campus to discuss the events for the day, gathered and prepared our supplies, and then carpooled to the site. We arrived each Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. and set up our groups in the individual outdoor locations whenever possible. We worked from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. making art, playing games, and cleaning up large messes. We completed our six weeks at the end of October, when it was too cold to continue. Our groups created a large display of children's artwork at the local library to commemorate our time there. We attempted to find a way to get all of the families to the library for a small art celebration, but with so many families lacking transportation and proper car seats, our goal was impossible. It was a disappointing but realistic moment when my students and I saw just how difficult it is to function without basic necessities like transportation.

Two new families moved in during our time teaching at the House of Hope, and one lasted only two weeks before they had to move out due to breaking the rules of residency. Two moms gave birth, and one moved back home to the Indian settlement where she was raised to receive help caring for her children. The students in my class were able to see, via the swinging doors of the House of Hope, a wide range of families and witness the struggles they faced to overcome homelessness.

While my preservice teachers were the primary focus of my study, the children and their mothers became an essential part of the story. I want the children and the mothers at the House of Hope to serve as real-life examples of the serious issues my students will encounter in public schools. Other participants in this study were Nina, the case manager for the women, and Betty, the new executive director. Finally, I must include myself in this study. I am the instructor of the students, the organizer of the art club, and now a board member for the House of Hope.

Data Collection: Interviews, Student Writing, and Field Notes

To begin my research, I chose three forms of data to collect, code, and analyze. Through triangulation of personal field notes based on my experiences and observations, student journals, reflective assignments, and selected student interviews, I was able to determine whether the data painted a reliable picture in response to my research questions. To collect my primary source data, I began by applying to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to collect data with my students at the House of Hope. Nine of the eleven students signed a consent form and agreed to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

Protection of Human Subjects

The data collected and coded in this study was handled confidentially with no obvious risks to any of the participants used in the study. Each student participant was identified by a pseudonym. As the researcher, I was the only one who had access to participant names. Interview data presented in this study are completely anonymous. As the researcher, I am the only one to have access to the interview audio recordings and transcripts, and these will be destroyed during the fifth year after publication of this dissertation. Participants were required to read and sign informed consent forms prior to participating to ensure that they fully understood the nature of the study, and they freely consented.

Journals

I setup my Methods of Elementary Art Education course to allow my students to have an electronic weekly journal that was privately shared with me. I created my syllabus with predetermined weekly journal prompts in order to keep the class organized and to allow students to know expectations ahead of time. I assigned sixteen journal entries during the semester. Ten of the journal entries directly related to our teaching at the House of Hope (see Appendix B), and the other six related to other required content from the course. Some of the journal entries are as follows:

- Journal about your thoughts concerning homelessness. What experiences do you have with homelessness? What are your fears, questions, and concerns, and what are you looking forward to when working with homeless children?

- Journal about your first experience at the House of Hope. Tell the story of what happened and which aspects of your plan worked and which had to be

adjusted. Were your expectations similar to or different from your experience? What will you do differently the next time?

- What is working well, and what is still very difficult when teaching art club? How are the children reacting to the art projects being planned, and how are you helping them to find success in their work? Share a specific strategy that you will take from this experience and use in your future art room working with children experiencing poverty, homelessness, or other insecurities.

- Journal about your experience at art club. Has your understanding of children in poverty and homelessness changed? What do you see as the most difficult part of being a homeless child? What struggles do you see as most difficult for them, and what are some of the ways the families and the House of Hope are helping them?

I collected the journals at the end of the semester, after grades were completed, and compiled them into one source for data along with their two reflective papers. One of their reflective papers focused on the driving tour, and the other focused on their final reflection, in which I required the students to look back at all their previous journals and reflect on their overall experience and growth. While the language in these journals appear informal and candid, I feel the need to explain that I took them verbatim and applied them to my research. The students were not required to formally write each but instead to shares their open and honest impressions and reflections.

Interviews

As part of the study, participants were invited to participate in a one hour, semi-structured interview at the end of the semester that was based on Professor Kajournboon's suggested interview method. In her article entitled, "Using Interviews as Research Instruments," Annabel Bhamani Kajornboon from

Chulalongkorn University in Thailand describes how these interviews should be conducted:

> Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative analysis... The researcher has a list of key themes, issues, and questions to be covered. In this type of interview the order of the questions can be changed depending on the direction of the interview. An interview guide is also used, but additional questions can be asked (Kajornboon, p.5, 2005).

Professor Kajornboon's article offered further guidance on the specific types of questions to include in a semi-structured interview:

> Additional questions can be asked and some may be questions that have not been anticipated in the beginning of the interview. Note taking or tape recording documents the interview. This type of interview gives the researcher opportunities to probe for views and opinions of the interviewee. Probing is a way for the interview to explore new paths which were not initially considered (p.6, 2005).

I scheduled interviews with five of the nine students over the next semester and spoke with them privately in my office on campus. Of the remaining four, one student took a semester off of school, another student went to study abroad, and two students had difficulty scheduling their interviews due to family and school issues. In my interviews, I used a Livescribe pen, which is a ballpoint pen with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder, to record my notes on paper and record each private interview. After each interview, I transcribed our conversations for my data collection. I scripted fourteen questions based upon my initial research questions and my observations from our time together at the House of Hope (see Appendix C). Here are some sample questions from my interviews:

- Did your involvement with the House of Hope help alter any beliefs or preconceived notions you had about homelessness? Why or why not? Can you share any specifics?

- How would you compare this experience teaching art club to your scheduled field experiences?

- Describe some challenges/rewards that you encountered while working at The House of Hope.

- While you were making art with the children, were there situations when their homelessness came into conversation? If so, can you describe the situation and share whether you were able to help them express it in their artwork?

During each interview, I also encouraged my students to share stories about their experiences and followed up with individual questions when appropriate. As students connected their own personal situations to the experience we shared, I heard many of the same common themes I had found in the journals.

I found it very important that I asked open-ended questions in my interviews. Sometimes I had to change the order of my questions to keep the flow of the conversation going with research participants. I wanted my students to feel comfortable enough to share their personal stories but also to reflect specifically back to their learning experiences last semester. As students had begun the spring semester, some were already involved in new field experiences. For some students, the distance from the experience allowed them the time necessary to reflect upon and process the information, but for others, some details were forgotten and they needed probing to get back to the specific memories of the House of Hope.

Field Notes

I kept thirty-two pages of personal field notes and photographs from our six weeks spent at the House of Hope, Nina's visit to our class, and my board member training. I chose not to include photographs due to the confidentiality of the families and students involved, but I used them as data to help me describe the weekly events and keep track of the preservice teachers' lessons. Students were allowed to photograph the children's work to use in their teaching portfolios.

Each week after art club, I sat down and reflected on my observations, experience, and actions that took place during art club. I was careful write my own field notes before reading any student journals so as to not alter my own reactions to our time together. I was cognizant of the importance of writing not only about what happened but also about how things made me feel, how I reacted, and what actions to take next in order to make this civic engagement experience most beneficial for all participants.

I began to analyze and code students' journals first because they were the most prominent element of my data since each of my students wrote of their experiences weekly. I was eager to see the commonalities and differences. Even though I read them throughout the semester, the journal data took on a new meaning when themes emerged and were arranged and considered in tandem.

Stereotypes of Homelessness

First I looked for signs of students' pre-conceived notions of homelessness and traced the growth these students made in their journals as our experiences progressed. Currently, 41% of the homeless population in the United States is

comprised of families and 84% of homeless families are led by singer mothers (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012; HUD, 2012) It was evident when this study began that none of my students was aware that homelessness was a growing issue for single mothers and their children. Before our House of Hope experience, many students shared the beliefs that homelessness is an urban problem and that homeless people are all dirty. They didn't bring up homeless children or families in their preliminary journal entries.

The teachers in training' lack of exposure to the homeless community and their stereotypical beliefs about homelessness overlapped with their dispositions of care toward children thus showing signs of what Goldstein and Lake (2000) shared as initial beliefs that teachers hold in regard to care in teaching; essentialism, oversimplification, and idealism. The students' naiveté of homelessness coincided with their understanding of what makes a caring teacher. These beliefs grew over time into more concrete understandings as their time at the House of Hope progressed. They were able to see that care alone was not enough, the children needed empathetic teachers willing to move into action.

Caring in Teaching

Using the themes I selected from my research questions. I began searching for signs of essentialism, idealism, and oversimplification in preservice teachers' dispositions toward caring in teaching. Goldstein and Lake (2000) reference Nell Nodding (1984, 2002) and Carol Gilligan (1982) when they emphasize that, "[f]or these scholars, caring involves the establishment of meaningful relationships, the ability to sustain connections, and the commitment to respond to others with

sensitivity and flexibility" (Goldstein & Lake, 2000, p. 862). They used this definition of care to guide them in their analysis of preservice teachers' predisposed beliefs about caring in teaching. I used the same themes to guide me in my study as I considered the beliefs my students demonstrated through journaling as they entered this class and the new beliefs they developed as their experience in civic engagement through the House of Hope unfolded.

In order to establish an ethic of care relationship, preservice teachers needed to move to a more reciprocal caring. They needed to include engrossment in the caring of the children at the House of Hope (Noddings, 1984; Owens and Ennis, 2005). The teachers in training needed to move from their discomfort or lack of awareness to understanding what was happening in the children's lives at the house and be receptive to the children's needs.

Empathy and Compassion

Noddings writes, "Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into another's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the one-cared for, not ourselves (Noddings 1984, p. 24). This type of caring is what leads to productive empathy. Noddings sees empathy as a way for people to relate to one another through shared feelings and then from that feeling, one can move forward to helping the other.

As I continued to analyze journals, I searched for signs of empathy and other themes such as compassion or pity for the homeless families. I have defined empathy through Noddings'(1984) writing when she explains empathy. She writes,

"we do not begin by formulating or solving a problem but by sharing a feeling" (p. 31). Compassion differs from empathy because it shares the feelings of concern for another but it lacks the next step which, as Nodding explains, is problem solving. It is with this definition by Noddings (1984) that I began my analysis of data looking for sign of empathy. During this search, I noted the times when empathy was replaced by pity or compassion for the homeless families as student's ability to care for the children grew. I found many similar excerpts related to compassion and empathy, and I sorted them under these categories to help make sense of my data. I found numerous strategies that the students envisioned to help the children who were experiencing homelessness.

The teachers in training vocalized their often-predictable concerns about the children, but one concern that I had not anticipated entailed the lack of technology within the House of Hope. I referred to this as the digital divide that impoverished people encounter. At first thought, I felt that material items like computers, and iPods were frivolous and not an important topic to discuss. But as it unfolded, I became aware, along with my students that the children at the House of Hope needed technology to keep up on school work and to be social with friends and classmates. This theme resonated with my students' ways of being in the world because they are always "plugged- in" to technology through their smart phones, iPads, and other devices. This unexpected theme is another 21st century concern for teachers.

Journaling as a Reflective Tool

As I completed my data analysis, I carefully considered how my students perceived the acts of journaling and reflecting. It became evident from the data that their initial global understandings of homelessness had transformed to one that was more personal and authentic. The interviews and journal reflections led to a paradigm shift for many of these students. Even though the data showed that students disliked journaling, it was evident that this practice impacted their interpretation of their experience by allowing students to make sense of this opportunity.

Respondent Validation

After compiling my data and answering my questions, I completed a respondent validation in order to member check my conclusions and emailed it to the five students whom I interviewed. This allowed the participants of my study to review my findings and provide me with feedback. The participants affirmed that the report overall reflected their views, feelings, and experiences from their involvement with the House of Hope. This respondent validation form is not without fault, as all results are somewhat subjective, but it serves as an opportunity to decrease the level of incorrect interpretation of my data and to help check subjective assumptions that I might have made during analysis. I sent this to research participants and asked them to respond if they disagreed with my conclusions. None did. Below is what I shared with participants.

Data Shared with Participants

- Preconceived notions of what homelessness looked like and how it happens were demystified for preservice teachers in this course and were replaced by new, deeper, and more personal understandings of what homelessness is and how damaging it can be for children.
- Through this experience at the House of Hope, preservice teachers witnessed first-hand that children need community, family, and school support to succeed. They saw that being a caring teacher isn't enough; teachers must understand the environment in which their students live and respect their cultural differences in order to develop a relationship with their students.
- Civic engagement experiences, such as working at the House of Hope, brought authentic and real-world teaching experience to preservice teachers' lives along with the freedom to try new strategies and lessons. This experience was favored over a scheduled field experience by the majority of students in this course because preservice teachers were able to get to know the students on a more personal level.
- Many college students in our methods course shared that they have developed new empathy for children in difficult living situations like the House of Hope and will use their newfound empathy to be more effective teachers of diverse students. This empathy was developed by physically teaching inside the House of Hope transitional housing program. This allowed preservice teachers to put themselves into the shoes of their students.

- Journaling was not favored as a reflective method by most students in this course, but it was determined to be an effective method for students to demonstrate their growth, understanding, and new learning. The more that students wrote in their journals, the more evident it became that students' reflective understanding grew deeper.
- Strong indications of social justice and equal education for all children evolved through our course, and students shared many examples of how this will be part of their future curriculum. Several students shared that they would like to get more involved in civic engagement and community arts after this course.
- Through this teaching experience, the majority of preservice teachers gained confidence and developed new strategies that they felt they could take to use in their future classrooms for working with children who live in low-income, urban areas and who are struggling with issues of poverty, homelessness, and abuse.
- Unexpected themes that came from this study include discussions of the revolving door that homeless children feel as a result of volunteerism, the need for authentic praise by teachers, and the digital divide experienced by these children while living in at the House of Hope.

Reflecting on the Study

As I developed this study, I became more invested in the children and the House of Hope than I had expected. I found that I, too, experienced much growth in the areas of compassion and empathy. I wanted to bring each child home with me

and give them all the things they needed in order to thrive. I had to separate myself from getting too involved in the issues that occurred within each family, and I constantly needed to remind myself that in order to empower the families, I could not wait on them because they needed to learn to help themselves. It was good for me to see my students move from feeling pity for the families to understanding that just because someone is homeless does not mean they are unable to love and care for their children. We all witnessed what it was like to live in a transitional housing center and have to face such issues as the lack of transportation and the need for steady employment. This had a great effect on everyone in my methods course, including me.

During my data analysis, I read many personal stories from my students that enabled me to see their unique perspectives of this experience. For example, I was forced to revise my initial assumption that because my students all came from Iowa and were white and female (with the exception of one male student who did not participate), they would have similar reactions and share comparable reflections. My students' unique journals helped me realize that I must continue to strive to see my own students as individuals as I continue to offer my students more opportunities of civic teaching. Much of the literature related to the lack of diversity in teacher education in the United States influenced me to believe that similar students would demonstrate similar reactions. After carefully reading my students' reflections on their time at the House of Hope, I have evolved to understand that each student, regardless of background, is a unique individual who brings a different set of experiences and values to the table.

CHAPTER IV: COME INSIDE AND OPEN YOUR HEART WAY WIDE

Stereotypes and Dispositions of Preservice Teachers

The skin I'm in
is just a covering. It cannot tell my story.
The skin I'm in is just a covering.
If you want to know who I am
you have got to come inside
and open your heart way wide…. bell hooks (2004)

This poem, written by bell hooks, is from a children's book about racial differences, but it also reflects the overarching ideas of this study. When preservice teachers become caring and attentive to diverse populations, they become effective teachers of all types of children. They foster the notion that meeting each child in their classroom with an open heart is part of being a good teacher.

My Own Experiences With Homelessness

Growing up, my experience with homelessness was very similar to the experiences of the preservice teachers enrolled in this study. I attended a small, private school, had the luxury of attentive adults who helped me succeed, and for the most part enjoyed school. Any *differences* in our student population weren't visible from the outside; my school consisted of a homogeneous population. In the small Iowa community in which I grew up, I did not know of anyone who was homeless. Then, when I began to attend The University of Iowa in Iowa City in 1995, I saw for the first time men (and some women) sitting on corners in filth with cardboard signs containing messages of homelessness and hunger. As an undergraduate, I avoided eye contact with these homeless people. I walked briskly

by them, occasionally giving them a cigarette or spare change, but never stopped to talk to any of them. I feared these people and believed that mental instability caused them to live this way. I felt embarrassed for them and guilty for not being able to speak directly to them. At times, I would even cross the street rather than walk by a homeless person.

When I graduated from The University of Iowa, I began teaching elementary art at a rural school. There, I experienced my first extremely impoverished and nearly homeless family. The oldest boy in the family was in fifth grade. He came to school early in the morning to shower and complete his homework while eating a quick breakfast. He may not have been homeless, but his family had no running water or electricity. They lived on a dirt road on the other side of a bridge that was only accessible in good weather. If it rained or snowed, the school van could not pick up the children, this little boy and his siblings would often not have an opportunity to bathe, do homework, or eat a full meal until the weather cleared. When he did return to school, his odor was so strong that children became sickened when they sat next to him.

After a year of teaching in rural Iowa, I moved to teach in a much larger Iowa community. There, I encountered a different type of homelessness and poverty. I met a young man in my elementary art room who drew the van that his family slept in while they were “temporarily broke.” This child showered, ate, and used the library for homework at school Every afternoon before the bell rang, the counselor would bring him a brown sack containing his evening meal. During my bus duty, I would watch him devour it as he waited for the bus, knowing that he might have to

share it with his older siblings if he didn't eat it before he returned to his family. These examples represent some of the obstacles that impoverished children face in Iowa and across the U.S.

Preservice Teacher Dispositions

Before teaching, I never considered that children could be homeless. Walking by the homeless people on the corners in downtown Iowa City, I never thought that these people might have families or that families could become homeless. Poverty and homelessness were never mentioned in my education courses, so when I first encountered homeless people in the public schools, I was bewildered.

School is the primary place for children to feel safe and secure when a family is unstable, impoverished, and/or homeless. Many of the children, like the two that I described above, rely on schools to meet their basic needs. Their families cannot provide these essentials, so children look to schools for food, clothes, medical assistance, and emotional support. I believe preservice teachers need to be aware of the role that schools and teachers play in children's lives in order to adequately help them grow up healthy and emotionally supported. Teachers need training to prepare them to deal with serious issues like homelessness, hunger, poverty, and other life crises that arise in children's lives.

According to Major and Brock (2003), preservice teachers' entering beliefs and dispositions often interfere with their training to become effective teachers. This is a common problem in preparing teachers for teaching diverse students. The authors stress that, "the importance of teacher candidates' appropriate dispositions and beliefs cannot be overstated" (p. 21). What dispositions did my students bring to my

methods course? What experiences did they have prior to the course? What impact would their prior experiences have in terms of their beliefs about teaching? How important is disposition in becoming an effective teacher? These were my initial questions as I began to investigate this teaching experience at the House of Hope.

My students all had little to no direct experience working with homeless population beyond collecting for food drives or working one day at a soup kitchen. They were all aware of homelessness, but it had not occurred to many of them that this issue could be a part of the Cedar Valley community. Most of their interactions with homeless people occurred from a distance; for example, they may have seen homeless people when traveling to larger cities or to other countries. Students made no references to fellow classmates, friends, neighbors, or community members who were homeless. There was a clear disconnect between my students and homelessness, poverty, and low-income populations when this course began.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE) defines professional dispositions as, "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development," (NCATE, 2012). The importance of teacher disposition in teacher preparation programs has been given a great deal of attention in the last 25 years and has been cited in recent evaluations of teachers by the NCATE in 2000 and The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in 1998. The study of teacher dispositions has been going on for almost forty years, with researchers like Arthur Combs (1975), Wiggins & Follo, (1999),

Taylor & Wasicsko, (2000), Major & Brock, (2003), Garmon, (2005), and Talbert-Johnson, (2006), all looking at students' shared perceptions or dispositions about themselves as teachers, about their students, and about the act of teaching.

Unlike measuring the academic knowledge of teachers, measuring teacher dispositions can be difficult. Too often, scholars overlook teacher beliefs because of this difficulty. Some researchers believe that the personal belief systems of teachers significantly influence the behaviors displayed in the classroom and the instructional decisions teachers make (Talbert-Johnson, 2006). Wiggins, Follo, and Eberly (2007), clarified the essence of dispositions: dispositions are not behaviors; rather they are determinants that reflect what the teacher has experienced and can make them effective or ineffective in the classroom.

What teachers believe and experience has a great impact on whether or not teachers become effective. Before narrowing the specific characteristics of professional dispositions, it is important to first look at what types of students enter the teaching field and what beliefs, values, and ideals entering students bring with them into teacher education programs.

Understanding Differences Through Empathy

When reviewing the literature on teaching diverse students, it is evident that White middle class females dominate the teaching profession nationally. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics:

> Among full-time and part-time public school teachers in 2007–08, some 76 percent of public school teachers were female, 44 percent were under age 40, and 52 percent had a master's or higher degree… among both males and females, 83 percent of public school teachers were White, 7 percent each were Black or Hispanic, 1 percent each were Asian or of two or more races, and less than one percent each were Pacific Islander or American

> Indian/Alaska Native in 2007–08 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007–08).

Researchers predict that the overwhelming "Whiteness" in the field of education will continue in the future. Because of this likelihood, teacher educators must look at what the typical White education student brings with them as they enter a teacher education program. Christine Sleeter (2001), a professor at California State University and author of several books on multicultural education studies, writes about the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in the field. She describes preservice teachers as having very little experience with people from other backgrounds; they generally come with stereotypical beliefs about urban children. To combat the discomfort with, fear of, and lack of experience with diverse populations, they use colorblindness -- the refusal to see the advantages and disadvantages of race -- to avoid confronting differences (Sleeter, 2001). Sleeter demonstrates that White preservice teachers who have not had experiences with diverse students may in fact pretend there are no differences between themselves and their students from various different backgrounds. Could this be because they are taught by White professors at universities and then model the same teaching they received?

Professor Jenny Gordon of George Mason University (2005) conducted a study of the challenges of colorblindness in higher education that focused on White professors who teach White preservice teachers who in turn teach children of color. She wrote:

> Resistance to acknowledging the power differentials of skin color is strong. In my experience, teacher education candidates, practicing teachers, and

> some education faculty tend to make comments to indicate that they don't see color; they see children. While at face value this may seem to be a reasonable if unrealistic stance, in reality it denies important aspects of children's experience. It also denies important aspects of our own experience. As White people we are schooled to ignore and to disavow the advantages of being born White. It is a struggle to keep our privilege within view, even as we understand it in ways intuitive and unspoken. (p. 139).

Both Sleeter and Gordon describe how colorblindness leads teachers to deny their own privileges of being White. By choosing to be colorblind, teachers lessen the value of what children of color bring to the classroom. Only by looking at one's own identity, while recognizing others, can one move forward. Teachers need to embrace the cultural richness of their classrooms and celebrate it rather than ignore it.

Wiggins et al., (2007) provided preservice teachers attending Oakland University in California with a variety of field cross-cultural experiences as they prepared to teach in urban schools. In their study, Wiggins et al. researched whether White, upper-middle-class female preservice teachers could be "assisted in developing the dispositions needed to successfully teach in a culturally diverse setting and determine how their preparation compares to individuals who are from the same culture as their students and have spent time in urban schools" (2007, p. 655).

Wiggins et al. worked to create culturally immersive experiences in urban schools and communities to help the White female preservice teachers become better prepared by developing "a model of experiences that contribute to an attitude change in our students" (2007, p. 661). Using pre and post-tests with both groups to measure the students' dispositions about teaching in a culturally diverse

communities, Wiggins et al. found that the immersion programs made a difference. The students who were not from an urban area and did not share the same cultural background as the children being taught stated that they "became comfortable teaching students from a culture other than their own"(2007, p. 661). Wiggins et al., related that "[i]f their perception is accurate, this comfort level will help them become better teachers regardless of who they choose to teach" (p. 661). Both groups were assessed, and it was determined by researchers that longer immersive experiences led to increased positive attitudes about working with culturally diverse groups (Wiggins et al., 2007).

These studies show that preservice teachers need to have guided discussions about and immersive experiences and working with diverse children in order to become more comfortable working with students whose cultural backgrounds are different from their own, to acknowledge and embrace differences in their teaching, and to address issues of White privilege and its effects.

Care as a Disposition

Children need caring adults in their lives who help them grow academically and emotionally. A classroom environment rooted in commitment to caring builds an atmosphere of trust that enables students to take risks and to develop their self-esteem (McDermott, 1977, & Charney, 1992, as cited in Goldstein & Lake, 2000). I believe teachers can improve student success by acting in the best interest of students, working to form relationships with students, and empowering students to achieve their best in school and to take pride in their identity. In order to achieve this, preservice teachers must be instructed in the ethic of care through good

modeling and supportive experiences throughout their education. In "The Ethic of Care in Teaching: An Overview of Supportive Literature," Owen and Ennis (2005) state:

> The ability to enact the ethic of care in teaching should be an expectation of effective teachers. Teachers need to be able to care for themselves, their students, the content, and the other members of the school community, too often, the ability to care is assumed rather than nurtured or taught (p.392).

Enacting an ethic of care means to focus on the whole child, the subject of instruction, and social and emotional development. Goldstein and Lake conducted a study of preservice teachers to determine their development and understanding of the ethic of care within teaching. Three common themes were found in this study: essentialism, oversimplification, and idealism. These themes represent common dispositions in regard to care in teaching that preservice teachers bring into teacher education programs.

Essentialism

Essentialism is the idea that caring is a natural quality that teachers, and particularly women, instinctually exhibit. This notion reflects historical stereotypes of the teaching profession and women. Alison Stone (2004), a Lecturer in Philosophy at the Institute for Environment, Philosophy and Public Policy at Lancaster University, England writes:

> Philosophically, essentialism is the belief that things have essential properties, properties that are necessary to those things being what they are. Recontextualized within feminism, essentialism becomes the view that there are properties essential to women, in that any woman must necessarily have those properties to be a woman at all (2004, p. 138).

The properties of essentialism, with which feminists have long been concerned, can be either natural, socially constructed, or cultural. The idea that all women share

similar characteristics can be seen as stereotyping females; however, one could also look at it as a way of creating shared identification among women. (Stone, 2004). Historically, women are viewed by society as caregivers and child bearers. However, it must be understood that just because someone identifies as a woman does not necessarily mean they will become a nurturing teacher. There is an age old assumption that if a teacher is a woman that they are naturally going to care for and enjoy children.

How does essentialism affect our overwhelmingly female population of preservice teachers as they begin their training? A preservice teacher named Catie wrote in her journal about feeling obligated in her role as a future teacher to show that she cared about a four-year old boy:

> When I was able to get Marty to come back and join the group, it made me feel accomplished and that I am good with children. I was able to make him see that we do care about him, want him around, and want to hear his opinions. I truly felt for this child and his sadness. Being in a situation like he is, he might not feel very appreciated, wanted, or loved. He might not get a lot of attention at home and he needs extra attention whenever he can get it. It makes me feel good inside that I can be that person to make him feel better about himself and feel important. I think he just needs a lot of reassurance that he is doing a good job and he needs to feel like he is wanted. I am glad to be able to offer him some extra attention in order to help build up his confidence. It is a teacher's role to show students they care for them, and this has been a good experience for me to be able to show this to Marty.

The notion that all women are caring nurturing individuals is a stereotype that continues to be held by many young women who enter the teaching field. In Goldstein and Lake's (2000) study, many of the preservice teachers wrote about their beliefs of care. The theme of essentialism came up throughout their journals. Ironically preservice teachers must be trained by professionals and certified by the state yet some students wrote of their natural ability to care as teachers. In otherwise this was not a skill they had to learn or practice. They held the belief that caring and teaching are one and the same (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). Socially and culturally constructed forces reinforce this belief.

Oversimplification

Teachers are regularly oversimplified in the media, and education students can internalize these idealistic stereotypes of naturally "nice" and "caring" teachers. Goldstein & Lake share idealistic images that their preservice teachers shared in their journals about what a teacher should be; their images often came from popular media portrayals of teachers. . For example, they note that **"**[b]ecause the image of the caring teacher is so prevalent in our culture, it was easy for our students to fall into overly simple understandings of what it meant to teach with care" (2000, p. 867).

I encountered similar stereotypes in my students' journal entries about the House of Hope:

> I am excited to teach at the House of Hope, simply just to make these women and children feel recognized. I want to be a resource for them. Touring their neighborhood was a great idea. I have a better understanding of their

> surroundings and the region they come from. By having this deeper understanding I am better able to be sensitive towards Waterloo's situation. I am better able to be a source of kindness for the women and children at the House of Hope.

Evelyn writes that she is now able to be more sensitive to the women and children at the House of Hope after seeing the context of the neighborhood and participating in the other exercises we worked through in class. She also writes that she can now be a source of kindness to the families at the House of Hope. Her use of "kindness" stems from the oversimplification that preservice teachers bring to the profession. She sees herself as someone who can help the families by simply being kind and compassionate. This idealized and oversimplified statement demonstrates how Evelyn's idea of kindness and teaching go hand-in-hand.

Teachers have been portrayed throughout history as saviors on white horses coming into urban schools to mold young minds and make a difference in the world. Movies such as *Blackboard Jungle,* (1955), *To Sir, With Love*, (1967), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Dangerous Minds,* (1995), *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995), and *Freedom Writers* (2007) all contain stereotypical images of teachers playing this role. As Rick Dadier, the character who is played by Glenn Ford in *Blackboard Jungle* states,, "I want to teach. Most of us want to do something creative—a painter, writer, or engineer. But I thought if I could help to shape young minds, sort of sculpt young lives, that would really be something" (Hainsworth, para. 2, 1998).

Each of the movies listed above follows a pattern of a new teacher arriving at school ready to "sculpt young lives," as Dadier stated, only to find a violent school

where they are instructed to fight back, in many cases physically. The new teacher is mistreated and suffers greatly, both physically and emotionally with no real support from a mentor or principal (Hainsworth, 1998). In the end, the teacher succeeds, the students do something miraculous, and the savior can ride away into the sunset -- tired, beat-up, but having successfully changed the lives of their students. This is far from the reality I saw in my ten years of teaching public school.

I struggled every year with difficult behaviors, troubling issues that students faced, a lack of funds, and difficult challenges from the state. I was supported by mentors, parents, colleagues, and several wonderful principals whose leadership guided me into higher education. I was not a savior of children but instead an advocate for children year after year. The dramatic portrayal of teachers from these movies oversimplifies what it takes to be a teacher, thus misleading new teachers into the false belief that difficult situations can be easily fixed in a short amount of time without the support of others.

Idealism

Idealism, brought into teacher education programs by many preservice teachers, entails romanticized imagery of eternally optimistic teachers (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). From media images and fictional stories, preservice teachers develop unrealistic optimism about the kind of teacher they will become (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). Some preservice teachers enter college with childhood dreams of becoming teachers. They spent hours playing school as children and were star students in their classrooms growing up. These idealized images lead to unrealistic expectations of what their futures will look like. Teachers in training need to see that the ability

to teach is not necessarily a natural talent but rather a skill that can be learned and refined through practice. Melanie, one of the preservice teachers enrolled in the study displays idealistic notions in regards to helping homeless children in a journal entry:

> I have come to believe that although homelessness is a huge issue in America, it can be fought if only there are people who are willing to believe in people who are impoverished and are willing to give support and guidance.

Melanie's description of how homelessness is a large issue in America that can be ended by people believing in others demonstrates the unrealistic and optimistic views that preservice teachers bring into the teaching profession. Her continued time at the House of Hope helped her to see that solutions are not that simple. However, idealism recurred in many students' journals throughout the semester.

The act of caring, as Nell Noddings (1984) writes, is a moral and intellectual act rather than a natural trait that all women exhibit. I believe that through discussion of and reflection about field experiences, preservice teachers can begin to unpack their notions of idealism and experience a more realistic vision of teaching. Along these lines, Major and Brock observed:

> Teacher candidates often enter education programs with life-long preconceived notions about schooling (as transmission of knowledge) and expectations about teacher preparation (a set of skills to be learned) that do not fit constructivist and reflective teacher education philosophies. This clash may be manifested as student's resistance towards reflectivity, critical thinking, sociopolitical awareness, and discussions about social justice and empowerment (Major & Brock, 2003, p. 10).

These notions often come from the way preservice teachers were taught in school, from idealized pictures they have encountered on television, or from the role that the female played in their own household. It is well known that diversity in schools is continually rising, but are our teachers in training growing in their ability to teach diverse learners? We need to graduate "effective teachers of diverse learners who share a common core of knowledge, skills, and dispositions" (Major & Brock, 2003, p.8). My goal was to provide preservice teachers an experience through which they would acquire more effective ways of teaching children, from socioeconomically diverse backgrounds who were experiencing homelessness. I hoped that they would develop dispositions that would benefit all of their students in the future.

Stereotypes and Attitudes of Participants

In the fall of 2012, ten White females and one White, male student enrolled in my Methods of Elementary Art Education course. My students were preparing to teach art to a population of students that they were unfamiliar with in a professional or personal way. Our university has a rather homogeneous campus: 90% of students are Iowa residents and only 10% are students of color (UNI factsheet, 2012). All of the students in my course were traditional students, meaning they enrolled in college directly after high school. They were all starting their junior or senior year of college. Each one of these students grew up and attended school in Iowa. Most of them were from fairly small rural communities, with the exception of a few who had grown up near Des Moines or Cedar Rapids.

This was my students' first methods course in art education. All the students had previously taken an introduction to art education class within the last year, and some were also enrolled in a secondary methods course. The students had varying levels of experience working with children. Some students worked in daycares, several worked at camps in the summer, and some had instructed after-school craft classes in their hometowns. This group of students did not seem more naïve than other groups I had taught in the past, but without the mixture of gender, diverse geographic locations, or life experience, this group appeared on the surface to share closely aligned experiences and views. All of my college students were eager to work with the children in this community. Their lack of experience with diversity did not affect their desire to gain experience.

The following is my initial reaction from our first visit to the House of Hope transitional housing program for homeless women and their children:

Nina took us through the house, which consisted of showing us the office, donation room, kitchen, and bathroom. There were three apartments within this house containing families in the transitional housing program that we did not visit. The old house creaked as we snaked through each room and squeezed into each room of this big old turquoise house to hear Nina share about the purpose of each of the rooms. The smell of cleaning products overpowered the entire main level of the house. She explained that a volunteer had just finished cleaning the house and smiled as she waved her hand across her nose and shared that the overzealous cleaner may need some training. The overtly "clean" smell stayed with us throughout the tour and even into the basement, which now consisted of cleaning supplies and the comforting smell

of fresh laundry all mixed with the cool earthy basement odors. The combination of cleaning chemicals gave an almost antiseptic, institutional feeling. I thought about my students' initial assumptions, and maybe even my own assumptions when I was in their situation, about homelessness and how often this mental image of seeing homeless people being very dirty and smelly. They may picture a person on the street, sleeping in a heap on the corner, covered in filth or holding a sign asking for donations with his sad dog sitting next to the homeless person. Being at the House of Hope, the students saw that cleanliness was important and so important to that volunteer that she used far too much of the products. Maybe she was trying to overcompensate or to rid the house of the stereotyped image of the tired, dirty, vagrant-looking, homeless person (Field notes, Miller 2012).

My reflection of our visit to the House of Hope consisted of me not only trying to take in the nuances of the house but also trying to put myself in the shoes of my students to anticipate what they were internalizing during the tour. I tried not to let my uncertainty about how this experience would play out show during our tour. I felt extremely nervous and worried about how the children would react to our presence. I wondered how my students would react to the hardships these children are facing and whether their discomfort would show during our time making art. Their attitudes during the tour reflected genuine curiosity, although they were still reserved in their actions. None of my students had ever been to a homeless shelter or housing program and, to their knowledge, had never spoken with a person who was homeless. By visiting the house, the students were able to see first-hand the

living situation of these families and simultaneously see that homeless families do not fit the stereotypical images they may have imagined.

Here, Shelly shares her initial thoughts on homelessness in her journal:

> I never thought much about homelessness because I haven't seen a lot in my life. I am from a small northwest rural town, which isn't to say that it doesn't exist there, but not to the extent of which I have seen or noticed. I believe that it is easy to fall into stereotypes when thinking of homeless people. Anytime that I have seen or dealt with them is while I am in larger cities such as Las Vegas or Minneapolis. Maybe once in awhile I have seen one as I drove around the Waterloo area. I think it is so easy to start assuming things like: "Why don't you get a job?" "You are probably a drug addict." "Well if you didn't spend your money on booze." "You must like living on welfare." While many people don't see that a homeless person is trying their best and are human.

Shelly notes that she grew up in a rural setting and was unaware of homelessness in her own community, though she knew that homelessness existed in larger cities. I believe from my discussions with students and my own experiences growing up and teaching in a rural community that rural communities do not attract a population of homeless people for several reasons, It seems that small communities come together to help out families in need. If a family becomes homeless, relatives or neighbors will usually rise to the occasion and help the family due to the cohesiveness of the community. It is also evident that rural communities

do not have resources to assist homeless people; therefore, homeless people do not seek out small communities. Large cities have emergency shelters, transitional housing, and other government assistance to help families and individuals in need.

In the next excerpt of journal entries Melanie shares her lack of experience with homelessness while growing up in a suburb of one of the largest cities in Iowa. When thinking about Melanie's ignorance of homelessness while growing up in a large city, one must think about her neighborhood. Homeless people would not be allowed in her housing development. There are no shelters located there, no food banks, and no thrift stores, so Melanie probably had no direct contact with people experiencing homelessness. Melanie shares her impressions of homelessness in an interview:

> I had never had any experience with homeless people in general. My original thoughts about homeless people were, oh, they are dirty and they live on the streets, they have no shelter, nothing over their heads. In Chicago, I've seen homeless people on the street asking for money and that's all I'd ever encountered. I'd never seen anybody homeless in Iowa. I had no idea that there were homeless people in Cedar Falls or what they would be like. I assumed it wasn't the same as in Chicago (living on the streets). I was very ignorant of this fact.

Melanie's response surprised me because she grew up in a large city in Iowa. Surely, she had witnessed homelessness in her community. Throughout the semester, Melanie discussed her upbringing as privileged. She lived in a suburban neighborhood, in a housing development right outside of the city. She attended a

small private Catholic school and lived what seems to be a sheltered, middle-class lifestyle. She was unaware of the urban issues right in her own community. When analyzing both journal entries, my students' perceptions of homelessness were rooted in stereotypical images of urban homelessness. Undoubtedly, homelessness exists in rural and suburban areas, but it is often more subtle than the grizzled panhandler on the corner in Chicago.

Urban Homelessness

Homelessness intensifies in large cities where resources are located to help people in need. Many of my students grew up in small rural communities where isolated and hidden situations related to homelessness may have occurred but went unnoticed. Poverty and homelessness are much more visible in urban environments.

Both of the journal excerpts discussed the student's experiences with homelessness in large cities like Las Vegas and Chicago but the students seemed oblivious to the fact that homelessness could exist in their hometowns and the small communities around them. Both students shared stereotyped images of homelessness such as people being dirty, begging on the streets, and having alcohol and drug addictions. The idea of families or children being part of this equation of homelessness was not mentioned, which leads me to think that these students, like me at their age, were not aware of homeless children.

Where do these stereotypes of urban homelessness come from? What leads people to believe that homelessness implies dirty urban dwellers begging for change? In embarrassment, I thought back to my 4thth grade Halloween costume. My best friends and I dressed up as "Bag Ladies" or "hobos," dressing in raggedy

costumes with bandanas tied on long sticks that were balanced on our shoulders. We wore old clothes from the local thrift store and made ourselves look dirty. No one of this description lived in my hometown of nearly 5,000 people. Upon reflection on this memory, I am filled with horror that we went out on Halloween night dressed in those costumes. My initial assumptions of homelessness must have stemmed from television and movies, and this was likely true for my students, too. In our class discussion, students mentioned how Hollywood portrays homelessness in movies such as: *Pay it Forward, The Soloist,* and *The Pursuit of Happyness.* In our discussion, students shared how the character with a young son seemed "down on his luck" and eventually got his home and job back. Homelessness seemed very temporary. No one seemed to believe that homelessness was a way of living for some children.

According to The Iowa Institute for Community Alliance, there were an estimated 19,525 people in Iowa considered homeless in 2011 with 27,567 people considered at risk of being homeless at any time. In Black Hawk County, where the House of Hope and the University of Northern Iowa are both located, there were 1,151 homeless people and 3,030 at risk of becoming homeless at any time. In order to better understand issues of homelessness, something that the 23 children living at the House of Hope deal with every day, we needed to reflect on our own thoughts and beliefs about homelessness and then go and see inside the House of Hope for ourselves. I wanted the students to see homelessness through the eyes of children, teachers, and the community in order to gain a wider perspective on issues and to see the effects of homelessness directly.

Initiating Discussions Through Children's Books

We used children's books to explore the issue of homelessness in order to see how the topic is introduced to children and how artists illustrate this issue to help children process and understand the problems of poverty and homelessness. I wondered if some of the stereotypes that students had would be dispelled or reinforced by the authors and illustrators. I provided each student with a picture book that dealt with homelessness. For some students, it was a natural disaster that caused homelessness, for others it was children reacting to an encounter with a homeless person, and for a few, it was the child in the story that was actually experiencing homelessness.

These varying perspectives allowed us to discuss homelessness from many angles and to begin to see how it must be for children to come to school dealing with an issue like this. Our conversation, elicited from these books, ran the gamut from racial inequalities and privileges to generational poverty and drug and alcohol addictions. We talked about domestic violence, child abuse, hunger, malnutrition, and other health issues that stem from homelessness. Here is an example from Evelyn's journal that is based on this assignment*:*

> The Tooth, by Avi Slodovnick, is an example of children noticing the homeless in everyday life. In the story the main character, a young girl named Marissa, is confused and curious about a man sitting on the street. She watches and observes as the people walk by, ignoring him for the most part. Marissa even

attempts to walk towards the man to get a better look. Her mother simply tightened her grip on her young daughter and kept walking.

This demonstrates the awkwardness our culture tends to feel around the homeless. We are curious, and even frightened by the people roaming the streets with their belongings on their back. When I was younger I remember seeing homeless men and women walking the streets of my home city. I would look at them, and then look at my mother. My mother would look at them and then look back at me in silence. She never explained homelessness to me as a child. No one formally discussed it with me. I first learned about it from overhearing rumors about an impoverished girl in my school. Growing up, the topic of homeless people seemed to be something "hush-hush." Something our culture swept under the rug, so to speak.

The book ended with the young girl walking up to the homeless man and giving him the tooth she just had pulled at the dentist office. She told him to put it under his pillow for the tooth fairy to find... only he didn't have a pillow. Not even a pillow. As soon as I read that I looked around my apartment and counted my pillows. I have seven pillows. Seven pillows for my one-person apartment. But wait! Woe is me, I am a poor college student! Yeah, right. The Tooth got my mind to snap back into reality. It pointed out how thoughtless our culture is, and even myself, have been toward the homeless population.

Evelyn was able to make a personal connection to the story by simply looking around her apartment and counting the pillows in her apartment. This new

understanding of what real poverty looks like caused a paradigm shift that allowed her to see that society teaches us that discussing issues like homelessness is taboo and that by ignoring the problem, homeless people continue to be an invisible population. Through the exploration of children's books, preservice teachers were able to see poverty and homelessness through the eyes of children, a lens that they will need to continue to look through as they become trained teachers.

Personal Maps of Childhood Neighborhoods

I wanted my students to use childhood memories of their neighborhoods in order to recall what it would be like to be the age of the children with whom they were working. I also wanted them to reflect on what privileges they had or didn't have growing up. I wanted them to consider what it would be like to grow up moving from place to place, struggling due to homelessness and poverty. I wanted them to compare their neighborhoods to the House of Hope neighborhood. In their journals, students needed to brainstorm lists of things that were important to them growing up and create a personal memory map based on what stood out to them from their childhood.

In this entry Melanie discusses her childhood growing up in a suburban neighborhood outside of a large city. She demonstrates her sense of safety and security when she describes the carefree play throughout her neighborhood and the safety that the streetlights represent in her memory. Melanie's description of her mother calling her home at night illustrates the care that she received from her parents, and the lovely green grass and front porch steps capture the luxury and privileges she had growing up in a nice, clean, and prominent neighborhood:

Today in class I enjoyed viewing all of the different examples of personal maps. I started thinking that everyone comes from a different background and everyone's map looks different. However, even those people who grew up in the same neighborhood may have seen the world differently due to different experiences they encountered. Because of this no two people can ever have the exact same personal map. When I initially thought about what I wanted to create for my personal map, I knew I wanted to create a series of abstract images that reminded me of home and memories from when I was a child growing up in the middle class neighborhood that I did.

Some of the experiences that I chose to include in my personal map include the front step of my house where the neighbor kids and I would always play nightly games of hide and go seek. I also included a page of green grass because I would spend all summer running around outside exploring and getting dirty until it was too late and I was called inside by my mother. Another page of my book includes an abstract line drawing that consists of a gradient of light to dark. This represents how there was a street lamp right outside my house so when I would look out my window at night there was always part of the street lit up for me to observe the silence of the night. After looking back at all of these positive memories, I started to think about what kind of memories the children at House of Hope would include in their personal maps. Would they remember the negative days of homelessness? Would they remember losing pets or their possessions? Being split up with their fathers? Or would they have a positive outlook and depict how they live

at the House of Hope and how they get to go to school? I can't wait to start working with the children to see their outlook on the life they live.

One interesting piece from Melanie's journal describes her getting dirty as she played outside. The theme of being dirty was sprinkled throughout my students' journals. Here, the idea of being dirty is accepted because Melanie can go home and be cleaned up by her parents in her home. Other times, when homelessness is described as being dirty, the image evokes hunger and homelessness and the lack of access to basic hygiene.

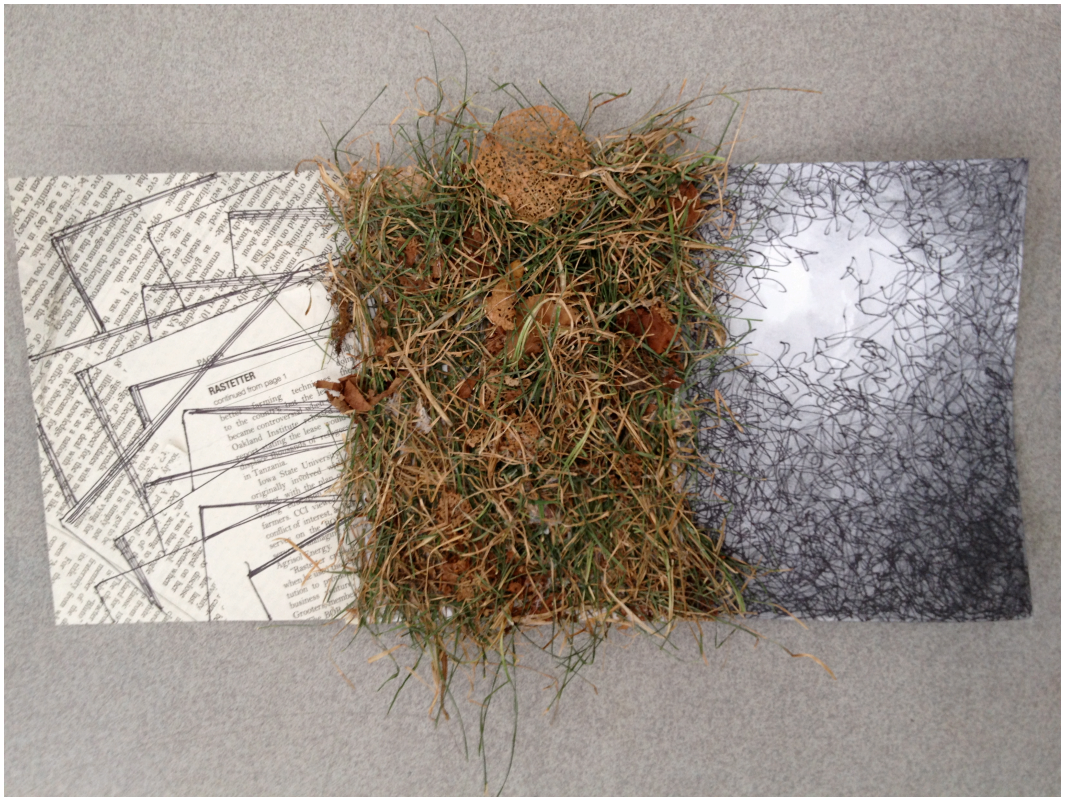

Figure 1. Melanie's Map

Looking at Melanie's map, one can see a rather symmetrically designed map with very orderly images of her childhood. She focuses on the safety she felt as a child, displaying the light outside her window and the privileges she unknowingly held, like the beautiful suburban home with a front porch and a lush green yard to play freely in all summer. The formal elements in Melanie's map show how confident and stable her memories are, and the structured images of her map reflect the way she views her childhood.

In the entry below Evelyn shares her experience of creating a map from her childhood. In this entry, it is evident that she does not share the past that Melanie had growing up. Evelyn shares that she did not grow up with the same privileges that her other classmates had. However, her parents kept this from her. Evelyn focuses on how her imagination and the security that her parents provided her sheltered her from the issues her family was facing. Unlike the children at the House of Hope who have experienced losing their home and most of their belongings, Evelyn expresses how lucky she felt that her parents allowed her to be a child, imagining the world as she grew up. She believes that the children at the House of Hope will not have this privilege of imagination, but this is an assumption. Evelyn lived unknowingly in poverty, and the same situation could happen to some of these children, although it does appear less likely:

> For this map assignment, we were asked to create a map that resonates with our upbringing. Our map could be a reflection of our hearts or minds. It could be from any part of our childhood. It could be made from mixed media. It

could be drawn or painted. The project was left open-ended and we were set free to use our imagination.

My map is a depiction of my hometown of Wellman, Iowa. I used watercolor and simple sketching to produce a visual that represents how I saw the world growing up. It was simple. "Real life" was muted from my mind. The rest of the map shows what I saw instead of real life. I lived kitty-corner to a park, and at the park the sandbox wasn't a sandbox. It was quicksand. The curvy green slide was an alligator. The monkey bars served as outer space. Reality wasn't a part of me, it was my parent's job to worry about the "real" things. Reflecting upon my childhood, I became aware that the things I thought about were purely imaginative. I didn't think about what I was going to eat for dinner, mom thought about that for me. I didn't think about where I would sleep that night, my room had always been there. My family didn't have much money, but I was completely unaware of that. The typical Christmas gift from mom and dad was our favorite box of sugary cereal. I remember wondering why that was all I got. I realize now that the reason our parents spent so little on Christmas was to make sure we could do things like eat. Looking back, just a few more medical bills at the right time could have made my family homeless. Recently I talked to my parents about our financial history growing up. It turns out, my grandparents had to help us pay our bills numerous times. If they hadn't, things like our water or electricity would have been shut off. Then all of these "real" problems would have been upon my small shoulders too, not just my parents.

I can't even begin to fathom being forced to become aware of the real world at an age when imagination is where your mind should live. These children who have actually lost their homes have no choice but to grow up and deal with mental and physical issues that no child should ever have to deal with. I am so blessed to have been given that one box of cereal each year. It helped save my life at home.

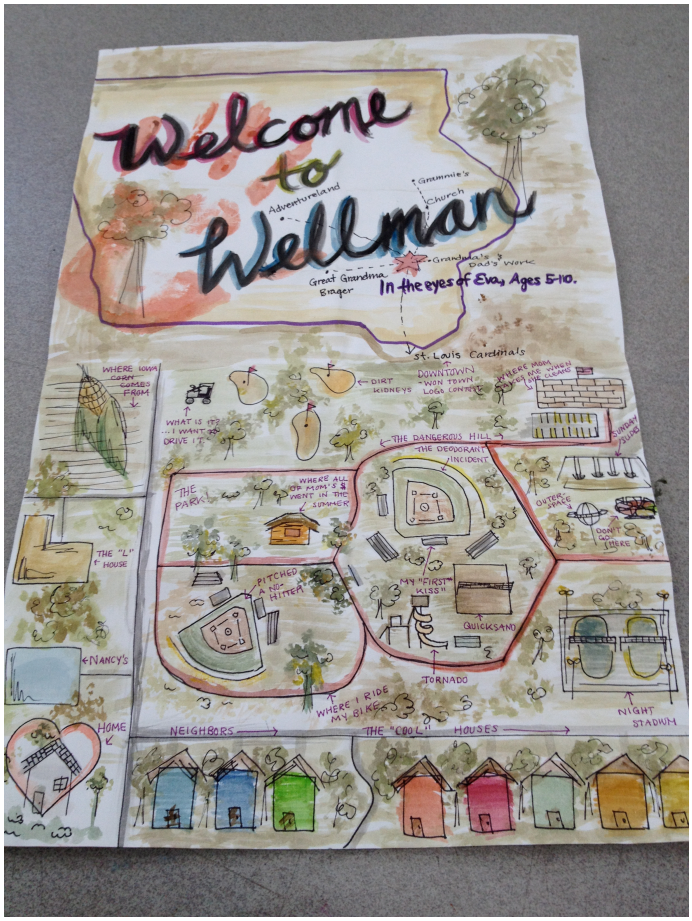

Figure 2. Evelyn's Map

In Evelyn's map of her hometown, her illustrations show the soft and sweet memories that she has of growing up. Her sense of safety is illustrated by the way Evelyn can move freely and safely throughout her community without fear of violence and crime. It is evident that she grew up in poverty, but she was sheltered and lacked the self-awareness to realize it. Evelyn's map portrays a childhood filled with play and carefree memories. Evelyn assumes that because she did not realize that her family was impoverished, she lived an idealized childhood. Her oversimplification of her life versus the life of the children living temporarily at the House of Hope illustrates that some students continue to make assumptions even as they learn more about children's situations. Getting rid of assumptions is a long process and cannot happen overnight, but every step we can help our students take toward better understanding the wide range of students they will encounter is significant.

Both students were able to portray images and memories from their childhood through their personal map. This exercise allowed the class to get to know each other and to reconnect with themselves as children. The first map was created by Melanie to abstractly represent memories of playing in her middle class neighborhood in the fresh cut green grass under the well-lit streetlight. Evelyn's map is drawn more realistically to show the imaginative mind of a child as she explores her small town. The detailed illustrations and descriptions help take her back to a time when she relied on her parents to care for her and her only job was to create new fantasies. Through this activity, both artists depicted a sense of safety, security, and fond memories growing up.

My ultimate goal in devising these lessons was to demonstrate to my methods students' non-threatening ways to begin a conversation about poverty, homelessness, and differences in socioeconomic class. The students learned to unpack their beliefs through the discussion of what homelessness looks like through the eyes of children and to recognize their privileges. In the creation of the maps and the discussion of children's books about difficult issues, I modeled ways that my preservice teachers could begin to carry over conversations like this with their own students while also recognizing that these activities could be problematic for children experiencing homelessness. Awareness of students' situations and individual needs are necessary when planning any lesson, and this was a prime example.

Confronting Stereotypes and Building New Understandings

The skin I'm in looks good to me.
It will let you know one small way to trace my identity.
But then again
the skin I'm in will always be just a covering.
It cannot tell my story.
If you want to know who I am you have got to come inside, bell hooks (2004)

It is essential to assist preservice teachers in overcoming stereotypes and beliefs that stem from their own experiences growing up or their lack of exposure due to the fact that they have been often sheltered from many culturally diverse experiences. When students' readiness is hindered from growing and developing, they are unable to accept and appreciate differences in their classroom, which negatively impacts their level of learning (Wiggins et al, 2007). If preservice teachers are able to gain an understanding and grow in their acceptance of cultural

diversity, they must first recognize that their monolingual, European-American, and often privileged views may differ greatly from those of children in their classrooms. They must then come to terms with these diverse cultural views of the students. Without this understanding, instruction can be harmful, even devastating to children through the devaluing of cultural differences and the teacher's imposition of a White curriculum upon a diverse group of students (Major & Brock, 2003).

Numerous studies have advocated the most effective ways to combat the "whiteness in teacher education" and suggested ways to effectively prepare a predominantly White population of teachers to teach the increasing number of diverse students enrolled in schools today. Professor Christine Sleeter (2001) looked at over 80 studies to determine the most effective ways to train teachers to develop dispositions that will lead them to become more effective teachers. She pointed out problems in higher education teaching programs, explaining that programs with predominantly White teacher education programs often place their White preservice teachers in field experiences where they teach other White students of similar backgrounds, thereby not exposing them to other populations and strategies for teaching (Sleeter, 2001). Professor Sleeter argued, "[t]he programs themselves provided disjointed multicultural content, dependent on the individual professors. By the time they student taught, the preservice teachers were concerned mainly about surviving in the classroom" (2001, p.95).

In her comparison of types of research, Sleeter analyzed research strategies for exhibiting growth in teacher learning. The development of case studies, tutoring, and field experiences demonstrated support for growth, especially in " cross-

cultural contexts in which they [the preservice teacher] have to grapple with being the minority, do not know how to act, and are temporarily unable to retreat to the comfort of a culturally familiar setting" (2001, p.97).

Studies show that in order to provide students with teacher training that can meet the needs of the growing number of diverse students in our country, several important components must be administered. First, students must have experience teaching in urban schools and culturally diverse community settings throughout their university time. Along with field experiences, preservice teachers need instruction from master teachers who model teaching diverse students. Finally, the application of reflection throughout training allows preservice teachers to analyze their own values, biases, and growth in order to understand their experiences (Wiggins et all, 2007, Wiggins & Follo, 1999, Major & Brock, 2003, Talbert-Johnson, 2006). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss how these approaches to teacher training affect preservice teachers in their development of an effective disposition for working with diverse students.

Field Experiences

Students with early field experiences in diverse and urban settings, often re-examine their beliefs. Preconceived notions of difference can be set aside to allow new understandings to develop. This is not always the case; some teacher education programs are unable, ill equipped, or unwilling to provide the necessary multicultural learning scaffolding to complement the experience. By reflecting, planning, and becoming part of the overall community in an extended context that is more than just a singular experience preservice teachers can become more familiar

with the school and community culture. This allows them to take time and invest in the experience, to develop concern, empathy and ownership. Only then can it allow preservice teachers to grow in their understanding of cultural diversity. (Wiggins & Follo, 1999, Wiggins et al, 2007).

While field experiences in diverse settings can ideally help students dispel stereotypes and develop new understandings, it has the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes or create new ones that may discourage students from wanting to teach diverse students. Wiggins and Follo, (1999) explains:

> Simply being in such a setting does not result in an understanding of, or an appreciation for, the cultural norms of the school or community, nor does it ensure that prospective teachers will be comfortable interacting with students, parents or colleagues whose cultural background is different from their own (p. 103).

Wiggins and Follo (1999) also stated that students' negative responses to urban field placements "stemmed from a lack of understanding of cultural differences and not from a lack of academic preparation. The need is not in pedagogical knowledge, but in more personal relationships with and improved attitudes towards culturally diverse communities" (p. 103).

In order to help students come to understand the community in which they will be teaching, they need to spend time within the community and get to know its strengths. Students need to reflect not only on the experience but also on who they are as teachers during the experience (Wiggins & Follo, 1999). In other words, field experiences must become "life experiences" (p. 103). When invested in the community, teaching becomes more than just academics; teachers can cater to the values, beliefs, and needs of the community in order to become a care-centered

teachers and to promote a caring curriculum model that will benefit students both academically and socially (Goldstein & Lake, 2003).

Modeling as a Mentor Teacher

As noted, not only is there a need for diverse experiences to shape preservice teachers' dispositions during training but having mentor teachers to model teaching during this experience is also essential (Wiggins & Follo, 1999, Wiggins et al, 2007). I gave my students the charge to teach children in small groups living in the House of Hope transitional housing program. As a veteran teacher, I served as the mentor and model. I moved among the three groups as often as possible, modeling ways to interact and motivate the children and demonstrating how put out "fires," especially with the 3-6 year old group. I was able to demonstrate ways to initiate conversations and redirect behaviors as well as model how to get to know the children on a personal level. The following is an example of a situation from my field notes:

The elementary group worked under the gazebo outside in the backyard making clay. I was glad that the one male student, named T.J. was in this group because it consisted of four boys and one girl. They were an energetic group, unlike the teens, they talked consistently as they worked with clay and shared ideas and moved around asking for advice often. One young man made at least three clay pieces in the 40 minutes they had to work together. Another little boy, named Jax, sat quietly in the left corner, still in his school uniform, looking a bit uncomfortable sitting on the ground in his polo and khaki pants, poking at the clay with a plastic tool. I made eye contact with the student sitting by him and she made the expression with her face and

shoulders letting me know she did not know what to do about this young man and his sullen behavior. I watched for a while and the students tried to engage him in making something with the clay but with no real success. After surveying the backyard and the other children, I asked Jax to come with me for a little walk. He got up obediently and followed me over to the playground equipment. We sat on the wooden fort, appropriately labeled the U.S.S. Hope, and I introduced myself again. I explained to him that these were all my students and that they were learning to teach art to children and we were really excited to make lots of great art with him. He didn't really answer me so we watched the other children playing and working together quietly. Finally, I asked him if he wanted to see what the other group in the backyard was working on since his younger brother and sister were in that group; he nodded his head and we walked over to check it out. They were working around a card table together finishing up oil pastel pictures about animals and going to paint them next with watercolor to create a resist painting. We watched for a minute then he decided that he did not want to join that group.

Through a personal conversation, I found out Jax really wanted to make something out of clay but was nervous. We found that we both had an interest in dragons together so I encouraged him to head back to the gazebo to begin a dragon sculpture from clay with me. We worked for a while together and then I enlisted my one male student to help him complete his clay sculpture by telling him a tale that T.J. was really a "Dragon-ologist" or dragon expert and that he would really be the best person to help him complete the work. The little boy seemed all right now, working diligently on his clay sculpture so I could slide away, leaving the students to complete

the work with him. They finished the dragon in no time, adding texture and great details together. T.J. was able to experience the feeling of success by helping this child successfully complete his idea of a dragon (Field notes, Miller, 2012).

For me, the most essential part of this experience was the debriefing of this experience in the next class. Students were anxious to know right away how I was able to get this student to open up to me and talk with him about what he wanted to make out of clay. I shared with them possible strategies to ease into conversations with children and how important it is to make connections with them. My connection stemmed from a book about dragons I had recently read to my son. I told Jax an interesting story about a dragon, and that sparked our connection and ignited our conversation. We discussed why this student may be having difficulty talking to newcomers, what he has possibly gone through before arriving at the House of Hope, and related the conversation back to the picture books we read.

After sharing possible reasons and then discussing ideas, I was able to share with them what worked and what didn't work with this little boy. I shared that I tried many options until I found a way to connect with him. I talked to the students about how important it is to be patient and indicated that it might take time for some of the children to open up. Each time may be different, and next week he may not respond the same way. It was evident that many of the children had fears of being left with strangers when their mothers went to their meetings. This fear could stem from losing many of their own personal belongings or from being separated from family members due to divorce, abuse, lack of housing for the entire family, or gender specific shelters. Over the course of our six weeks together, Jax did continue

to open up, but it was a slow process and a good example of how important it is to show caring attitudes for these children.

Reflecting on Differences to Develop New Understandings

The third piece of building students' more effective dispositions towards diversity is using reflection as a tool to help students uncover their beliefs and to analyze new experiences that will allow them to continue to shape their beliefs. The prospect of blindly sending my students to the east side of Waterloo without a proper introduction left me feeling nervous. Waterloo has a reputation for being a diverse city in Iowa, but it is also a poor community with crime and some neighborhoods labeled unsafe by many. I arranged for a tour of the House of Hope before we began our after school club, but it didn't seem to ease my mind. I worried that my students would complain to the department head about driving to this part of Waterloo due to their fears and assumptions about this neighborhood. I had never had to worry about anything of this nature before with my students because we had worked in safe environments such as the Lab School, but this assignment was outside of the safety net of the university, outside the walls of the ivory tower, and inside a less predictable community. I have lived in Waterloo for the last two years, but prior to living there I too was nervous about the neighborhoods. My impression was based on the negative evening news stories of crime that often featured Waterloo. Many people at the university encouraged me to look for housing in Cedar Falls, where the university was located, but housing was less expensive in Waterloo, and my husband was hired at a Waterloo middle school. As we looked for houses in the area, the first realtor I called suggested we not buy in Waterloo due to

the diversity and lack of safety in many of the neighborhoods. I found this offensive and chose to look for a second realtor.

My first impression of the city of Waterloo was that it was extremely divided by class and race. The majority of White and Bosnian residents live on the west side of town, whereas the majority of African- Americans and Latinos live on the east side. The west side of town appeared much more impoverished. I was nervous navigating through this side of town at first, but after a few months, I found interesting establishments where I liked to shop and eat. I discovered that the library, the art center, and the children's museum were also located on the east side. Over time my fears were eased and my stereotypes were dispelled. I hoped to ease the tension of my students' fears through an exploration of the east side. I was hopeful that they too might change the way the saw the area.

The Driving Tour

In the course of my study I came across the work of Associate Professor Missy M. Bennett from Georgia Southern University. Her research deals with preservice secondary science students and their lack of understanding toward impoverished students in Georgia. Her study emphasized the hole in research regarding the focus on low-income students in multicultural coursework (Bennett, 2008). Bennett explained that her students didn't fear racial differences, but instead struggled to connect with their impoverished students during their field experience. Bennett states, "[i]n the United States, there are large numbers of low-income black and Hispanic children; however, the largest number of low-income children in the United States is White. At the same time, minorities make up the highest percentage

of low-income children (p. 252). When one compares this to the extremely high percentage of White teachers in the United States, one can see the importance of helping preservice teachers better understand working with children in poverty.

Bennett created an assignment to have preservice teachers visit the impoverished neighbors of the students they were teaching:

Preservice teachers in the secondary education program at Georgia Southern University report a lack of understanding of people who live in differing economic circumstances than themselves. In the portions of the driving tour which led them through the most economically deprived neighborhoods, students expressed opinions of disbelief that these housing areas existed (p.252).

She describes how astonished her students were in discovering what actual poverty looked like. College students often express that they are living in poverty during their college years. However, after seeing the neighborhoods of their students, students in her class saw poverty in a new light. Bennett discusses how her students displayed empathy through this assignment due to the personal nature of seeing where their students lived versus just reading about the impersonal facts and figures of low-income students. Other issues that arose from the driving tour were the recognition that teachers cannot make assumptions about students based on the appearance of a neighborhood or of the individual student (Bennett, 2008).

When analyzing the tour as future educators, the preservice teachers I studied shared insights into reasons why homework assignments may be more challenging due to the lack of technology in homes or support from family to complete the necessary work. Understanding the “digital divide” and seeing how to help students

bridge the gap that is created due to this divide illustrates effective teaching (Gillete & Grant, 2006). These students were beginning to see that their expectations for all students cannot reasonably be the same. Teachers need to understand and get to know their students individually to help them with issues like the divide in technology accessibility. Bennett stated, "preservice teachers voiced the realization that they need to see students as individuals, not as a collective," meaning that they can no longer see their class of students as homogeneous (Bennett, 2008).

Bennett concluded that through this new learning, students began to identify ways the schools could assist low-income students "to help them overcome the disadvantages of poverty" (2008, p. 254). I adapted this driving tour assignment for my preservice teachers, hoping they could take away some of these new understandings. Perhaps it helped them gain insight into the issues students face in Waterloo or in any other place they decide to teach.

Bennett's preservice teachers were already engaged in their field experience at the schools consisting of low-income populations when they concluded their tour of the neighborhood, while my students took the tour as a pre-requisite to teaching at the transitional housing center. My goal was to help prepare my students for what they would see when they began their work and to help ease the fears of those who had not ventured into Waterloo's east side. Below is an excerpt from my field notes which describes how I explored and prepared for the driving tour:

My Route

I left my house at 9:00 am on Monday morning. As I drove from one end of Waterloo to the other, ending at the House of Hope, I planned a route for my students that would open their eyes to the extreme class differences and racially separated neighborhoods that residents of Waterloo experience daily. I wanted them to see that there were beautiful neighborhoods, historical areas, and residents who loved their homes. I also wanted my students to see the severe poverty that lays especially on the east side of Waterloo where the House of Hope is located and how children who attend the school next to the House of Hope must reside in an extremely dilapidated neighborhood, one that I really didn't feel 100% safe in all the time. My comfort has grown over the last two years, mainly because I am a resident of Waterloo and I have explored the east side and found wonderful places and resources there as well.

I wanted my students to see the struggles that this area has, like lack of public transportation, high unemployment, low income residential housing often in poor condition. More importantly, I also wanted the students to see the cultural aspects of this neighborhood, the history of it, and the community that exists within it to help others around them in need.

The housing on the east side consisted of mainly rental properties, many signs, security systems, and not much in regard to landscaping. I saw many houses with boarded up windows, or vacant houses with doors wide open. I saw one house that was located adjacent to the new elementary school that been in a serious fire but was left standing, charred, black, and empty. The streets were busy with activity and the

voices of many citizens could be heard as I drove by. I was surprised by the activity due to the time of day. The neighborhood was mostly populated by African Americans.

I saw unique signs of community, like the Eastside Arts Festival that was advertised. I read a sign placed in front of a funeral home reminding folks to turn down their music that a service was being held today. Something I never would have encountered myself as a Catholic school student in a small rural town in Iowa. I saw churches, organizations, and flyers for numerous community events. I wanted my students to see the people out in the neighborhood to ease their fears, and allow them to see that this part of Iowa has real needs to fill like hunger and homelessness, and poverty. I wanted them to see that real people are here living in the community- some barely surviving, others thriving here. I wanted them to be able to see what the children were up against, how far they'd have to walk if they had no car, where they played, how they accessed their needs, and how they may have felt living here. As I created this assignment, I saw an opportunity to help my students to overcome an image of Waterloo that breeds ugliness I wanted them to see that while this community was impoverished that people still had to live here. Most were happy and busy members within their community. There were businesses, arts venues, schools, and children (Field notes, Miller 2012).

Using the basic ideas from Bennett's study, I defined themes that I saw in my students' reflective papers. The themes are: the visible and invisible face of poverty, development of empathy, and recognition of assumptions. The experience of fear is interspersed throughout each of these themes, as demonstrated below. I did not want my students to use this driving tour as an opportunity for voyeurism or to

engage in any behaviors that might endanger them such as entering an abandoned building. I was somewhat fearful about sending my students into Waterloo to drive around. According to a number of sources for realtors, levels of crime in Waterloo are higher than the average city in Iowa and also higher than most cities in the United States. According to the Waterloo/ Cedar Falls Courier crime in Waterloo is rising (Reinitz, 2013).

The Visible Face of Poverty

Many of my students came from rural parts of Iowa where poverty existed, but it is quite likely that family, neighbors and a close community kept that hidden from children growing up. The majority of my students seemed unaware that there was much poverty in their lives growing up. Taking the tour of Waterloo and later working in one family's apartment during art club allowed my students to see first-hand what it would look like to live in extreme poverty.

One student, Shelly, describes the Waterloo neighborhood in her journal as follows:

> A few spots that I observed in the neighborhood were in a pretty rough stage. I noticed a couple of houses had doors wide open. I honestly don't know what to think of that. A thought was maybe it was a way to get air into the house if they didn't have or couldn't afford air conditioning. I noticed quite a few public notices on doors, which I assume means the property is going under foreclosure but I don't have much experience in that. If it was really going under foreclosure, I assume that those houses were owned. I noticed there were a lot of places for rent as well, as I saw signs for rent and apartment

> buildings for rent. Some of the houses said no smoking or no pets, which I wondered if that was for a personal preference or the landlord's signs. Another observation I made were the smaller businesses throughout the neighborhood had bars on their windows and doors. Plus, a lot of houses had ADT security signs outside their homes, which may be an indication of crime in the neighborhood.

Shelly's description of the neighborhood depicts startling images that she saw along her tour, including doors wide open, bars on windows, and security signs heavily posted. One can read signs of fear when she points out that these were signs of high episodes of crime and poverty in the area. Many of the things Shelly noticed, for example, the signs on doors requesting "no pets" or "no smoking," seemed foreign to her. Shelly described a neighborhood that was unfamiliar to her, a way of living that she did not grow up sharing. This was a good introduction to the children at the House of Hope's living conditions.

In another journal excerpt, Libby shared her impressions of the neighborhood as she and her group took a drive one Friday afternoon. She points out right away that she did not see many signs of public transportation in this neighborhood and shared her concern for children getting home as schools were releasing. She wrote about her similar assumptions of high crime, based on the bars over windows and the prevalent security signs. She goes on to discuss how this lack of basic services and security can affect how the children might feel about the neighborhood. This is an assumption, but Libby goes on to say that this experience has helped her see the importance of looking closely at a student's situation to try to better assist them:

We took our driving tour at 4:00 pm, which was right as the schools were being let out. I thought it was interesting that we didn't really see as many kids walking home as I expected to. We did see a couple school buses. Whenever I go home [to my hometown] I see so many school buses around the time that school gets dismissed, I was surprised that we only saw a couple. It made me think about how maybe the school buses don't go to certain areas, and then they have to find other ways of transportation. I didn't really see any public buses. I only saw one on the way to Waterloo, but other than that I was expecting to see more. I also only saw one public bus stop as well. It made me wonder, where is the nearest grocery store? If you don't have a car and there are only a few buses to rely on, it could be pretty hard to get food for your family.

Some other signs of problems in the neighborhoods were that there were a lot of houses abandoned and vacant. I noticed a lot of houses were for rent or for sale. Then I also noticed that most of the houses had security systems, and a lot of businesses had bars over their windows. This scared me to think that there was a lot of theft and crimes going on in the neighborhood. Some of these living conditions that I saw on my drive might impact the students' by making them not be able to be comfortable while at school. The living conditions at home might make them not be able to focus in school. The transportation might make it hard for them to be able to make it to and from school on time. Also the roughness of the neighborhood might make it hard

for a student to sleep at night and so then it might affect how they do at school by being tired.

The idea of theft and crime obviously frightened this student as she toured the neighborhood. In her experiences growing up, a high rate of crime was not listed as a part of her life. The idea of needing bars and security systems in order to feel safe provided a new image for Libby and one that she said scared her.

During the course of this class, students have expressed that college life ensures that they are living poorly, piling many roommates into one dwelling, eating Ramen noodles until their next paycheck, and working at low-paying jobs just to have enough money to get groceries. They do this while attending school full-time, most of them being supported by parents and financial aid. My students realize that this is only temporary, until they graduate and find permanent work. Although they may have stated they are poor, it is evident from their journal excerpts above that they see now they are experiencing a dramatically different kind of poverty than the population living on the east side of Waterloo. Libby and Shelly demonstrate a new perspective on what it means to grow up having their needs met and also feeling secure. They need only worry about making enough money to go to the grocery store to get food and they don't have to worry about what they would do if they had no car or access to getting to a grocery store. The contrast between the poverty in the eastside neighborhoods and the privileges that my students and I have can be easily seen here.

The experience of these two students echoes the sentiments of John Dewey when he discusses that through awareness of cultural conditions educators are more able to positively relate to their students. Dewey wrote:

> It ought not to be necessary to say that experience does not occur in a vacuum. There are sources outside an individual which give rise to experience. It is constantly fed from these springs. No one would question that a child in a slum tenement has a different experience from the city boy, or a boy on the seashore one different form the lad who is brought up on inland prairies, ordinarily we take such facts for granted as too commonplace to record. But when their educational import is recognized, they indicate the second way in which an educator can direct the experience of the young without engaging in imposition. A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only are aware of the environing conditions, but they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile (Dewey, 1938, p. 40).

During the driving tour, the students encountered a neighborhood that was extremely diverse in comparison to the maps of their own childhood. They saw signs of community, had glimpses of severe poverty, encountered being a minority, and felt genuinely unsafe at times. This experience, as Dewey describes above, can be beneficial if the teachers in training use this common experience to understand the children and serve their needs by utilizing these common experiences and environments.

Libby wrote at the end of her driving tour reflection:

> My overall impressions of the neighborhoods were that they were all lower class. When you get closer to the business areas or closer to Cedar Falls the houses got nicer and you could tell that the neighborhood was nicer. It's amazing how there is a huge transition between what you always see and

> what you don't always see as you drive by, then if you go deeper into the neighborhoods. I was always told that Waterloo was a scary place to be, but the people didn't really seem scary they were just normal people trying to survive and doing the best they can. I feel better now driving through here.

Libby shared that she came in with initials fears of Waterloo based on what others had told her about the city. She had never before taken the time to drive through the city, although it was the neighboring community to the university she attended. Libby wrote that she felt better after taking the tour because her tensions eased. Her journal entry gave me confidence that she could now focus on the children without worrying so much about the stigma of being in Waterloo.

The Invisible Face of Poverty

The reflections on the neighborhood consisted of descriptions, but I also asked students to consider how their view of the children's neighborhood could affect their art planning or curricular work in the future. Students discussed the importance of connecting to students' lives and personal interests and the need to remember that each student brings unique experiences into the classroom. The needs of the children in the classroom must be met and maintained in order for learning to occur. The following is an example of a student, Heidi, reflecting on how this tour may affect her teaching:

> Some of these conditions could really have an impact on children at school. For example, if a student's house is going under foreclosure, I believe that it will be hard for that student to learn in school. Their mind is going to be elsewhere, maybe worried or scared. Attendance could be poor depending on

> moving around and trying to find a place to stay or helping out the family. They may be hungry and not able to concentrate on their studies or even be tired. Students may not have a decent workspace to do their homework or have the technology to do it away from school. A student may not feel safe in their neighborhood if crime is going on as well. It could be possible a student's home was broken into which could cause security issues for the child. I will be honest in saying I did not feel the safest in the neighborhood. I was fine driving around in the car with my classmates but I don't think I would feel as safe walking around. While we were in the car we were stared at and even once yelled at.

This student seemed very reactive to the individual circumstances that a child dealing with homelessness may encounter. She put herself in the situation, saying that she would not have felt safe. She tried to explain that she saw the struggles that students in this area may go through while also attending school. Jackie shared a different perspective in her driving tour paper, however:

> Based on my own experiences, observations, and things we've discussed, I feel like I can be at least empathetic with students in less fortunate situations. I'm not entirely sure what to expect at the House of Hope, but there's one thing that I feel fairly strongly. Sometimes it seems like there's an expectation that kids will be vastly different simply because they are homeless, and that teaching them will be a major challenge, etc. I find this hard to believe. Kids are kids. They may have more on their minds, be a little more serious or act out more, dress differently, etc, but I don't think that homelessness is the

> only thing that can make kids that way. Honestly, if I was homeless as a kid, I would want to be treated the same. I wouldn't want special attention, or to have people asking too often if I was ok. Obviously though, if it comes to my attention that a student is homeless, I will want to do all I can to help. This is an issue, and my hope is that all students will get the help they need. I want to be supportive to all my students, if they want it, and that support would go for all kids, regardless of their home life.

In a study of preservice teacher beliefs by Virginia E. Causey, Christine D. Thomas, Beverly J. Armento of the Department of Middle/Secondary Education and Instructional Technology at Georgia State University, effects of urban field experiences on the influence of teacher dispositions were researched. In the study, one factor was noted that makes the task of influencing attitudes about diversity difficult, the tenacity with which preservice teachers cling to prior knowledge and beliefs about other people" (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000, p.33). Jackie, who wrote the phrase "kids are kids," had difficulty letting go of her belief that "good pedagogy is equally effective for all students (Causey et al., 2000 p. 34). She seems unaware that to be responsive to each student's needs, teachers must treat students individually. She seems to contradict herself towards the end by saying that she would help homeless children, but she reiterates that she would do that same thing for any student. It appears that this student is grappling with the ideas of help and sympathy. She doesn't want to come off as feeling sorry for homeless children and plays on their resiliency, but at the same time does not want to seem like a cold teacher who would not be there to support her students.

Throughout Jackie's journal, she comes back to this statement that kids are kids and they just want to be treated like everyone else. In a sense, I agree with her that they may want to be treated the same way, to fit into the norm and to go about their life under the radar of teachers and welfare workers. In reality, however, their situation needs focused attention, and it is evident that they are not being treated the way other children are. After all, they are missing one of life's most basic necessities: shelter. As the semester unfolded, this student was asked to consider the implications of this statement as she became aware of the negative effects homelessness has on children's lives both physically and developmentally. In the end, she continued to grapple with her implicit belief that homeless children should not be treated differently than other children, though hopefully this will change through more experiences with diverse students.

Developing Empathy

Students were asked to write about their childhood neighborhood and compare and contrast it with the House of Hope neighborhood in order to put themselves in the shoes of the children they would be working with over the course of the semester. Libby shared assumptions she made from her tour that led her to develop feelings of empathy:

> This driving tour will impact my teaching at the shelter because I have a better idea of where they are coming from. It also gave me a chance to see the place and see what they are going through. It will help me to be able to make connections with the students and be able to put myself in their shoes. It gave me an eye opening experience to realize that not everyone grew up like I did.

> This driving tour affected me personally by helping me realize that you never know what students are going through outside of school just by looking at them. You have to get to know your students and you have to pay closer attention to the little details to really understand the situation.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013) empathy is defined as, "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner." Evelyn demonstrated signs of empathy in her journal, through the impact of seeing the transitional housing location itself and realizing how difficult it is to live in "temporary situations." She was able to empathize with the children by relating it to her transient way of living as part of the college life:

> Temporary living has become my lifestyle, and it's my least favorite part of college. When I think about how uneasy all of this moving around makes me feel (when I get to pick and choose where I live and with whom), I can't even imagine how hard this lifestyle is on these children. They don't get much say in where they stay. They take what is available and work with what they got.

This student was able to relate her life as a college student and the discomfort and hassle it is to move every school year as dorms close, roommates graduate, and better properties become available. She is careful in her writing to mention that her choices, though painful, are intentional, and she notes how difficult

the struggle must be for children who have to move around to places in this area that are not in good condition and do not seem safe and welcoming at times.

Evelyn wavers back and forth between pity and empathy. She finds herself able to relate to the children's experiences earlier on through poverty and here through temporary living. In her journals, I see times in which she shows pity as her primary feelings, which can easily occur when small children are involved in difficult situations. Evelyn imagines the life of a homeless child as one where choices about where they sleep and eat are determined by the resources available to help families. Although there may be truth to this situation, Evelyn assumes this is the case and develops feelings of pity for the children before even meeting them.

This example describes what Maxine Greene (1995) calls the wide-wakeness of the social imagination in her book, *Releasing the Imagination*, which leads Evelyn to understand what the children are experiencing through homelessness. Through her experience trying to situate herself in the experience of being homeless, by sharing her own memories of being poor, and by connecting to the children through her temporary lifestyle, she attempts to move from pity to empathy. Imagination is the ability to see the world from other perspectives, "[b]ut the role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected" (Greene, 1995, 2001). Maxine Greene believes that being wide-awake opens the door to the social imagination. Although the imagination is perceived to be a private experience, the social imagination focuses on bringing this idea to the public space in order to imagine what a community can envision (Greene, 2001).

Greene wants educators to not only imagine change, but to also work to put this vision into reality. “Imagination is not only the power to form a mental image, although it is partly that. It is also the power to mold experience into something new. To create fictive situations” (2001, p. 31). Educators can work to ignite their students to imagine the world they want to live in and then begin to make those changes. Without imagination, there is no creative thinking, no opportunities to see new possibilities.

During this driving tour and while working at the House of Hope, my college students began to use their social imaginations to envision the difficulties the children faced. The teachers in training discussed the barriers these students face and worked to devise ways to help students experiencing homelessness feel cared for, safe, and encouraged to be successful in school. Just as Professor Bennett’s students saw inequities in schools, as they toured the impoverished neighborhoods and community, my students also began to see the world through other points of view. However, they still showed qualities of essentialism, oversimplification, and idealism, as Evelyn showed in her statement about being a source of kindness.

Greene (1995) suggests:

> It may well be the imaginative capacity that allows us also to experience empathy with different points of view, even with interests apparently at odds with ours. Imagination may be a new way of decentering ourselves, of breaking out of the confinements of privatism and self-regard into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, “Here we are” (p. 31).

Greene reminds us that imagining things differently is the first step to making changes in the world that occur when we act on beliefs and new understandings

developed through experience. One must look at experience through reflection in order to find significance and find new ways to understand it (Greene, 1995).

Recognizing Assumptions

During the driving tour of Waterloo, students were quick to notice the lack of care in lawns, broken windows, abandoned houses, and abundance of rental property. They mentioned many times that it appeared that many people were not working during the day, a typical time they felt people should be working. But their observations and assumptions went beyond that. In my assignment, I asked them to look for signs of challenges within the geographic setting, such as: poverty, unemployment, crime, and dangerous living conditions in the community. I also asked them to look for signs of community such as: parks, churches, social events, community groups and celebrations, or other signs of togetherness.

Here are some examples of students looking beyond their initial assumptions that this run-down neighborhood was crime-ridden and lacked pride and commitment. Erika wrote:

> I noticed on our drive there was the high amount of new construction in the area near the block of the House of Hope. There is a new pharmacy going in just down the street, and a nice new school that the kids attend. This new construction seems to add hope to the neighborhood. Yes, they have a few liquor stores nearby, but they also have nice park nearby. Yes, their rental properties in the neighborhood could use some major work, but they have a beautiful new school just a block away.

Evelyn shared her observations of the challenges in the area and the signs of a positive community in the neighborhood from her tour:

> You could tell most residential areas were impoverished. Empty lots, run-down buildings, and communal living were just a few signs I saw that implied poverty within the area. Almost as common though were signs of outreach opportunities. I saw five or six churches, one of which was holding some sort of potluck with a bouncy house, food vendors, and lots of people. There was also the House of Hope, the Boys and Girls Club, and the YWCA. Everywhere you turned there was a sense of ambition, the community was there for each other.

I asked the preservice teachers to look closely at the neighborhood they toured in order to offer different views of the neighborhood and to help them better understand what the children living at the House might be dealing with on a day-to-day basis. The preservice teachers noticed extreme poverty, signs of crime, lack of transportation, and high amounts of police presence. They also shared that they saw signs of progress through new construction, a new school, and substantial support from churches and groups like the Boys and Girls Club and the Salvation Army.

Reflecting on the Driving Tour

The students seemed nervous and reluctant when I gave the driving tour assignment to them in class. I had only known them for a week, and I was nervous myself to send them out driving. I worried that they may get lost or make a decision to enter an abandoned house. After writing and discussing the parameters of the

assignment and giving out my phone number to them, I decided to let it go and just see what would come of this assignment.

Shelly shared her new insight into the children at the House of Hope:

> After touring Waterloo I feel much more prepared to work with the children from the House of Hope. Prior to my drive through Waterloo, I had never been to this area before and I had no idea what the conditions were like. I feel as though I have a better understanding as to the lifestyle that the people from the House of Hope have come from and life they may have lived. When I look back at my childhood I feel as though I am a world apart from these children who are growing up homeless. However, through this experience touring Waterloo I feel as though I was able to gain an insight into that whole different world.

Although this exercise of driving through the neighborhood unveils only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the complex issues like community, poverty, and housing the families face being homeless, it is a new reality for the teachers in training as they work at the House of Hope. Shelly's eyes are opened to a whole new way of living, one she has never experienced. Greene's idea of developing a social imagination creates a larger image of society for my college students. This image led the teachers in training to use their social imagination to see the inequities the children face, and it helped them plan more appropriate lessons based on their new knowledge from the tour and their newfound empathy toward the children at the House of Hope.

Liminality: Trying to Save the World

Be with me inside the
me of me,
all made up
of stories present, past, future
some true to life
and others all
fun and fantasy,
all the way I imagine me. bell hooks (2004).

In the continuation of this bell hooks poem, the pieces of *present, past, and future* refer to the liminality felt by preservice teachers as they stand on a threshold. They are preparing to join the ranks of professional teachers with all of the challenges and social responsibilities that the title of "teacher" carries. Pierce offers the following commentary on liminality: **"**[d]erived from the Latin *limen* meaning "threshold," liminality helps explain how the rite of passage known as beginning teaching involves the suspension, even temporary loss, of professional identity" (Pierce, 2007, p. 33). This liminality can be seen in preservice teachers' relationships with mentor teachers and students during their field experiences. Within the university, they are crafting one identity as an artist and often a separate identity as a teacher (Miller & Williams, 2013). As Miller and Williams note, [i]n order to solve the Rubik's Cube; we mix and match portions of our identities, as we try to unravel the puzzle of who we are and who we might become" (p. 48). Students preparing to become teachers find themselves torn among many identities and often struggle to find their voices as teachers.

This section is entitled *Trying to Save the World* because often times when preservice teachers imagine themselves as teachers, they develop unrealistic visions of how their teaching will "make a difference" or enable them to tenaciously "save

the world." There is some validity in this quest. There is no doubt they will many make meaningful differences as a result of teaching children throughout their career, but this idealistic way of viewing teaching can be unrealistic and typical at this stage. This view is understandable as they lack of experience teaching in the field and they tend to have a naïve understanding of how the educational system works. Students are also filled with doubts and fears about teaching, and the act can feel very abstract to them or cause them to become disillusioned about the role of teachers. As they begin student teaching and preparing for their job searches, preservice teachers enter this liminal space between the safety of the college setting where they can experiment and try out new ideas and ways of teaching and their entrance into the professional teaching world.

This threshold is the time in preservice teachers' careers when civic engagement is important; these experiences are ripe with opportunity for preservice teachers. Ideally, they can acquire a unique experience teaching in the community with diverse populations of students while safely remaining nestled in the womb of the university classroom:

> Liminality is a dramatic cultural phase where the novice hatches awkwardly out of one phase and eventually into another more sophisticated phase and acceptance into the community. During the liminal stage, beginning teachers are caught between the intense engagement with students in classrooms and the muted compliance tacitly expected of newcomers among adults in the new school context (Pierce, 2007, p.34).

Civic Engagement Creates Meaningful Experiences

How does civic engagement help preservice teachers develop an integral experience? John Dewey, in his 1934 book *Art as Experience*, wrote that in order for people to have *a meaningful experience*, they must have closure, a sense of

completeness. They must digest the experience and reconstruct it in order to grasp the meaning of what they experienced: "[f]or 'taking in' any vital experience is something more than placing something on the top of the consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction, which may be painful" (p. 42). Dewey further explains that emotions play an innate role in an experience. Although emotions do not consistently lead to a complete experience, they are the "moving and the cementing" that creates unity within the situation to create an experience (p. 44). Teachers in training need to have integral experiences, as Dewey described, in order to help them develop into effective teachers. In the process of acquiring civic experience and the new insights that come from working with a diverse population, preservice teachers experience a range of emotions that can help cement their understanding of the diverse learners they will encounter in their classrooms. Preservice teachers need real-life experiences to help them create strong relationships between their beliefs and the instructional strategies they are developing in their teacher education programs. If civic experiences open the door for students to teach in new and often unpredictable situations and also include students of diverse backgrounds, preservice teachers can develop pedagogical skills alongside the development of characteristics of positive dispositions needed to teach all students (Cone, 2012).

Neporcha Cone, Assistant Professor of Science Education at Kennesaw University in Georgia, conducted a study with elementary Science Education students to determine the effects of community-based service learning and teaching diverse students. Cone described reasons why multicultural education was not

having a positive effect on her students' ability to teach diverse populations of students and noted that "[o]ne possible solution for preservice teachers' lack of preparedness is that their beliefs go overlooked and/or unchallenged during matriculation, thus weakening the effects of the programmatic experiences" (Ladson-Billings, 1994 as cited in Cone, 2012, p.890).

Through engagement in the community and working with populations from backgrounds that are different from theirs, preservice teachers are able to utilize what they have learned during their coursework, including pedagogy and multicultural teaching. When teachers in training do not have this opportunity to test their new learning "because of their limited personal contact with diverse populations, [their] beliefs about diversity are commonly interwoven with false or stereotyped information" (Cone, 2012, p. 891). This could easily result in the stagnation of their understanding.

Typical field experiences in teacher education programs focus on teaching skills, while civic engagement opportunities push preservice teachers to transform their beliefs by "not only teaching the skills necessary to effectively teach diverse students but [also providing] experiences that enable preservice teachers to apply these skills and develop awareness and insight needed to respond to the diversity of their students." (Cone 2012, p. 892).

Non-school settings such as community and recreational centers and after-school programs can offer these types of experiences. Specifically, a non-school setting provides preservice teachers with the opportunity to interact with diverse students without the restrictions inevitably imposed by traditional schools (Irvine,

2003, as cited in Cone, 2012). The House of Hope fits into the non-school setting. Our after-school art club allowed for the relaxed setting that preservice teachers needed to get to know students, and it was open-ended in that we had no curriculum we needed to follow. Together, the students and preservice teachers were able to decide what to make and how to go about making what they were interested in creating.

My students were able to take their preconceived notions of what homelessness looked like in their minds and substitute it with the experiences of actual children and their mothers from the House of Hope. They could replace the pervasive rumors and notorious stories of the East side of Waterloo with the caring feelings they developed for the House of Hope and the families living in it. Our experience at the House of Hope differed significantly from our former after-school teaching club at the more affluent Lab School. While both experiences offered students in my class the opportunity to craft age-appropriate lessons and also to teach multiple age groups at the same time, House of Hope offered lessons related to diversity that were missing at the Lab School. This real-world hands-on approach where methods are combined with fieldwork helps preservice teachers as they learn to differentiate their lessons to meet students varying abilities in art. At the Lab School, the students in my class learned general things about what the kids were interested in as far as pop culture and Saturday morning cartoons, but since the preservice teachers in the Lab School setting were nestled in the safety of the university, they didn't learn about the very real struggles that children who are not

middle class and upper middle class can experience. The majority of the children at the Lab School came from very privileged family situations.

When we began to teach at the House of Hope, the lesson planning seemed secondary to getting to know the students and understanding what it would be like to be in a situation like this. After an adjustment period, my students began to connect with the children at the House of Hope. Their guard lowered as their initial sympathy turned to empathy, especially when students worked with the children in their living space and saw the piles of donations that the children were able to sort through to find new clothes. The students saw how the families shared a single kitchen and witnessed first hand some of their struggles such as having to hold the microwave door closed to make popcorn after school.

Prior to this, my preservice teachers enjoyed teaching at the Lab School where everything was provided including supplies, space, aprons, technology, running water, etc. and there were no complications with the setup. The teachers in training could walk into the school, set up their project, and teach. The preservice teachers often complained that the students seemed annoyed that there were field experience students and didn't seem appreciative of the enrichment activities, such as our art club, that were offered to them. My preservice teachers and the children at the lab school took for granted the after school enrichment opportunities offered on campus. We would meet the Lab School children after school to walk them down to the art room, and some kids would try and sneak out or make up an excuse to head home. They all seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves after they were

"caught" and were escorted back to art club, but the obligation of one more after school activity or one more structured part of their day seemed too much for some.

By contrast, the children at the House of Hope ran off the bus to join us, and many begged us to stay longer and come back. It was clear that they loved what we planned for them each week. The teenagers may not have displayed this affection outright, but I am not sure that anything would have pleased several of these 16 year-old girls. They were stuck in a transitional housing shelter and had little to no privacy, not to mention having to babysit siblings after school and again after art club. We never could seem to find a way to truly connect with some of the high school girls, but I felt that they were pleased with our group project and took pride in what they created with us. They seemed to enjoy watching the college students, and it gave them an opportunity to discuss what it is like to be in college. It was also an opportunity to see that the university was not an out-of-reach institution for them but a welcoming place. I am confident that this opportunity allowed the teens to get to know each other and see that they aren't alone in this situation, and it was an opportunity to create something without the pressure of grades or the burden of watching all of their siblings.

During an interview, Melanie compared the experience of teaching at the House of Hope to her experience teaching in the public school art room where she also worked that semester. She contrasted her more relaxed House of Hope experiences with the pressures she felt in the public school art room. These pressures resulted from having to focus solely on the academic side of teaching due to the structured situation and large number of students at one time:

> Having this non-traditional teaching experience was beneficial to me because it was important to learn how to make those connections with students, and you can't learn that just stepping into a field experience for a week with a large group of students [like her field experience]. It's so hard to make those connections during your field experience because you are so focused on the academic aspects. We need to learn to make connections and see how important it is for teachers [so that] when we enter our field experiences, we can transfer that and mix these personal skills with the professional aspects like good lesson planning.

Another student, Evelyn, shared a similar comparison with her field experience:

> The House of Hope was more valuable than being in a public school for field experience because we got to apply those classroom management skills that are pounded into us in school and we were able to apply what we learned from the House of Hope to our field experience at school. It was a rich and much more diverse experience because in our level two [field experience] we just walk into someone's already organized and established classroom. We just walk in and take over. The House of Hope experience made us kind of have to experience what it's like to build our own classroom and get to know our students from the start. What do they like, and don't like and build our lessons from there. It was much more authentic and useful.

This civic engagement experience at the House of Hope allowed "preservice teachers the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills learned in previous

education courses, while addressing the real-life needs of their community" (Cone, 2012). Preservice teachers had the opportunity to work in small, multi-age groups to learn about varied ability levels and become comfortable working with low-income children experiencing the effects of poverty, homelessness, hunger, and other traumatic issues like parental abuse or incarceration, separation from family, loss of personal belongings, and drug abuse.

John Dewey discusses the power of experience in education by stating, "everything, depends upon the quality of the experience which is had. The quality of any experience has two aspects. There is an immediate aspect of agreeable or disagreeableness, and there is its influence upon later experiences" (1938, p.27). Shelly's journal entry is a perfect illustration of what John Dewey would describe as the process of making meaning from an experience. Shelly wrote in her journal about how she was so affected by this new awareness of homelessness and poverty in the school system that she went back to look at the statistics on socioeconomic status from her own school growing up. Her awareness of poverty had grown and her concern for students experiencing it was more evident. In her description of how she felt she has grown through this experience she noted:

> I had only had experiences like "let's make something or donate something to help these people," but I never went with the stuff and actually face-to-face took part in the actual experience. Being there [at the House of Hope] and experiencing it gave me the most meaning and helped me to see what was actually happening. I looked back at my own school's statistics after this and found there are a large percentage of free and reduced in my town- a lot!

This student's understanding of poverty shifted her concern from a group of students experiencing homelessness to the issue of homelessness in her own community. Her description connects well with Dewey's observation that, "…every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem of an education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 28).

The experience of working at the House of Hope caused many of my students to question the educational disparities in our community and the communities in which they grew up. This resonates with the beginning of a connection to the importance of social justice. This preservice teacher is looking at her experience at the transitional housing center and then educating herself to be more aware of the injustices around her. Several students began to look at schools they attended or taught in during the semester in order to become more aware of the poverty in and inequality of schools around them. One student mentioned in class that the school on the block adjacent the House of Hope had a population of students in which 98% received aid through the free and reduced lunch program at school. Other students mentioned that some schools in the area were under 20%. They wanted to know why this disparity existed in such a small radius. In our class discussion about the inequalities of school for diverse students, some students became angered, while others seemed resigned to accepting that this is just the way it is.

Caring Comes from Engagement

This is an excerpt from Evelyn's journals in which she described a pivotal experience at the House of Hope. In this entry, she saw how a caring attitude towards the children made a lasting impact on her and her future teaching:

> The experience just feels more personal compared to one within a classroom. I've noticed that I treat them more along the lines of how I imagine I would treat my own children, with a lot more patience and acceptance. I also find myself more than overjoyed with everything these kids do! And sadly, I bet a couple of weeks ago if I had met these kids in a classroom setting, not knowing that they were homeless, I wouldn't have been so impressed. That bugs me. Every child should feel that their accomplishments are of worth. I have no idea where the kids in my future classroom will be coming from. This experience is pushing me to be attentive to every student. Let them know that they are appreciated and that I am genuinely excited that they are there! I watched you, Wendy, when you came over to our group today. You smiled big and told the kids how excited you were that they were there with us. You said your heart was just so happy they were there today. And I thought about it, how great would that have felt to hear that as a student growing up? That the teacher was genuinely happy that I was there, that it was a joy in their life. That I was a joy in someone's life. My level II field experience is coming up, and that has become my goal. I want to make the students feel appreciated and wanted. I want them to know

that I am genuinely happy to be there and that they are a joy in my life. Thank you.

To care within the context of school means that teachers focus not only on imparting pre-determined knowledge but also on spending significant time and energy on nurturing and sustaining each of their students. By modeling caring behaviors for their students, teachers facilitate the development of a caring community within the learning environment. In turn, children feel affirmed, supported, and safe in these environments and are more likely to perform well (Talbert-Johnson, 2006, p. 157).

Stepping Over the Threshold

You can find all about me--
coming close and letting go
of who you might think
I am
before you
come inside
and let me
be real
and you
become
real to me.
All real then. In that place where
skin again is one small way to see me
but not real enough
to be all
the me of me or the you of you. bell hooks, (2004)

This section of hook's poem describes the letting go of stereotypical images that my students shared at the beginning of the semester. She encourages the reader to come inside and see beyond the physical appearances and the prescribed notions of how this child is represented by society. "Come inside and let me be real," writes

hooks as she reminds us that the skin or physical appearance is just one small way to view a person.

We live in a diverse nation, but yet diversity does not seem to fit the norm. The majority in our society fears that we will lose our conformity and our image to chaos, to differences, and to uncertainty by embracing this divergent culture. Yet, we continue to grow more heterogeneous every year. Maxine Greene writes of the social imagination as a way for educators to encourage students to reach, to open, to seek, to create, and to look wider (p. 172). Teachers can encourage "live communication" and "the reflective taking of initiatives," which is how Greene defines action (p. 177). We can help students develop these qualities: "tentativeness, regard for evidence; critical and creative thinking; openness to dialogue; and a sense of agency, social commitment, and concern" (p. 179). My goal for this civic experience was to provide an opportunity for my students to see the capabilities that marginalized students have to offer, to better understand what it would feel like to live at the House of Hope, and to see how art can play a positive role in their lives.

In the next section, I will share my field notes spanning the six-week period during which my preservice teachers and I led art club at the House of Hope. My field notes and the field notes of my students are written in candid language. I did not edit these for the purposes of this study. At times, I have interjected my students' journal entries to show evidence of my findings. I have divided my notes into the three individual groups of children and labeled them by age. The teen group consisted of 12-17 year old children; the Elementary Group consisted of 7-11 year

old children; and the Young Children Group consisted primarily of 3-6 year old children, but sometimes the toddlers joined in as well.

Week 1

When it was time to prepare for art club, we divided into the three groups with about 5-6 children to 3-4 of my students per group. Because there is no common room in the house, the preservice teachers toured the property to plan places to meet with the students and work together over the next six weeks.

The Teen Group

The teen group sat together around a small card table and worked on the large front porch, making books and clipping interesting images from magazines to decorate the covers. I noticed right away that it was a good way for everyone to sit in a circle, and I hoped this would promote conversation. The project my students designed for the teens were books to keep ideas for the collaborative project they wish to create for the house. This group was extremely quiet and worked diligently on the bookmaking process. I sensed the teens were a bit uncomfortable at first but didn't look unhappy. After checking on them several times though, I didn't hear much conversing or sharing of ideas. I remembered why I was always drawn to elementary children, the conversation seemed to flow easier and the fear of actually sharing any emotion was less of concern than with teens. I was going to have to help them in this area and I felt a bit insecure myself about this. I am an elementary art teacher at heart.

As I observed the art club on the porch, the comfort level seemed better as they began to work. Several teens seemed to rely on their phones as a way of avoiding

conversation at times and I made a note to discuss this with the students in our next debriefing session. I will also suggest that next time we have some music on the porch for them to listen to as they work to take the pressure off to always have a conversation going and to relax the mood.

The Elementary Group

The elementary age group worked under the gazebo outside in the backyard making clay. I was glad that the one male student I have in this methods class was in this group because it consisted of four boys and one girl. They were an energetic group, unlike the teens, and they talked as they worked with clay and shared ideas and moved around asking for advice often. One young boy named Brandon, made at least three clay pieces in the 40 minutes they had to work together. Another little boy named Jax, sat quietly in the left corner, still in his school uniform, looking a bit uncomfortable sitting on the ground in his polo and khaki pants, poking at the clay with a plastic tool. I made eye contact with the student sitting by him, and she made the expression with her face and shoulders letting me know she did not know what to do about this young man and his sullen behavior. I watched for a while and the students tried to engage Jax in making something with the clay but with no real success. After taking a walk with Jax and checking on his siblings, I was able to help this little boy come up with a clay dragon. It was through my individual conversation with him and offering him other choices of art activities that the other groups were working on that he warmed up and shared his interest in dragons.

Libby shared her perspective on Jax's difficulty getting started on his clay project in her journal:

> It's frustrating to me when someone doesn't want to make anything or even work on the project at all. Since I am a new teacher and still learning it's hard for me to deal with situations like that. It's hard for me to not just give up on him and let him sit there for a while. When Wendy came over, I was exhausted on ideas and couldn't think of anything else on what to do, or ask him to help him. In my field experience class I have some students like Jax who don't know what to do or don't want to do it. My cooperating teacher just lets them sit there and do nothing for most of the class and I don't think that's right. I would want to come up with some way of motivating them enough to at least want to do the project. It was helpful to see Wendy work with Jax and to hear about her strategies for motivating students. Maybe I can try these with my cooperating teacher next week for a change. It seemed that Jax was more willing to work after having someone on one time with someone. It was like he just needed that extra bump of encouragement!

In Libby's writing, she shared that her cooperating teacher in her public school field experience wasn't motivating the students to create art. This was discouraging to read, and it seemed to shut down Libby's ability to help Jax start working. Her past models lacked the skills to personally connect and motivate students, so it was vital that she have a positive experience now to work through her frustration when she can't motivate and student and to continue to develop new strategies in the process.

The Young Children Group

The last group consisted of very young children from ages one year to six years old. Two little girls and two little boys and two toddlers. Two students from Social Work at the university were there to babysit the little ones that were too small to make art with us, while moms attended group, but sadly between all of us, none could soothe or calm one of the little toddlers. His mom dropped him off with his 3 siblings a bit abruptly and closed the gate to his sobbing face and did not turn around. I was a bit shocked but not knowing the full situation, I made it my goal to try and help him calm down. After books, toys, a drink, a stroller ride, being held, and sitting by his siblings, he was still displaying a constant sob, we gave up. The other little children listened to the story and drew and painted only running over to play on the equipment briefly.

One little boy in this group was painting with black; the students watched in amazement as they covered several pieces of paper with black paint methodically. It was obvious he had not painted before and was not sure how to add many colors to his picture. I wanted to show the students that it is ok to help the child try new ideas like adding color. With his permission, I reached over and helped him move the watercolor paints around to show him how the colors react together and blend and bleed. He was amazed and took off painting from there.

Melanie shared her observation of this moment in her journal:

> Throughout our first visit, I realized that it is just as beneficial to watch my peers interact with the children as it is interacting with the kids myself. I had a wonderful time interacting with the kids this first week, but there were two moments that really stood out and made an impact on me that I got to

> observe someone else interacting with a child. The first moment was after Mikey was finished drawing his image on the piece of paper. [A classmate] took a minute and asked him if he could explain it to her. He of course said yes, and his eyes lit up with the opportunity to talk all about his masterpiece. She took the paper in her hands and bent over to his level. By taking the paper in her own hands, she allowed Mikey to use both of his to point out what he was describing. It was a precious moment and I could see the genuine interest that she had and his excitement in the moment. He relished in this attention too.
>
> The second moment occurred when after Mikey was finished with his project and was doing a free painting on a second sheet of paper. Wendy came over and stood behind Mikey, took his hands in her hands, and moved their hands together. Wendy showed him how to use multiple colors, how to mix colors, and how to overlap lines. His eyes grew so wide as he saw the paint do magical things in front of him. I realized how a simple step as holding a paintbrush with a child can be so powerful. Taking the time to work one on one with this child and meet him at his ability level and help him to make this new discovery was amazing!

This experience that the student journaled about above describes the act of caring for the child by getting down to his eye-level, listening, and showing a vested interest in his art making. One of the benefits of this teaching experience was that students worked together to model teaching strategies, share ideas, and reflect on difficult situations together. The importance of care was demonstrated for this

student during class that day in a way that impacted her and how she would later interact with students. She saw that Mikey was positively affected by the attention he received and how important it was to take time to observe students and listen to their stories. By providing children with individualized attention and showing investment in their work, children will develop higher self-esteem and can increase positive adult relationships as they work through the many emotions of being homeless (Harms et al, 1998).

When working with homeless children who often come from different backgrounds than the preservice teachers who are working with them, it is essential to remember that cultural differences may be difficult for preservice teachers to accept. Here is an excerpt from a dialogue I had with a student over her e-journal about her reflection of art club. She shared a situation from her first day of teaching art club to the 3-6 year old group:

> **Student:** Kelly used language that surprised me for her age. For example, she said something along the lines of her little sister always acts bad so she is going to punch her in the face. It made me wonder what kind of family life she was raised up in and if that was something of normalcy for her.
>
> **My response:** I am curious to know how you felt when Kelly spoke in a harsh language around the other children? Were you more accepting knowing her background? Would it be different if she said this at school?
>
> **Student:** Regarding Kelly's harsh language around the other children, I did not feel that it was appropriate in any situation. As soon as she said those words about her sister my thoughts immediately raced towards questions

such as "were things said like that often by her parents or adult figures in her life? Do African Americans tend to speak more violently than Whites? Was this a result of being homeless?" Even though I immediately thought these things, I tried to not let my actions show them. My first response was to tell Kelly those were not kind words and we needed to use nice words when we were at art club and around other children. I was not accepting of her behavior because she has a different background. Wrong is wrong, and she should be taught that. I tried to treat the situation as if it were the same as if we were actually at a school, where talking in such a way would not be allowed.

My response: I agree that what she said should not go unattended. I want you to consider that this child has had a great deal of experiences that could be different from yours. It may be good to try and ask her why she said she wanted to punch her sister and then maybe try to help her find words that are more appropriate for the situation. Saying that something a student said is “wrong” is a pretty strong statement. Culturally, that could be something that is said regularly at home and we must be respectful of that. I think that you are correct in saying that at school this wouldn’t be acceptable and maybe that’s why it is good to give her an alternative phrase to use instead.

Melanie needed to be aware that the particular phrases that Kelly was using may be a common way of communicating within her family. I felt it was good to help her come up with an alternative expression to share her thoughts about her sister, but I also wanted her to be sensitive to how she approached this. Talbert- Johnson

(2006) discusses that teachers often promote their own cultural values directly or indirectly in interactions with their students. She writes,

> [T]eachers bring to schools their own set of cultural and personal characteristics that influence their work, it is not surprising that their beliefs, dispositions, behaviors, and experiences would also be included…. The preconceived behaviors of teachers and their lack of cross-cultural experiences may impede teachers from being effective with their diverse students (Talbert-Johnson, 2006, p. 153).

It was necessary to discuss with this student that while she may believe that what Kelly said was inappropriate, that she needed to be respectful of the cultural differences between her values and this child's situation. Kelly's family may use phrases like this in jest or as light threats to impose parental management upon the children. I wanted her to be aware that although she and most schools may not approve, that we must be cautious of what we declare as "wrong." As teachers, we cannot assume that our upbringings and experiences are the same as the students we teach.

Week 2

We arrived to find out that one family was home entirely sick together with the flu. This only included two children but that did make a difference. Another teen did not come and one little boy from the middle group was slipping away to a medical appointment as we pulled up in our van. This was extremely disappointing the students. It was difficult to not take it personally because the groups were small and the time spent together allowed the children to really open up to my students. We were missing four children on only the second week. I knew this would be a problem from the beginning, not only because this art club takes place at a homeless transitional

program but because life is busy and when people who are not stable run into problems, often they must be solved right away.

In discussing this issue with my students, I explained when you are in a situation where you don't have the resources to be proactive, you must resort to being reactive. The families at the House of Hope don't always have the funds to repair vehicles or the insurance to allow them to go to specialists, or the help they need to support them when things do not go as planned. Being flexible is a skill needed at the House of Hope and as an effective teacher.

The Teen Group

Watching my groups this week, they set up in the same locations but arranged their groups differently. The teen group stayed on the porch, the elementary group chose the shade over the sunny gazebo area, and the young children's group started in the grass on blanket. The teen group was short two girls today but luckily the two middle school girls who are the most talkative were present. I enjoyed watching them draw manga characters and talk about the difficulty of school. The students worked with the teens to complete their books and begin planning their collaborative project.

I engaged the third teen in conversation, pulling out her ideas for the collaborative art project that will go in the study area. She was quiet but shared several ideas on how she planned to incorporate jeweled and wire hearts in the tree branches. Each person in the group is going to make a tree, and then we will hang all the canvases together with the title "Watch Us Grow" above the trees. She had great ideas but seemed unable to just jump in the conversation because everyone was talking quickly and laughing. I modeled how to engage students who are quiet into the

conversation because it seemed my students were focusing on the middle school siblings because they were quite chatty, inquisitive, and enthusiastic students. It is easy to get carried away in situations like this and let the quiet ones fade into the background.

The Elementary Group

They set up a long folding table in the shade of large oak tree in the back yard and diligently worked for an hour. I watched T.J. lead the group today while the others helped out the children individually. Several children became frustrated during the coil building process, but I heard calm voices, helping and redirecting them to create successful pottery. Jax worked closely with T.J. and seemed much more comfortable working with clay this week. The closeness of everyone working around the table was helpful because everyone watched closely and paid attention to the demonstration, but it was a bit crowded when my students tried working alongside of them to help out. I noticed that Libby, one of my students, stepped up more this time when Megan, a second grader, got frustrated. She told her not to give up and helped her fix the crack in her lid. Only, when Libby put the lid on Megan's clay pot it was too small and cracked again. I decided to give Megan a quick fix idea so that she wouldn't become too frustrated she would quit. By taking an already made clay coil that was sitting on the table, I sprayed her lid and then quickly scored the small clay lid and then wrapped the coil around the lid, making it much bigger so that it actually fit on the clay pot.

I chose to demonstrate to Libby that I saw Megan starting to become agitated and in order to prevent that from happening, I gave her a quick fix to keep her focused and to complete the project. She was now finished. Libby took over and encouraged her

to draw pictures into the clay on the inside center of the pot. I felt that if I hadn't demonstrated a way to help Megan, her frustration may have caused her to smash her clay and leave her with nothing to be fired in the kiln and painted next week. It seemed that Libby was afraid to interfere with Megan's construction of her coil pot, but to me, the importance of this moment was that Megan could feel successful. As Libby watched Megan relax and begin carving images into her pot, I felt she understood now as well.

Jackie, my most skeptical student, shared a learning experience while making clay with several elementary-aged boys:

> There was one gigantic red flag that stood out to me today: saying "good job!" doesn't tend to mean a whole lot to kids. And our group was so bold enough to remind us of that fact. I think "good job" tends to be the quick answer when praising quality work, effort, etc. I decided after today that I should really try to be more specific though. Perhaps "your pot is really smooth!" or "you're doing a nice job stacking your coils to make them stand up straight!" Something a little (or a lot) more specific than just the generalized "good job." One of the boys asked me if we were paid to say "good job." He went on to say something about how he knew that adults didn't mean that, and that it was what they were supposed to say, even if it wasn't a good job, and how he was smarter than to think we really meant it. (even if we did). I think that's a really important point. Kids aren't stupid. They know when you're being fake and giving praise just because you think you have to…

Something else interesting that I picked up on today was one of Brandon's comments, when he was going off about how we probably get paid to say "good job." He also asked if we get paid to be here, and one of our group leaders said no, we're here because we want to be. Brandon responded with something about "volunteer hours" and "community service," both said in a slightly... mocking tone? I'm not sure that's the right word, but I feel like he said it with an eye roll (minus the actual action). The way he said it made me wonder how he feels about us being there, and about all the people that come to volunteer there in general. If I was in his position, and knew that others knew things about my life situation, I think I'd be pretty uncomfortable. I tend to be a very independent person, and quite honestly would find it a bit humiliating if a chunk of the activities in my life revolved around the volunteer work others did to provide basic necessities for me. Obviously, I can't tell what he's actually thinking, but hearing his comments today make me wonder how he actually feels about us being there. Does he know that I do care about him?

Jackie brought up some valid concerns about working with children who have been shuffled around through the system and have been exposed to a great deal of well-meaning volunteers, but these children may have also experienced a wide variety of short-term and rather empty relationships due to his family's situation. Brandon may not feel that people care about him based on these situations or that they are paid or made to care about him. He may have trust issues due to the instability in his life and now is letting Jackie know that he is aware of this

type of situation. He is correct in seeing that this is a short six-week art workshop to help the house with childcare while providing the teachers in training with experience. Brandon needs to see that there are people in his life who are committed to him and personally invested in him beyond the required teaching or supervising they have been assigned.

> To care within the context of schools means that teachers focus not only on imparting predetermined knowledge but also spend significant time and energy on nurturing and sustaining each of their students. By modeling caring behaviors for their students, teachers facilitate the development of a caring community within the learning environment. Children feel affirmed, supported and safe in these environments and are more likely to perform well (Talbert-Johnson, 2006, p.157).

My journal response to Jackie:

With concern to Brandon, it sounds like maybe your group should each focus on one or two students to be able to give them more personal attention that is more meaningful to them. This is a good lesson to share with the whole class during our reflection on art club on Thursday. You also need to remember that Brandon may be acting this way because he was upset by something else and was taking it out on you all because you were the first people he saw after school. I remember after class, someone in your group mentioned that the whole family seemed upset when they arrived. They are dealing with a lot right now. Remember, Mom just got remarried. We have to take all of this into consideration. I think you did that in your reflection here by stating that you'd be pretty uncomfortable. Keep that in mind as you work together next week.

I believe that Jackie brought up a valid point about the amount of sympathy that the children get from volunteers and community workers. Her ability to put

herself in the situation of Brandon and write how she would feel was an effort to try and understand what the children need and how we can actually help. It appears that by being sincere and taking the time to get to know each child personally would have a much more positive effect on the children.

Evelyn wrote in her journal, sharing a similar theme about praising children in meaningful ways to show she cares:

> As far as making sure each kid feels accomplished goes, I always make sure I tell each one that I appreciate their work, and I think it's great. I don't want them to only hear a generic "good job," but I want them to know they are appreciated. I also try to pick something specific about their work to praise, something that is different from everyone else's. This is something I plan to use in my future classroom. I think it helps each kid feel accomplished as an individual. Especially for students at-risk, it will help them feel like they have something special to offer that no one else does, they are important and they matter. I have made that my goal every day at art club.

Nell Noddings (1984) argues that caring should be at the heart of teaching. This is the basic framework of her work of the ethics of care in education. She describes the teacher as the “one-caring” and the students as the “cared-for.” This reciprocal relationship allows the teacher to empower her students by her actions, which stem from the sense of feeling like “I must do something” rather than the less responsive feeling of “something must be done.” By taking personal responsibility for students, teachers model the act of caring for others and the feeling of being cared for. Students, in turn, see this model, feel empowered, and then can return the

caring to the teacher and other students. There are defining characteristics of the ethic of care that are essential to discuss.

An attitude of engrossment and commitment and the motivational shift from self to student must first take place. Students must know that their teacher is engrossed in them and accepts them, cares for them, and values them. This becomes reciprocal when it is conceived as genuine. This involves a commitment to the student beyond the superficial "good jobs," as Jackie shared in her journal. Teachers need to seek personal connections and work to meet the needs and interests of each student. Finally, the motivational shift of being able to see through the eyes of the student can occur, by first understanding where they are coming from and responding to who they want to grow to become.

Through activities like modeling, open dialogue, opportunities for practice, and confirming trust preservice teachers can develop methods to show students genuine care. (Noddings, 1992). Examples of these include modeling how to care for others by creating a classroom environment that demonstrates caring and celebrates similarities and differences. Through the use of dialogue, open and reflective conversations, caring teachers can guide students to gain insight from classroom events. Discussions that allow everyone to contribute can lead to students' better understanding and appreciating one another; hence, students' voices feel valued. By seizing opportunities to practice these characteristics and opening their eyes to multiple ways of viewing the world, students are able to grow in their practice of the ethic of care while in the safety of the classroom. Lastly, caring teachers must establish trust between teachers and students through

affirmation and encouragement. By building strong relationships with students, caring teachers can help cared-for students reach success (1992).

The Young Children Group

The next group of tiny artists sat quietly on a blanket enjoying a few monster stories. I listened to my student Catie praise Kelly, a sweet little first grader with braids and colorful barrettes shooting from her head, for being able to read the title of the book out loud called "Monster Show." She grinned with delight and shared other things she could read as well.

This group was missing one child this week, and he was the one child in their group who had difficulty staying focused and wandered off to the playground several times. Mitchell is four but seemed bigger than the other children in the group, which easily caused the students to hold higher expectations for him last week. This little boy shared several times last week that he was excited for his mom to sign him up for school next year. In class, we discussed how his young age and lack of experience in school makes this group a challenge for him at times.

My favorite part of this group's work this week was at the end of art club, one student cleaned up the supplies from painting while the other students took the children outside to play a game that involved counting and chasing and monsters to connect to their lesson. It was great fun to see siblings Amy and Mikey run through the yard, squealing with delight after arriving during the first week so quiet and timid to our group. The project ideas this group originally planned were not age-appropriate, but after our joint planning session I was able to help them alter their ideas into more appropriate and enticing lessons. I saw today how much they have already grown and

adapted their club to include more active learning and small transitions between activities that are necessary in keeping small children attentive for long periods of time.

Melanie reflected in her journal about her new understanding of the importance of having well-planned lessons with small children from this experience:

> We started art club in the same way we did last time by sitting on a blanket out in the backyard, playing duck, duck, goose and reading a book. By having these same introduction activities, the children are becoming used to a routine. I saw how important it is for kids at this age, as well as kids who might not have the best home life, to have something consistent, even if it as simple as an introduction to art club. All three kids focused extremely well during the introduction time this week. Last week, we had difficulty with them paying attention to the book when we read it aloud. So, this week we tried something new. We gave them two instructions. First they had to open up their ears, and as they did this they took their hands and pretended to turn their ears open so they could hear. Second, they had to zip their lips so they wouldn't talk while the book was being read aloud. I was amazed at how well this worked, but they didn't say a single word the entire book and listened very attentively. It was really great having the opportunity to try out new ways to work with small children. I think our group really saw the importance of having procedures for our lesson and lots of transitions from one activity to the next. I didn't think this would be that big of a deal in class when we were writing lessons, but now I see how invaluable it truly is.

This example demonstrates praxis coming to life as the students used their knowledge of lesson planning and adjusted their teaching strategies to use more simple and direct instructions to keep the children engaged. Melanie didn't see the connection during class when lesson planning instructions were taught and we practiced them in class, but when faced with a group of children that demonstrated some of the qualities discussed in class, Melanie was able to use her knowledge to alter her lesson for success. It was evident by watching the children that these small adjustments to her group's teaching allowed the distractions to be minimized so that the lesson could be successfully implemented.

During this session of art club, Melanie shared another moment that demonstrated her development of care towards the children in her group:

> As I was blow-drying a mask to speed up the painting process, I noticed Kelly was just hanging out waiting patiently. I had one of those teacherly moments where I asked Kelly if she could help me take a couple pictures with my camera. I gave her the camera and told her to take 3 pictures of anybody working on their art project. I then proceeded to show Kelly how to hold the camera and take a picture. Her face lit up and she was so excited to be able to use the camera. I then let the other children have a turn and each kid got to take 3 pictures of the project we were working on. I thought this was a great idea because it allowed me to continue to dry the masks and get pictures taken at the same time. We also could get pictures from the viewpoint of the children, something that is precious and often times overlooked. The kids

also had a great time being able to take turns and use the camera and capture their perspective on the happenings around them.

As Noddings (1992) explained, the one- caring teacher must show an attitude that promotes characteristics of commitment, engrossment, and a motivational shift toward the cared-for child. I saw elements of this type of caring developing in this situation, as Melanie saw that Kelly was not a participant in this part of the lesson and found a very personal way to involve her and then extend it to the other children. Melanie recognized the importance of seeing through the children's perspective and showed that she trusted them by placing the responsibility and ownership of the camera into their hands. As I saw aspects of this take place, I saw trust beginning to develop among the children and the teachers in training.

Week 3

When I arrived home last week, I felt great. Our art club had been short a few children, but the weather was great and the projects were starting to bloom. I thought the student journals were becoming more reflective, and the students were getting more comfortable being there. I also felt like the children were starting to open up and disclose their personalities to my students through jokes, a few stories, and questions about their lives and schooling. I felt that we were heading in a direction that would lead to good, reflective discussions and would help us to develop better strategies to help as they continued to talk.

This week things were a quite a bit different. Everything changed this week starting with cold, rainy weather, forcing us to work inside. Because there is no community room or even a large living space downstairs, it is nearly impossible to

teach art inside. I knew I was taking a risk to wait until October, but I wanted to make sure I had enough time to prepare my students for this experience through readings, activities, and reflection. We were at the halfway mark, but it felt a little bit like we were back at the beginning again, scrambling to make things work and feeling the strain of time, weather, space, and a great deal of unharnessed energy.

I called the executive director at lunch to remind her that we were in fact still planning to come despite the gloomy weather, and she was thrilled. She planned to straighten up the small donation room so it could be used for art club. She reminded me that this was the evening that all the moms were going out to dinner at Famous Dave's BBQ restaurant due to the fact that the restaurant was donating a percentage of their profits to the House of Hope that month. It was also a great opportunity for them to get to know each other. Because there is no common space, the families really do not have many opportunities to get to know one another enough to develop a support system to help them as they re-enter independent living.

This had been told to me long before we begun, but I had forgotten about it until this phone call. She shared that a new family had moved in and so there would be some new faces at art club this afternoon and that there would be a full house since everyone was excited to go out to dinner. I quickly formed a plan for the teens to work upstairs in the family of five's apartment, the little ones worked in the study area again, and that left the 7-10 year olds in the kitchen. I found them a big blanket to sit on and let them loose. That left the three little toddlers free to play with the toys in the donation room with the social work students who came from the university to babysit.

I watched the moms pile into a silver van together to devour barbecue and build relationships; I was left with 18 children, 11 art education students, three toddlers, and two clueless babysitters. Pushing aside the thoughts of running after them to jump in the van and escape this madness, I surveyed the house to decide where to start. With a packed house, the smell of wet children, and squeaky sneakers filling the air, art club began to unfold into utter craziness.

The Teen Group

I was already nervous about this week's lesson plans but decided to let students move ahead with them. I felt that I had been too pushy last week in shutting down some possible bad lesson ideas for the collaborative art piece that the teens were creating for the study room. They kept telling me that they wanted to fill balloons with paint and throw them at the canvases to create the background for the mural. This seemed unpredictably wild and messy, not to mention wasteful. I don't think that a collaborative piece should look so haphazard, not to mention that I think teenagers are capable of much more than this kind of activity. This old house has a great sense of character, and I didn't feel that splattering paint across our artwork would properly represent it. I gave out many other solutions, and they finally settled on spray-painting the backgrounds in a few similar shades of blues and purples. This seemed fine last week because it was so nice outside. I pictured them lining up canvas in the grass, spraying beautiful gradients of the sky all over their canvases. Instead, we were huddled around long sheets of butcher paper under the grandiose porch, taking turns with the three spray cans. The image I had pictured did not look the same when we

handed out masks and gloves for students and required they all work in the same area to avoid spraying the porch.

This group seems most challenging for me to help. My students in this group are quiet when it comes to sharing their ideas and seem defensive when I give them feedback due to what seems like their own lack of experience working with this age group. The students often grumble about each other and don't seem as invested as the other two groups. By allowing them to choose their groups, I felt like that would be a large motivator for them, but it hasn't seemed to make much difference. They often seem as reserved or disconnected at times as the teens appear.

In their journals, I read hints of difficulty within the group to decide how the collaborative art lesson should be designed. I want them to reach out to the teens to get them more invested in the project and to find ways for them to personally connect to it. I'm not sure if it's the dynamics of the group or my students' fears that it won't turn out well and they will be embarrassed to hang it on the wall at the house.

To get them thinking about good teaching and positive thoughts, right before we left class to drive to the house, I highlighted some really great reflective moments from journals and shared some teachable moments I observed. I repeated a conversation the teens were having with my students about going to college and brought it back to our conversation about the Sherman Alexie book we just finished reading. In the young adult book called, The Absolute True Diary of a Part-time Indian, a teacher named Mr. P. helps the main character Arnold realize that he needs to leave his school on the reservation and attend a public school 22 miles away to receive the quality education Arnold deserves. He tells Arnold to get out while he can before the

reservation kills him. I tried to show the students that their conversations about school could help the teens see a perspective about college that they may not be familiar with. They may hear that no one in their family went to college or that college is out of reach for them due to finances. The teens may only see college as a ticket to getting a good job but not be introduced to the whole picture of what college can offer. I tried to point out little things that they said that might have made an impact on the girls. I pushed them to try to make a one on one connection with a teen to get to know them better. It has been hard to read if this is making an impact on my students due to their quiet demeanor.

They spent the rest of the time working upstairs on a large sketch of a tree to later transfer to the canvases to make a mosaic tree design. I am very interested in hearing about their experience of spending time in one of the apartments in the House of Hope. After seeing some of the small spaces that the families live in, I hope my students will cherish the lavish space of their dormitory rooms on campus.

Here is a journal entry about the experience working in one of the family's apartment. The mother of this family of four children has just remarried and is planning to graduate from the program in the spring. It is a unique situation since her new husband cannot live at the house:

> I am so glad that we got to work upstairs in the middle school girls' home. It seriously affected me more to see their actual living space. For one, there is no door on the apartment when you reach the top of the stairs, so there is no real privacy. You have to practically climb over the couch to get to the dining room table because there is no space to walk. Each child has a change jar on

> top of the TV that says vacation money. I can't imagine there is more than twenty dollars between them all, but they were setting goals with this and working towards something more.
>
> That is when it really hit me who these girls are and what they are dealing with. Keeley was home sick for the day because of an earache, and I sat there thinking...it would be so weird being home sick in a place like this. And they talked about using "bunny ears" for their TV to get cable. In their living space, they could only get about 3 channels, but in their mom's room they could get about 13. It was interesting to me, and that is when their situation like I said really hit me, because they do act and seem like such normal girls around us. But they are dealing with so much more.

By spending time visiting the girls' living situation, the teachers in training were able to see first-hand what extreme poverty looked like. Shelly's experience of having to climb over the couch to get to the table to work and seeing the pitiful jars of change labeled for a vacation provided her insight into the way that many students in this situation are living. This transformative experience replaced Shelly's image of homelessness, which she described earlier as a dirty man begging for change in a large city like Las Vegas. Her understanding now encompasses a much deeper and broader understanding. She saw that homelessness can happen to anyone, that families suffer greatly from it, and that it is difficult to rise from it, but there are places that are helping families. She realized that the children suffering from homelessness may look "normal," as she described, but they must deal with many more issues pertaining to acquiring their basic needs to survive, completing

homework without technology, and living with the lack of personal space. She was able to put herself in the situation of the girls she was working with to help understand what they were going through. Working in the apartment was only one of the ways the dynamics of the teen group was altered this week, as my field notes below demonstrate:

The newest member of the House of Hope art club that joined the teen group. Ray, an energetic, young, male, eighth grader, arrived just as we began art club. Roy complained consistently throughout art club but at the same time showed signs that he was enjoying himself. He worked diligently and cracked jokes but would never let his guard down while he was creating this tree with a bunch of older girls that he had never met before. I really liked watching how each person in the group drew one part of the tree and connected it to the larger piece. I think that as they begin to put the project together, the group will come together. Roy may be the wildcard in this bunch!

Shelly wrote in her journal about Roy:

> Ray was an interesting character. He was so negative about EVERYTHING. Even so, I seriously think he secretly enjoyed being there but he wanted to act like he didn't want to be. Because he did talk a lot, he was eager to spray paint and he was the first one to get up and draw the trunk [of the tree], which I should also note that he offered to have the trunk which is the center of the whole entire project. I don't know anything about his situation, though, maybe that is just him being a young adolescent boy. Either way, he added a great deal of energy to our group.

Ray may have felt his adolescent masculinity being challenged as a new tenant at the House of Hope transitional housing program that consists of only mothers and their children. No men are allowed. On his first day, he was put in a group of five teenage girls and four female preservice teachers to paint a large tree together. As Roy is developing his identity as a young African-American male in a difficult situation, this may have been his way of reacting to all the females surrounding him.

The Elementary Group

The face painters faced some roadblocks this week as well. Being crowded into the kitchen together on the floor, the slippery, thin blanket upon the hard wood floors bunched up and slid around with each student's movement. This caused students to have a difficult time sitting and using the face painting supplies. They shared well and seemed to enjoy painting their own faces. I worried this would not be enough to do today so I had the students bring a book to read about silly painted monsters. As students worked, I passed out iPads to the teachers in training to take photos in the Photobooth application to help them see some fun ways to alter their faces using paint and technology. They used the iPads to search interesting images of face painting and looked at ways artists used paint and ink to create illusions. It helped keep the children engaged since they couldn't burn off energy outside due to the weather.

Even with all the whistles and bells that iPads offered, it was difficult to keep kids confined to one room for more than hour, so we began to take them outside on the porch to shoot short movies about them as zombie creatures and scary clowns. It was a

very positive twist on the chaotic hour of art making. The children loved it and asked to watch it many times.

During face painting time, Libby came up to me and told me that Jax was not working again today and asked me to come over and talk to him again. I didn't want to take over and help him again for several reasons. The first reason being that I haven't spent time with Jax since our time making a clay dragon together. I didn't have a relationship with him like my students would after working closely with him. I was afraid to take him aside to discuss this because then I couldn't model how to help him for Libby, but I knew he was sensitive and shy so he may not open up in front of everyone. I chose to model some brainstorming with Jax in front of Libby to help her see what processes I go through when assisting a child. I first asked him if he had found anything interesting he wanted to paint on his face. He shook his head no. I threw out a few ideas and then asked if he had something specifically in mind. Again he shook his head no. Last, I asked him if he wanted to keep looking for ideas with Libby on the iPad or if he already knew what he wanted to paint, or if he wanted paper to sketch out his idea first or if he needed to see what others were painting or wanted to see what other groups were doing instead of face painting. Nothing but a head shake no came from Jax.

I wasn't able to demonstrate success, but I gave her many ways to approach a rather stumped child. It seemed to me that he was very overwhelmed by the amount of noise and chaos with everyone cooped up in the kitchen like a bunch of chickens. Jax was a sensitive and quiet child who had clearly been through a great deal before coming to the house. He often started art club by hiding around the corner where we

were working until he was ready to join the group. He was reserved in his art making, and I felt that painting on his face may have been too much for Jax. My last ditch effort was to ask him if he wanted to paint my face. He smiled at me for a moment and then said, "no thanks." Instead, Libby found a connection to his interests by showing him how to manipulate his "unpainted" face on the Photobooth program on our iPads. He enjoyed this process for the rest of art club.

The Young Children Group

The littlest artists worked to complete their monster masks after reading a favorite book called Monster Mama. I recommended the book to the children because it focuses on a mother and her son living together. She wants what's best for him in life and is embarrassed that she is an actual monster. It's beautifully illustrated, while it deals with shame of overcoming what others think of you and focuses on accepting yourself and your family. They finished early because there wasn't the usual transition from story time outside on a blanket to inside for art making. By now the face painters are transforming into zombies and chaos was starting to build. At one point, we had little monsters with masks and bigger makeup painted zombies all running around on the porch at once. This was also at the location where the teens had left their spray painted canvases to dry. This was a temptation for all the creatures on the porch.

As the end of art club crept up, children became unable to be contained. I decided it was best to divide them up. I sent older students up to their apartments with some siblings while keeping younger ones in the donation room with the toddlers and the UNI babysitters, but with no doors and "monstrous" energy it was nearly impossible. I dismissed my students but stayed with the babysitters. One little girl

named Regan ran outside and hid in the back yard and a babysitter ran after her. In the midst of it all, a FedEx man came and delivered a huge box of drug testing supplies. I locked them in the bathroom for fear that they would be taken by someone living in the house. We finally rounded up all the children and quickly hid in the donation room only to yell surprise to the moms when they arrived home and to show off our monster faces. I left feeling a little defeated and extremely exhausted.

When I opened up journals after art club, I was certain that my students would be upset by the chaotic mess of art club due to the rain, being trapped in the house with so many people while all the staff and moms were gone out to dinner, but this is an example of what Evelyn wrote:

> Art club number three was chaotic and wonderful. With all of the kids bundled together because of the weather, everyone just felt connected. While working with the kids, it wasn't just my little ones I was working with, I was interacting with all of the age groups. I think each kid was feeding off of each other's excitement, I had never seen all of them smile so much and they were full of energy! The older kids were interacting with the little kids, chasing them around, everyone was laughing. The House of Hope kids connected us teachers and we all became one big group.

I was taken aback by the fact that the students enjoyed the chaotic community that developed by having everyone in the house together. As we discussed it in class, they said they felt like part of a big family and felt more comfortable in the house with all the staff gone. They enjoyed being in charge and seeing siblings care for one

another. This experience allowed the preservice teachers to let down their guards and engage in a convivial environment.

Week 4

Warm, sunny weather was back this week, and I could not have been more thankful! We arrived and set up in our usual locations, securing the front porch and backyard. Although my students had enjoyed the closeness of teaching all together in the house the last week, I was thrilled to spread out again.

The Teen Group

The teen group grew once again at art club. Another young man, named Kamil, near Roy's age appeared on the front porch at the start of our work. He is in 6th grade at a local Waterloo middle school. He spent a little time working on the title piece for our collaborative piece, but mostly just seemed content just watching the hustle and bustle of all the students and children working together and the conversations that surfaced throughout the hour we worked. His sign he created for the mural showed little knowledge and interest in art; he quickly wrote the title in chalk and did not properly space out the words. His painting showed no connection to the group's theme or color choices. I wasn't able to witness the creation of the sign, but in order for it to be hung up, it is going to need to be painted with more effort on craftsmanship. My hope is that Roy and Kamil will find a friendship while staying at the House of Hope together.

I watched the teen group seem to really focus this week and get quite a bit completed on their collaborative piece. The engagement level seems to get higher each week. My students spread out and sat next to a teen to get to know them better and to

answer any questions they had during the process. During a discussion on fashion and hair, one middle school teen shared how she dyed her hair with Kool-Aid, and the conversation took off from there.

Here is a journal entry from Heidi that discusses the growing relationship she felt with the teen group in the few weeks together:

> Both Bethany and Chloe talked a lot with me today. I wonder if it was because our group was kind of split up into two groups. We are on the porch and the others were working on the sidewalk. I actually like the idea of splitting into a group, it felt more personal because I could just focus on a few kids to get to know and paint with. I would ask questions and we had conversation going for most of the time and we all laughed. I think it was the most I have ever heard of those two girls talk. Now I want to try and get to know Kamil better because he was quiet but he worked on his sign and seemed engaged with the actual project. Looking back on it, I really wish I did more with him today, but I didn't want to overwhelm him since he just moved in yesterday.
>
> All of the students seemed engaged with the art project and their own tree. Bethany was splattering paint and finger painting. Chloe was taking a little bit more time but she was constantly painting and talking with us. They are all turning out wonderful and they look really beautiful. Bethany and I talked a lot when we were cleaning up trays. I asked her if she learned that splattering technique in her art class, to which she said yes and we talked about art for a while, which I encouraged her to stick with it throughout high

> school. We also had a moment together today because it turns out we are both in love with Hello Kitty. She was so different than that quiet girl I first met. Chloe and I had some good conversations outside, and she wants to be a family/marriage counselor. I feel like we have come a long way in just four weeks.

It was heartening to see that teachers in training were seeing such insight into the children's dreams. Shelly, in an interview, shared a moment she had discussing future plans with one of the teens, Avery, who is close to graduating. She said, "[t]hese girls are so strong, no poor me!" She described an image of Avery who told her she wanted to go to UCLA to be a lawyer: "[s]he didn't even have to be pushed, I'm not even sure I would move to California now as a senior in college!"

The connections that preservice teachers Heidi and Shelly shared in their journals and interviews demonstrate that this experience has opened their eyes to seeing the teens in a new light. They are developing an understanding that sympathy is not wanted, but instead, a listening ear or hand for support is needed. The children living at the House of Hope have the same goals as other children, which came to a surprise to some of my students because of the large obstacles that they face.

<u>The Elementary Group</u>

The elementary group decided they wanted to glaze their clay on the back porch and have the kids sitting on chairs. Insightful in their thoughts, they shared that they believed the students would work longer if they were comfortable sitting down to paint the glaze on their two clay pieces. We worked hard but managed to find just

enough seats for them to sit around my folding table to glaze their masterpieces. I noticed a difference immediately and agreed with their good planning. The group stayed focused longer and seemed much more concerned about the quality of their craftsmanship in comparison to last week sitting on the kitchen floor. I believe that the students saw the children needed an appropriate working environment to reach the glazes and get the right amount of detail through the sharing of colors and brush sizes. This group stayed focused and worked rather quietly. Brandon, one of the oldest children in the group, and his thorough knowledge of glaze and how it transforms in kiln impressed me. His art teacher would be so proud.

I felt that there was an ease of comfortableness on the front porch, that by sitting by the older group of teens and seeing them focused on their collaborative mural, they were not distracted by younger siblings or playground equipment. The conversation seemed light because the children seemed more focused than usual. Megan impressed me most. She was so frustrated with the directions to not paint the bottom of her lid or pot because the glaze would stick to the kiln and destroy their projects. I gave her an alternative solution that we would put her lid on triangular stilts to keep it from sticking, but she could not glaze the bottom of her pot. She agreed with me without putting up a fight. At times, I feel like she argues to push to see how far she can get my students to bend. They seem instead to try to stick so close to the lesson plan that they can't see that when they compromise, it can lead to a happy child and a successful project. I want them to come up with solutions, but I feel like the children in this group are pushing their buttons and a friction is growing.

I made sure to try and accommodate her requests since she had struggled so at the end of the last art club when the moms were all out to dinner. I tried to show her and my students that we make these accommodations to help Megan stay positive and enjoy her time with us while also honoring her vision for her artwork. As teachers, they need to see the red flags going up for the need to differentiate their lessons. In Megan's case, by simply adjusting how the clay was fired, everyone was satisfied.

The Young Children Group

This group read a book by Jamie Lee Curtis called "I Feel Silly Today," and it shows how a little girl feels a variety of feelings each day of the week. One student asked them at the end of the book how they were feeling today and they answered happy and silly and glad that we were there. It was a wonderful moment to witness, and my students beamed with pride as they climbed down the wooden playground fort where they had been reading and started working on the project of creating a puppet theatre.

As they finished painting a large box cut to become a puppet theatre, I saw Mitchell arrive with his mom. Art club was almost over, and he had not been able to join the group since the first week, but we decided that didn't matter. Each week the students hoped he would be there. I explained that we were making puppets and asked if he wanted to join us to start one of his own in the backyard, and without much hesitation or approval from his mother, he tore off around the fence to the back play area. I chased after him, knowing the group had just finished painting the box and were planning to start puppet making. I wanted them to include Mitchell in whatever they could so he would feel part of the group again. As I chased him, I saw Mitchell run

straight for the painted box. He promptly sat right down on one side of the box just as I took his arm and lifted him up. The box didn't smash, and Mitchell didn't tumble to the ground, as I imagined, but his bottom was covered with wet, black, acrylic paint. I whisked him away to look for a wet rag and to notify his mom of the situation. We scrubbed his bottom with a dishcloth and then sent him back to make puppets.

Week 5

One family was sick, so both daughters didn't come to art club. One had the flu, while the other daughter, a teenager, had injured her knee after school at sporting practice. Everyone else was present today with a surprise of another little boy. Kadin arrived today to join the last two weeks of art club. Kadin, who was four years old, appeared in front of the big turquoise house after being pulled by his brother Kamil.

<u>The Teen Group</u>

At the beginning of art club, the mother with two sick daughters walked by to attend her evening meeting with staff while we worked with the kids. I stopped her briefly and asked if her oldest daughter, Avery, could work on her collaborative piece upstairs this afternoon while letting her injured knee rest. I told her how we were working on a group project to be displayed at next week's open house. She agreed and sent supplies up with her, but unfortunately at the end of art club, nothing ever came back down. This was disappointing for me and for my students because this was the last day and we were supposed to hang it up for the Open House on Thursday. The collaborative piece seems to worsen with each week. I have tried to provide suggestions to make the piece strong and cohesive while still allowing my students to lead with their ideas. As the project wrapped up today, there was not a great deal of

evidence in this collaborative work. My students cared too much about providing the teens with this open-ended experience of art making that their lesson seemed to become superficial and impersonal. They walked gingerly around the teens, afraid to extract anything from them that might be personal or, in this case, interesting to create this work of art. In the end, the teens had too much freedom to add all kinds of materials with no limit, thereby causing the canvases to mirror Las Vegas more than the large collaborative tree they had intended to make.

As I picked them up today, I saw glitter, gems, curled ribbon, googly eyes, and other cheap looking glued on "bling." The original intention of the lesson derived its inspiration from Gustav Klimt's Tree of Life mural, with the symbolic imagery and golden mosaic pattern, but this did not end up that way. My suggestion of having a black outline for the tree and filling it in with pictures and scraps from their daily life was ignored. It seemed, with each passing week, they moved further away from the intent to become a more fun and crafty project.

From this, I saw several reasons why this occurred. First, the students wanted so much for the teens to have a positive experience making art together. They focused on trying to make connections, and at times, were disingenuous in their feedback, lacking the critical eye that an art teacher provides in order to push the students into creating their best work. Each week, the teens may have become less interested in the project as it became watered down, and to combat this, the preservice teachers continued to lighten the structure and intention of the lesson.

Heidi writes in her reflective paper at the end of the semester about her fears and her behaviors working with the teens at the house:

> During art club, I was very concerned about saying the wrong thing around the teens. I think what I've gotten most from this experience is that I should just be myself around the students. Without sounding heartless, they should not be treated different from other students. I know there may be certain circumstances, mostly individual [situations] that can change this. I think I grew more comfortable each week working with the teens.

Erica shared her thoughts on her group's instructional planning of how to teach painting:

> While painting their trees, we all encouraged the teens to add more detail and texture rather than just painting their tree a flat color. For the most part, they really needed more instruction on color mixing. They all ended up with huge gobs of colors rather than just as much as they needed. We could have provided more examples to help them see what we meant by texture, I guess. It's hard to say what they already know how to do. We had assumed that they knew how to mix colors and stuff, and we should have added more to that instruction piece.

Both examples show their fears of saying something wrong or assuming they don't know how to do something based on their situation of being homeless. In ways, I felt at times that the preservice teachers were too cognizant of this and it interfered with their ability to effectively teach. Taylor and Wasickso (2000) defined an effective teacher as someone who provides students with freedom but holds students accountable; to be effective, a teacher must be empathetic and work to meet the individual needs of the student yet still be in control. My students seemed

aware of what the students were going through by spending time in the girls apartment, working closely at the house together, and seeing the donation room they depended on, but they had difficulty then transferring this compassion into productive art making.

The Elementary Group

As for the elementary group, upon arrival and setup, my students called me over to discuss a problem they were having in how to deliver today's lesson. The 4 students began telling me almost all at once that they had different ideas for how to alter the black and white photos we took with the children's faces painted. One by one, I had them each share their vision of today's lesson with me. We shared our lessons in class last week, but over the weekend as they each worked to revise and prepare, the lesson diverged from one another's. Each one seemed fine, like a spin-off of the idea of altering self- portraits with mixed media. I provided them with a suggestion on how they could each demo an idea for the students through their examples and allow the children to explore the materials and chose how they wanted to alter their own portrait. Once again, I wished their lesson was more explicit, but I tried to leave it open to allow flexibility due to the transient nature of the children at the House of Hope, the personal issues that could arise, the lack of space, and the unpredictability of the weather. Most importantly, I wanted to be flexible to allow the children's personal interests to be integrated into the lessons.

Jackie wrote about this lesson in her journal:

> Today went.... interestingly. Their projects definitely didn't turn out the way I was imagining, and yet that is completely okay. Especially considering we all

had slightly different ideas of how we wanted them to turn out. That was particularly frustrating, not knowing what we were going for. I'm pretty sure the kids in the group had different ideas than we did and that was ok. Given that, I'm actually really glad the kids took it in their own direction. One of my favorite moments today was Jax starting to work, slowly at first, then quickly becoming intensely engaged. At first, it was looking like he wasn't going to do anything again today. Libby was trying to help him to brainstorm, but like usual, he didn't like any of the ideas suggested. He sat and watched the other kids for a bit, and just as Libby was about to suggest something else, he slowly grabbed an oil pastel, contemplated for a bit, and began to work in full force. I was so happy that he started, and not only that, he did something different than what was suggested.

In this situation, it seemed to pay off to leave the project more open-ended. The guidelines for Jax were clear, take the black and white portrait that was printed out for him from last week and alter it with colored paper, watercolor paint, or pastels. The mix of the preprinted portrait and the freedom to alter it using the materials and theme of the children's choice created a healthy balance for creating art. Jax, who almost always stumped the teachers in training, engaged in this with intensity.

<u>The Young Children Group</u>

The youngest group had Malachi arrive right on time today, and he enthusiastically agreed to make a puppet with a new young man, Kadin. They worked together to create sock puppets, hot gluing, coloring with markers, and trying them on

in between to make sure the decorations were correctly placed. They loved the puppets, snuggling the socks in their arms, hugging and kissing them, breathing life and personality into them. The children took their puppets out to the gazebo where they introduced them to the toddlers who were playing with the babysitters on the playground.

I noticed that the children, upon completing the puppet performance for the most part, discarded their puppets carelessly onto the ground and ran to play for the last ten minutes of art club. My students were obviously surprised and hurt by this disregard for something they had just made and seemed to love. As we cleaned up that day, I asked them how this made them feel. Our discussion led to the idea that they thought the children would cherish the puppets since they owned so few belongings.

As our conversation continued as we packed up my station wagon with supplies to head back to school, I talked to them about the possible impermanence of the children's lives due to their age and how they many have lost their possessions or had them sold or left behind, that their understanding of possessions is much more fluid than someone who has had a more stable home. My students seemed hurt by the lack of care the children showed for the puppets they worked so hard on dying, sewing, gluing, and drawing on. It was another layer of poverty that deepened the preservice teachers' understanding of what homeless children may experience and how it may affect the children's values.

Maxine Greene (1995) wrote, "[t]o tap into the imagination is to be able to break what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real. It is to see beyond what the imaginer has called "normal" or "common-sensible" and to

carve out new orders of experience" (p.19). Through this conversation and many others we had during class and through our electronic journals, my students were able to see that the instability caused from poverty and homelessness can lead to a lack of care or appreciation for personal possessions.

Greene describes the importance of participation in an experience by saying, "[a]t the very least, participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to see more in experience, to hear more in normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed" (p. 123). Teaching the children through art allowed them the opportunity to step away from the daily struggles of homelessness and the stresses in their tight living quarters. They had an opportunity to imagine new possibilities through their art making.

Week 6: Our Last Session

Today was our last day at the House of Hope; everyone is excited to have a small Halloween party. We arrived in costume with small treats and activities for all ages to participate together in the back yard. My students wanted to have this party because many were concerned that the children wouldn't be trick or treating the next night due to moms working or lack of a costume or the fact that there aren't a great deal of safe places to trick or treat near the house.

The party was a great success. The teens painted miniature pumpkins with expressive faces while the middle group learned to make mini-piñatas by cutting tissue paper into fringed strips and using colored paper to create spooky characters. The youngest group wrapped Kleenex around suckers to create little ghosts and used

markers to decorate mini pumpkins. We ended the day by heading to the back yard to break open a handmade bat piñata by my students. We lined up smallest to tallest and almost everyone got a chance. Kadin cracked the spooky bat open, and everyone ran digging through the crunchy leaves to retrieve the goodies.

We ate candy, cupcakes, cookies, and popcorn before packing up and saying goodbye. I made a little announcement about our time together, but it was chaotic with everyone in costume and eating sugary snacks. Some kids lingered and didn't want to say goodbye, while others ran off to find their moms to show off their treats. It was a bittersweet ending. Some kids hugged us, and a few seemed surprised we were ending, even though we had been telling them for the last two weeks about the party being our last day together. It was wonderful to see everyone together on the back playground.

I feel a sense of sadness and relief at the same time. It was six weeks of meaningful time working with the children. It was also stressful, worrying about the weather, which children would be present, and how the dynamics of the space would work with the projects we planned. The time with the children was extremely rewarding and heartening. I enjoyed watching my students provide enriching experiences for the children and work closely with them, becoming more comfortable at the house, and altering their beliefs about what homelessness looks like. As this experience came to a close, I realized that our time at the House of Hope was only the prologue to their as-yet unwritten career.

Maxine Greene wrote:

> As teachers, we cannot predict the common world that may be in the making; nor can we finally justify one kind of community more than another. We can

> bring warmth into places where young persons come together, however, we can bring in the dialogues and laughter that threaten monologues and rigidity. And surely we can affirm and reaffirm the principles that center around belief in justice and freedom and respect for human rights, since without these, we cannot even call for the decency of welcoming and inclusion for everyone, know matter how at risk. Only if more and more persons in their coming together learn to incarnate such principles and choose to live and speak in accord with them, are we likely to bring a community into being. All we can do is to speak with others as passionately and eloquently as we can; all we can do is to look into each other's eyes and urge each other on to new beginnings. Our classrooms ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once; they ought to pulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive. They ought to resound with the voices of articulate young people in dialogues always incomplete because there is always more to be discovered and more to be said. We must want our students to achieve friendship as each one stirs to wideawakeness, to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility (p. 43).

It is these words that resonate in my mission to awaken my students' imaginations toward a new sense of understanding of marginalized children who are experiencing extreme poverty and homelessness. My students saw the effects of warmth, compassion, and the sense of possibility through the House of Hope. This experience pushed them to question their beliefs about what it means to be a teacher in our diverse schools and to consider how it feels to be without even the most basic needs.

Looking Back on the Experience

For we are all inside
made up of real history,
real dreams,
and the
stuff of all
we hope for
when we
can be
all real
together
on the
inside. bell hooks (2004)

Teaching a civic engagement course with preservice teachers provided an opportunity for students to work with a diverse group of children within an authentic setting. I also found that my own eyes were opened to the critical issues that children who are homeless must deal with on a regular basis. At times, my students and I were disheartened by the lack of consistent attendance from the children and the chaos of families coming and going. My students often took their absences personally, thinking the children must not be enjoying their art club experience if they didn't come back the next week. My role became one of promoting and trying to maintain attendance at times, while also helping my students see reasons why a child may not be present. Issues of childcare, visits to their fathers, doctor appointments, and unexpected events caused some of these absences.

The Impact of Civic Engagement

Overall, the preservice teachers developed new understandings of what it means to be impoverished and homeless, while gaining experience teaching in a diverse setting. They learned first-hand what it was like to live without technology, to have to find their basic necessities from a room full of donated items, and what it was like to experience a neighborhood unlike the one they grew up in. This experience allowed me to step back at times and watch my students struggle a bit while navigating new strategies to work with children who are dealing with substantial social issues such as inequity and economic hardship. I believe my students grew to understand the importance of this experience and saw the value of stepping out of their comfort zone to work with these children.

My students reflected on their entire experience and what affects it had on them as future teachers. It became clear through this civic engagement course that working with the children at the House of Hope not only affected them as teachers but also awakened them to inequities in our community and around the world. Evelyn wrote about how this experience not only caused her to reflect on her teaching but also to modify her actions as a human being. She describes how this experience helped her push past insecurities of the unknown and enabled her to look at differences as something to embrace rather than to fear:

> The most meaningful part of my experience at the House of Hope is something that I think about a lot. I guess I'm throwing this ball around all the time and that's the appreciation for everyone's life and their struggles. I'm grateful for what I have and it puts things in my life into perspective." When I did my first field experience, I picked students I was comfortable with to talk to and focus on. I guess I picked favorites, ones I could relate to or were most like me. I had a fear of the unknown or how to work with different types of kids. Now everyone is on the same level. I realize now that I don't know where everyone comes from or their story and I'm much more sensitive to that.
>
> This class [experience at the House of Hope] definitely helped me with not only being a teacher, but just as a person. I kind of feel like as teachers you need to start with you as a person and you first need to be solid so you can better focus on the needs of your students. Reflect first on you and your values to help you better understand others.

Evelyn's experience echoes the sentiments of many other students in this study. Civic engagement provided students with a chance to reflect on their values, but this is only one of many experiences that they will encounter in their professional lives. This realization is the tip of the iceberg for preservice teachers as they begin their careers. This experience is an example of how much preservice teachers must still uncover as they set out to begin their careers in this increasingly diverse world in which we live.

This was a new experience for me to step outside of the walls of the university. I took a risk, not only in asking my students to drive each week to the House of Hope, but also to work at transitional housing program with families I did not know myself. Obstacles such as bed bugs, theft, vandalism, and drug use have come up since my time volunteering at the house began, and these are things that cannot be taken lightly as I consider whether or not to continue bringing my classes to the house.

After completing our after school club, I became a member of the board of directors of the House of Hope. My commitment has remained strong, and I plan to become board president in the near future. It is vital to support organizations such as this program in order to maintain strong civic partnerships, to continue to help children in need, and to strengthen university ties to the outside community.

The Children at the House of Hope

The children at the House of Hope were not always easy to love. They often demonstrated behaviors that challenged my students and my own strategies for teaching art. The younger children were needy, loved affection, and always wanted

more time and materials than we could give in a single session. They were hungry for attention because their mothers were in educational sessions while we worked with them. After long days of school and daycare, the little children wanted to run free and relax. We helped them to take their minds off the struggles of being homeless and the close quarters of their living situations. My students provided them with structure to stay focused while praising their good choices and hard work.

The older children were quiet and rather reserved with respect to letting us into their lives. Many of the teens enjoyed discussing everyday things like fashion, school, and what college life was like. It was hard to know if they remained quiet because they were embarrassed that we knew they were homeless or if it was relief that we knew and they didn't have to explain their situation or make up excuses. The teens all held a great deal of responsibility, and many worked and took care of siblings. A few were involved in afterschool activities, but many ran the household while Mom was working. I believe that our time together was beneficial to them because it provided a time for them to get to know other teens in the program and offered a free afternoon from caring for many younger siblings.

At times, there was clear disinterest, as evidenced by the teens' refusal to participate. This was difficult for my students to understand. The teachers in training seemed hurt that sometimes the teens weren't as excited as they were about making art together. I reminded them that not everyone enjoys art as they grow older and that this after-school program we were offering was an alternative to having babysitters for the children while their moms attended class. As teenagers,

they had to find this frustrating at times. I felt they enjoyed making art with college students rather than being supervised by "babysitters." When the program came to an end, many of the teens asked if we would return again in the spring, and the younger children begged us to stay and a few even had tears in their eyes.

Our time together was short, but I know that we left an impact. We allowed the children to be carefree and leave their troubles behind for a few hours a week. We showered them with art materials and praised them as genuinely as we could about their work and ideas. We tried to model ways to handle frustration and to demonstrate that art was the perfect tool for expressing anything that they had on their minds. We listened to each child, showed interest in what they had to say, and allowed them to make what they wanted to make. Each week, we designed lessons based on what they shared with us. My students and I tried to model that adults care for them as people and value their ideas.

I am unsure of the impact we left upon the children, but as I returned this summer to hold an art and literacy reading program on Tuesday nights, I saw many familiar faces. I was happy to know that many of the families were working hard and following the house rules in order to stay and successfully graduate from the program, but I was sad to see that the children were not yet in permanent housing. They all were glad to see me return, and many stayed in the literacy program due to the fact that they knew we would make fun art projects to go with the reading. I smiled as I pulled up each week to the big turquoise house, as several of the children yelled, "The art lady is here again!" I know that creating art is making a positive impact on their day.

Changes for the Future

As I reflect back on this experience, there are several components from this course that I would alter in order to create a more organized teaching situation for both groups involved and to foster in my preservice teachers an even greater understanding of the House of Hope children's adverse living conditions.

I went into this course knowing that this was the organization that I wanted to work with because I believed in the program, knew that the need in our community was strong, and was confident as a new mother that the focus on women and children was important. However, I was hesitant because of the lack of working space to actually teach children. I spent many hours thinking of ways to make better use of the house, to find a solution to the lack of space for families to eat and socialize together, to allow community members to work with families, and to create a place where everyone could come together.

The difficulty of creating art without tables was challenging. We had one table on the porch, and I purchased two small card tables to be stored there for our use. It was hard to find a reliable place to work due to the weather changing from week to week. Having a consistent place to work would have helped the students become more confident in their lesson planning and provided more stability for the children.

I am happy to say that, as I complete this study, a community room has been designated and remodeled for meetings, counseling sessions, and outreach programs such as my art club. This space will allow for more opportunities for community involvement at the House of Hope and continued growth among partnerships such as mine that are already in place. Having a room to teach art club

in will ultimately cut down on the disorganization that we often experienced and eliminate the need to fight the ongoing battle with unpredictable Iowa weather that we faced when we had to work outside.

Secondly, I thought much about my students' understanding of the ethic of care and the role the female is traditionally expected to play in terms of caring and teaching. As we discussed the importance of caring in the context of the works of Nell Noddings and Sarah Ruddick, I felt I should have spent more time discussing the importance of caring in both the public and private sectors. Caring should be modeled and not be considered gender-specific. In my future teaching, I feel it is vital to frontload my course with more discussion of the ethic of care, how this can impact children and their success in school, and how it can help my preservice teachers as they develop strategies for teaching all types of students.

Lastly, I pre-planned all of my journal prompts and carefully laid them out in my weekly syllabus to ensure that students could stay on top of all assignments during our busy semester out in the community teaching. However, I found that by prescribing all of the journal prompts, I did not always like what I had originally written and longed for more flexibility. Sometimes, situations would arise at the house and my students would want to discuss the issue at hand over the scheduled journal assignment. Other times, the prompts felt redundant or disconnected. I spent too much time adjusting journals or emailing my students to let them know that the prompt needed to change, which caused several mix-ups and confusing journal entries. I ultimately felt that journaling made a large impact on my students, whether they enjoyed it or not, but I will develop future prompts as the course

unfolds to make sure they are authentic and more directly related to our experiences.

CHAPTER V: A LARGER PERSPECTIVE

Addressing My Research Questions

As I reflect back on my research questions in order to synthesize my research findings, I find it crucial to consider the dispositions of preservice teachers as they began the teacher education program. I began this study by asking, "What dispositions do students bring into the teacher education program as they enter the field of study? How do these dispositions affect teachers in training as they begin their careers?"

I found that preservice teachers who participated in this study developed attitudes towards diverse students based on their own experiences as school-aged children. They have also been deeply influenced by the media around them. It is widely known that most preservice teachers are White, middle class females (Sleeter, 2001; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008) whose experiences are often vastly different from the growing population of economically and culturally diverse students they will serve in their teaching careers. Goldstein and Lake (2000) studied preservice teachers and found that they bring essentialism, idealism, and oversimplification to their teacher education programs. I view these three beginning dispositions as harmful to the children they serve because they prevent preservice teachers from fully valuing the cultural differences between themselves and their students. Through my study, I saw signs of essentialism, idealism, and oversimplification throughout conversations with my students and in their electronic journals. In my data collection, I coded nine journal and reflective

paper entries that represent aspects of essentialism, idealism, and oversimplification.

My students' experience teaching at the House of Hope helped demystify the belief that simply working with the children at the transitional housing program as caring and loving teachers would automatically transform the lives of these children. They witnessed first-hand that children needed community, school, and family support to succeed. The preservice teachers observed how the families shared a kitchen and relied on donations from the community for clothes and furniture for their small apartments. They learned what it was like to live without a television and the internet and the effects their difficult lives had on their schoolwork. After touring the neighborhood, the preservice teachers better understood how difficult it could be for students to attend school, get to the grocery store, and access public transportation.

All of these new experiences opened the eyes of participating preservice teachers and helped them shift their understandings from fear or ignorance about homelessness to empathy. Many of these teachers in training hoped they could use this experience to help their future students feel safe and welcomed in their classroom. The preservice students also aspired to be empathetic to their students' situations and to be able to model acceptance and help all students reach success. The real-world experience that my students encountered while teaching at the House of Hope helped them start questioning some of their beliefs about teaching and face some of the realities that their students face.

Throughout this study, I saw extensive growth in my students' understanding of homelessness and the effects of it upon children. They began this course with preconceived notions that the majority of homeless people are male, dirty, mentally unstable city dwellers sitting on corners begging people for spare change. They were unaware of the reasons why people become homeless, of who is considered homeless, and of how damaging this situation can be for children. In my data coding, I found eighteen examples of students discussing their beliefs of homelessness. In seven of the eighteen entries, the students preliminarily described people who are homeless as a dirty, poor, and urban. The next eleven entries showed growth in terms of understanding what it means to be homeless and acknowledgment of how their beliefs were changing from this experience.

As we worked at the House of Hope this semester, I saw and read signs that my students' understanding of what homelessness means had begun to evolve. They began to develop ways to support these children during art club and in their future classrooms. This experience represents only the beginning of the preservice teachers' journey to understanding the immense diversity that students bring to schools each day. I felt, as this study unfolded, that the evidence from my students' actions, journals, and interviews demonstrated that their beliefs turned not to unproductive sympathy but rather to empathy that would enable these future teachers to become more accepting of all types of children in their classroom.

Strong commitment to social justice and the desire to gain the power to provide an equal education for every student in a classroom showed through in our class discussions and their journals. My students shared that their experience at the

House of Hope seemed authentic and personal and allowed them to more intimately understand the situations of students with whom they worked. During my research, I found sixteen examples of students discussing their increased empathy and understanding of children experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty. These examples reinforced my belief that this experience was transformational.

I cannot say that civic engagement will create better teachers, but I believe that it has created a group of more caring teachers who will be more empathetic to children's needs and the diverse economic and cultural differences in their classroom. This may lead to stronger and more effective instruction, but this is only one of their many field experiences. Students need a variety of experiences in order to gain confidence and a greater understanding of all of the challenges involved in the art of teaching.

Through the course of this semester, I required my students to journal weekly, write reflective papers, discuss their thoughts and experiences in small and large groups, and participate in activities that were specifically related to our studies in art education, issues of homelessness, and working with diverse student populations. After examining the reflections of nine of the eleven students who participated in this study, along with my own field notes, I found that students overall did not enjoy writing reflective journals and papers but instead enjoyed reflective activities such as reading children's books and crafting art related to the topic being discussed. Seven of the nine students shared that the reflection exercises felt forced or prescribed at times but, after reviewing journals, I noted that students who diligently journaled had deeper, more productive insights into the experience.

The students who completed each weekly prompt shared more detailed and insightful understandings than students who did not consistently journal. This could mean that diligently journaling students did internalize more from this course due to reflective exercises such as journaling or it could simply be that because they enjoyed writing, they completed more thorough journal assignments. Either way, the majority of students demonstrated substantial growth in their understanding of homelessness through their reflective assignments.

One example of the impact that journaling had on my students came from Libby. She wrote in her final reflective paper that forcing her to reflect is what helped her to actually make sense of the experience:

> I thought I was going to barf if I had to write one more journal entry about the House of Hope at the end of this semester. The process of writing and reflecting on my experiences each week forced me to internalize what I was learning. It also gave me a chance to keep track of everything I was experiencing. I had to relive it and think what really made me apply it [what I learned] is that I had to put it into words. I mean so many times when I live an experience when I think about it, it's a just like this blur- and having been forced to relive it made it clearer and deeper and gave it real meaning.

Evelyn shared the connection she found between journaling in our methods class and a course in the College of Education she was also enrolled in during the same semester. She found journaling to be a reflective tool because it became a way of organizing her thoughts and, more importantly, journaling allowed her to comprehend the impact of homelessness on a larger level:

> In my Classroom Contexts class, we have been talking about how it is nearly impossible to learn information without a way to organize it. That is what journaling did for me within this experience, it provided a way for me to organize and store information. I've found that the older I get the more confusing and jumbled the events of my life get. It gets to the point where I don't even think about why I am doing something; I just do it because it needs to be done. Journaling didn't allow that to happen. It kept the experiences fresh in my mind. I found many of my experiences trickling into what I was thinking about or discussing in other classes. Even during a casual Sunday dinner with T.J., it is always popping up in conversation. The disconnect that I had with the homeless population is gone and I now connect it to almost everything I experience, it reminds me of how much I love my major. My art education classes provide so much more than just how to be a good art teacher; it teaches students how to be sensitive, understanding, and thoughtful people in society.

Evelyn described that journaling became of way of organizing and reflecting on her experiences at the house in order to help her make deeper connections to other experiences in her life, thus creating deeper meaning.

Unexpected Themes

While compiling my data for this study, some unexpected themes, such as volunteerism, authentic forms of praise, and facing the digital divide, arose in my study. These themes developed as preservice teachers began to work with the

children at the transitional housing center and as they started to explore different perspectives of teaching homeless children.

Volunteerism

Preservice teachers shared five journal entries that described being questioned about the college students' role at the house. During the time together, several boys began to ask the teachers in training why they wanted to come to the house and work with the children. It became evident that many of these children had experienced a revolving door of volunteers and people assigned to do community service with them in the past and had negative feelings that people assigned to work with the children were be required to do so, and in that case the relationship was not lasting or real.

One of the difficulties of working with community groups is the closure of a project, especially when a relationship has developed. The strength behind civic engagement projects is the building of a strong and continuous relationship with the community partner. Working together over time, the two groups can develop a lasting and trusting connection where both parties learn from each other. My partnership with the House of Hope has continued through my role of the Board of Directors, and I have continued to involve my art education students by inviting them to help with Christmas parties and summer reading programs. Although it is not perfect, my continuation with the House of Hope has deepened my relationship with the staff and residents, and I am now able to make more meaningful contributions and add more university support when the organization is in need.

Authentic Forms of Praise

Another unexpected theme that I discovered in my analysis was the discussion of praising the children. Preserivce teachers, Jackie, Evelyn, and Melanie shared a discussion involving the authenticity of praise towards students. Jackie felt that the kids she worked with did not appreciate the numerous times the teachers in training complemented them and their artwork. Using what she phrased as, "the generic good job," her discussion of disingenuous praise stemmed from a little boy who asked her if she was paid to use that phrase. This reminded Jackie that although it was important to be supportive, being genuine and taking the time to really talk to children as individuals also makes meaningful personal connections.

Conversely, Melanie and Evelyn shared how the group of children seemed to burst with pride with every bit of praise that they shed upon their group of children. Melanie wrote about how important it was to point out all the positive behaviors with her children with warm praises like "good job" and "very impressive." It seemed that Evelyn and Melanie's group, who were a few years younger, enjoyed the attention and praise from the preservice teachers and were motivated to continue their positive behaviors because of this. Jackie's group consisted of mainly boys in upper elementary school who seemed much more critical of my students' role and motive for working with them. Jackie seemed empathetic to their criticisms of the group, saying that it would also make her uncomfortable having people coming and going and not really knowing if they were being genuine or simply being paid to be here, as one of the students had suggested.

Digital Divide

Throughout this experience, the teachers in training came back to the fact that the children at the House of Hope did not fit their stereotypical image of homelessness. Many stated that they dressed as well or even better than the college students. One student commented that she was surprised at first that the girls "did their hair." During the semester, this new image of what homelessness looked like changed. Students began to see the children as typical people who were struggling with permanent housing and the lack of funds to live independently. As their reflections deepened past the physical traits of the children, they began to write often about the digital divide the children were experiencing and how it must affect them academically and socially. Five different journals described their frustration that the children lacked access to technology.

Libby shared:

> One of the most frustrating things that happened at the House of Hope was hearing how difficult it was for the students to do homework. As I sit here in the comfort of my own apartment typing this paper on my personal computer, I can't help but to think of how frustrating it would be to have to type at the library. A couple girls were complaining about how the library only allows a one-hour time limit to work on their computers, unless no one else is in line. This means that if a student at the House of Hope needed to research and write a paper online, they would only have one-hour increments to complete it. If they are unfortunate and don't complete the paper within that time frame, they will have to rely on no one else needing a

computer at that time. The lack of technology access had a big influence on me. As a teacher, I hope I can remember to allow ample work time for my students when doing projects with computers or other technology.

Libby shared the realization that the children must use the public library after school to access the Internet to complete schoolwork. There were twenty-three children living at the House of Hope at the time of our study, eighteen of whom were enrolled in school and may need access to computers on a regular basis. The library is also an eight-block walk through the busy downtown Waterloo, which included walking across a large bridge spanning the river. These children were only a fraction of the patrons at the library who needed to use computers, and my students quickly realized that it would become extremely difficult to complete essays and term papers outside of school. They were also made aware of the lack of access to social media like Facebook and popular culture connections like YouTube. They quickly became advocates for laptops at the House of Hope and approached me about the situation several times. The preservice teachers worried that the teens would be too embarrassed to let their teachers know about their living situation. Our discussions led to an understanding that although each of us in this methods class own a computer, many of the students attending school in Waterloo may not have one. This is yet another example of how this experience is only the beginning of preservice teachers' awareness of economic differences.

Social Justice in Teacher Education: The Power to Create Change

Through this teaching experience at the House of Hope, preservice teachers were exposed to the injustices that children suffer from in their community and

throughout the world. My students' eyes were opened to the lack of basic needs children go without consistently, such as food, shelter, and medical care, while still being expected to attend school and meet grade-level requirements. Preservice teachers can be empowered to see these injustices and learn about ways to act upon them in order to help better the lives of the children they are teaching within the public schools.

Social justice education stems from over 30 years of multicultural education efforts. In 1978, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) required teacher education programs to include multicultural studies as part of the curriculum in order to improve education for students of color, impoverished students, and students whose first language is not English (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009): "Social justice education shifts the focus from issues of cultural diversity, making social change and activism central to the vision of teaching and learning promoted…[T]hey attempt to prepare teachers to take both individual and collective action toward mitigating oppression (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009, p. 597). While the majority of multicultural studies lessons focus on the celebration of individual differences, social justice looks more closely at societal and institutional forms of racism and oppression (Sleeter, 1996; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009).

When reviewing Banks' four approaches to multicultural education, one can see the merging of social justice in the fourth approach, which is labeled transformative and social action. In this approach, there is a push to move beyond the celebration of the individual to ignite students to take action. Instead of adding to the curriculum, the structure of the course, materials, and content must be altered

to include new perspectives and experiences from a multicultural lens (Banks, 2008; J. A., Banks, & C. A. Banks, 2007).

Creating a Catalyst for Transformative Thinking

In a study of two university education programs, Baldwin, Bachanan and Rudisill (2007) examined how service learning opportunities affect teacher candidates' understanding of diversity, social justice, and teaching ability. . Preservice teachers, mainly White, middle-class students, taught an oral history project to groups of culturally and economically diverse elementary children at one university and held a motor-skills camp at the second university (Baldwin, Bachanan & Rudisill, 2007).

Multicultural and social justice education were emphasized in order to address stereotypes and the lack of experience working with groups that differed from the teacher candidates. Reflective journals and interviews were used to enable the students to debrief and reflect on their experiences. This data demonstrated that through the participation in the service-learning opportunities, preservice teachers were able to examine their preconceived notions of these diverse children, families, and communities. The authors concluded that "[s]ervice-learning, emphasizing multiculturalism and social justice, has the potential for empowering prospective teachers to confront injustices and to begin deconstructing lifelong attitudes and constructing socially just practices" (Baldwin et. al., 2007, p. 315).

The authors (Baldwin et. al., 2007) also stated that often preservice teachers assume that the children they are teaching share the same educational and life experiences as they did growing up, causing them to teach the children in the same

way they were taught (Baldwin et. al., 2007). In reality, this false assumption pushes irrelevant content onto the children and increases the disconnect between children and their school community. Teachers need to recognize the growing diversity in schools and work to provide a more relevant and just curriculum. By providing these two groups of preservice teachers with the opportunity to be infused in a diverse cultural setting, to interact with parents and the community, and to experience what it is like to be in the minority, these scholars became more aware of the need for a relevant and just curriculum.

The Baldwin et. al.,(2007) study described the important factors that make service-learning a successful component of teacher education. Many of these factors, such as the achievement of curricular goals through community partnership, reciprocal benefits for both parties, and the importance of focusing locally on global problems (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009) were found in the parallel experience of my students who participated in the House of Hope project.

Reflection is a vital component of service learning and civic engagement. In this study, preservice teachers were asked to analyze their prior notions of teaching culturally and economically diverse children. Baldwin et. al. (2007), stated:

> Experiences in diverse settings enable teacher candidates to gain insight from children, providing the beginning of a "coming to understanding" of children who happen to live in seemingly different worlds. Through reflection, teacher candidates begin to move from accepting the school and/or society status quo to questioning it. Ultimately such questioning can lead to altered understandings and perhaps even subsequent action. Thus, service learning has the potential for being the catalyst for transforming thinking (Baldwin, et. al., 2007, p. 316).

The opportunity for preservice teachers to work in the community allows them to acknowledge and become comfortable with the diverse culture as they interact with

the many layers of the community. It brings the student out of his/her comfort zone and provides experiences that can create real-world teaching connections between the teacher and the students (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009).

By choosing to place teacher candidates in service-learning experiences versus classroom experiences, "[c]linical practica serve the purpose of socializing teacher candidates into the school setting. Teacher candidates are placed in classrooms where they have little to no opportunity to experience the community in which the school resides" (Guadarrama, 2000, as cited in McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). During school field experiences, as mentioned above, students follow the rules and teaching style of the classroom teacher, thereby making it easy to follow in the teacher's footsteps without questioning the process or reasons why certain patterns, behaviors, or procedures exist. This conformity isn't as likely to fall into place in more civic engagement-focused experiences like in the Baldwin et al. (2007) study or at the House of Hope, mainly because the children are able to voice their own ideas, interests, and have more ownership in the experiences. There is a negotiation between the community and the university to create a partnership, which allows preservice teachers to see the benefits of building relationships with parents, students, and community members (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009).

I am confident that this negotiation may transform preservice teachers. Within this experience, they have more freedom to find agency and to make choices related to their students and environment. They learn to be more nimble and flexible in their approaches to teaching. They understand that writing curricula and

the reality of teaching can be quite different experiences because expectations and reality are often quite different.

I can see evidence of this transformation in my data. While reflecting on her experience at the House of Hope, Shelly, one of the research participants wrote:

> My image of a homeless person has changed greatly now. I don't automatically see the dirty, scruffy person in my mind anymore. Homeless people can still dress in decent clothes and fix up their hair. If I had met any one of these children or mothers during a field experience, I would have no idea what these kids are going through just by looking at them. Thinking about this experience, I really got to know the teens in my group, and they all acted so strong. Some were quiet at first, but when they opened up, they were never complaining about the situation they were in. In fact, I heard all of my group members talking about the future with optimism.
>
> This experience really opened up my eyes about homelessness. I feel as if homelessness isn't talked about enough. All of this information is new to me. Probably because there is a stigma of being homeless and most adults turn their heads away, like I admit to having done. I think it is so easy for teachers and adults in general to be ignorant about homelessness. I was never taught about it growing up or in school. In some of my education classes it may have just come up like, "students can be struggling from poverty or homelessness," but I have never been taught about it or what I could do as a teacher until now. I can't even imagine what it would be like to be living in my home one day and losing everything and being in a shelter the next day, especially if my

> family had to be split up while I am already going through a hard time of losing my home. It makes me really reflect back to my high school and middle school days. While I never made fun of anyone directly to their face, I admit I judged people that showed up with poor hygiene or wearing the same old clothes day after day. It now makes me wonder if they were going through hard times and how it must have felt. I will remember this as I begin teaching in my own classroom.

Shelly's journal entry describes how she now sees a new image of homelessness, one that is personal and more authentic. She describes how her past experiences have played into her reflections, creating new meaning from this experience. Shelly used this experience to not only become a more informed teacher but also to reflect on her own childhood. The relationships that developed as a result of this project at the House of Hope encouraged Shelly to see homelessness through a new perspective that may change the way she looks at poverty and inequality in her life.

Developing Teacher Awareness of Inequities in Education

In the Baldwin et. al. (2007) study, teacher education professors provided teacher candidates with opportunities to reflect on their notion of culturally and economically diverse students and to work in authentic teaching situations to help them more fully comprehend how to teach students whose experience differ greatly from their own. Another important component of social justice is making teacher candidates aware of the inequities that surround them in education when working with children from diverse backgrounds.

According to Edith Guyton (2000), professor of Early Childhood Education at Georgia State University, there are many external factors at play in the reasons why minority students have lower achievement rates in school performance. There is poverty, crime, single-parent situations, drug and alcohol dependency, welfare, and too many others to name. These reasons are valid but are not nearly as imminent as the lack of response that schools give to neighborhoods and family conditions. She said, "[b]eing poor, being of color, or being an inner-city resident does not cause differences in educational achievement. Rather, the lack of resources put into the education of some students is a major cause of difference and social injustice- and teachers are the most important educational resource to students (Guyton, 2000, p. 109).

Here, the "lack of resources" includes the ways in which teachers are not properly trained to teach minority students or inner-city children. She writes, "[m]any teacher educators have heard themselves or their colleagues admit that the teachers they produce are fine for middle class and suburban schools but are not well prepared for schools serving large numbers of minority and/or poor students" (Guyton, 2000, p. 110). She goes on to say, "[i]f we freely admit that we are not preparing teachers who can teach all children, then we willingly participate in a system that takes away the right to learn from some children" (p. 110).

Guyton believes we can improve our teacher education programs through the development of partnerships with diverse schools, the intentional hiring of faculty that can model the teaching of *all* children, and the creation of an atmosphere where democratic teaching is modeled within the classroom. She believes that through

these measures school inequities can be altered: “Just as schools must be places where practicing teachers live the democratic process, teacher education programs also must be places where democracy is modeled and explored” (Rolheiser & Glickman, 1995, as cited in Guyton, 2000, p. 111).

My of my students shared numerous new understandings from this experience that demonstrate their enhanced potential as future teachers. Here is one example from Libby, who describes in her journal her new awareness of homelessness and how it will alter her curriculum:

> When planning my curriculum, I hope to be more accommodating towards all of my students by avoiding things that may “out” them to their classmates by revealing their housing situation. This to me means not only avoiding the “draw your house” activities, but also educating my students on homelessness- its causes and how widespread it is. Instead of simply tiptoeing around the subject, I hope to create an atmosphere of acceptance and community for my students that will allow students to be open and tolerant towards differences in class, race, and culture.

Even as Libby describes how she plans to educate her students about homelessness, she is careful to mention that she will not intentionally draw attention to any child’s home situation. Her entry illustrates her newfound awareness that homelessness and poverty can be difficult to detect and that fact that the obvious stereotypes of what that might look like are unfounded. She shares that through her lesson planning, she will be considerate of all students’ differences and help them embrace differences as well.

Heidi described ways to bring the awareness of homelessness into her classroom through art lessons connected to current events:

> Art teachers have an advantage connecting with students because it is so emotional. We are able to talk about issues like homelessness or hunger and then create artwork based on the issue and our discussion. Everyone will have their own story to express, their own view on the subject and share what they value. The recent Hurricane Sandy would be an excellent tie in to homelessness, because no one chooses to lose his or her home.

Heidi's ability to see that art making can be the vehicle to discuss difficult but important topics in the classroom led her to see how she could incorporate Hurricane Sandy into her art lesson. Students can relate to homelessness through a connection to natural disasters such as flooding and tornadoes in Iowa. Although these are small steps towards social justice, they can make a significant difference to our students and can be complemented by other lessons that further reinforce this issue.

Jackie shared a new understanding of the importance of providing classroom materials to students. She grew up bringing specific art supplies to class in order to complete a project. After seeing the students at the House of Hope and their lack of funding for cable or basic household necessities, she vowed to provide the necessary materials to students in her future classes:

> The school I grew up in required that we provide most of our own art supplies, except a few of the big things, like paint, paper, oil pastels, etc, so I wasn't even aware that there were school districts where all art supplies

> were provided. Freshman year, I did my first field experience in Waterloo at an elementary school where all the supplies were provided. This surprised me, but the more I've learned over the past few years it makes a lot of sense. I feel like providing supplies is at least one small thing I can do to help my students. They have enough on their mind; they shouldn't have to worry about money to buy supplies, not to mention how embarrassing it would be to not be able to bring in the required supplies.

Jackie saw the importance of not drawing attention or embarrassment to the students who may not be able to afford art supplies or have access to getting to a store that sells those particular supplies. This experience at the House of Hope, which afforded her the intimacy of working alongside students whose family income differed dramatically from the students she worked with as a freshman, helped Jackie see why asking students to provide their own materials was an excessive request in some schools. Just as McDonald & Zeichner, (2009) pointed out, the conformity of the classroom field experience made it easy for Jackie to not question why supplies are provided at certain schools and not others. This is another example of the learning my students received from teaching at the House of Hope.

As school reform continues to be a heated concern for educators, teacher education programs must continue to look for ways to better prepare teacher candidates for the growing diversity in our schools. The shift must work toward a more socially just curriculum that invites teachers to not only experience diverse teaching experiences but also to see the inequities in schools today and to work for

change in our schools today. Teachers in training need to see that the changes can start within their own classroom.

Civic Engagement in Public Schools

Preservice teachers who participate in civic engagement opportunities have first-hand experience. They observe how opportunities are planned and the relationships that develop, and they recognize and value the new understanding they have developed from the situation. Teachers in training become the best advocates for this type of learning. My students shared that they found this teaching experience to go beyond their typical field experience, and now they can use their new understanding of civic engagement in their future classrooms in order to create more civic-minded students who want to make a difference in their own community. They feel the pressures of academic requirements and the push to meet National Art Standards, 21st Century Skills, and the Iowa Teaching Standards. New teachers must see that civic engagement can be imbedded into their curriculum and can enhance the experience of students.

In a national report entitled, "Restoring the Balance between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools," written in 2004, by The American Youth Policy Forum and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, it states:

> As a new century unfolds, we find a disturbing imbalance in the mission of public education. America's recent preoccupation with reshaping "academics" and raising academic performance has all but overpowered a task of equally vital importance: Educating our young people to become engaged members of their communities, not just as wage earners and taxpayers, but as citizens—people who participate in the civic life of their communities (Boston, Pearson, & Halperin, 2005, p. 7).

This study produced seven propositions to assist teachers, policy leaders, and administrators in increasing civic instruction, engagement, and academic proficiency. The report demonstrated that since No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was instituted in 2001, students in public schools receive far less instruction in social studies, civic learning, the arts, and foreign languages (Boston et. al., 2005). This lack of knowledge in the areas listed above creates a situation in which students lack a basic understanding of the importance of civil liberties, expression through the arts, diversity amongst cultures, and ways to negotiate one's place within our complex society.

The Restoring the Balance between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools Report illustrated that three majors areas of concern should be addressed. First, students must become more knowledgeable in order to be a more effective citizen. Students need to understand the world's problems and the ways in which people choose to deal with these problems. This knowledge must be connected to real-world experiences, such as service learning, civic engagement experiences, and volunteerism, where they have the opportunity to practice this new knowledge and understanding of the world. Lastly, it is vital that students develop the appropriate values of and attitudes toward citizenship. This means that an essential understanding of equality and liberty must be taught to all youth in our country; they need to learn how to be part of the democratic process as young members of their community.

The Restoring the Balance between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools Report described that students lack the very basic knowledge needed to be

effective citizens because so much schooling is spent on math, literacy, and science due to NCLB's focus on standardized academic testing. The report also explained that students in k-12 schools want to be more involved in their communities. The authors stated that volunteerism among youth is higher than adults and higher than in years past (Boston et. al., 2005). Students want to be part of their community and want to help make a difference in their communities, but it cannot happen without the support and knowledge from schools and communities to engage students in this active learning.

A Charge for Art Teachers

Artists make art to for their own pleasure and to express meaning. Art making engages the mind, the heart, and the hands to express both internal feelings we have and our external movements through the physical making of a piece. Tom Anderson (2010) states:

> Art education can serve an important role in helping us all of us- teachers and students alike- develop relationships through which we come to understand ourselves and others. These are the relationships through which we come to constitute community, not only locally, not only with those who share our immediate interests, but community in the larger sense of understanding our place in the web of all peoples, everywhere (Anderson et. al., 2010, p. 8).

It is through this relationship that art teachers can help students share their personal stories and injustices, their joys and sufferings, and their discoveries and ideas. In order to be able to reach students, art teachers must develop new understandings of how to teach the changing population of students in schools today. Anderson writes, "[f]oundationally, art education for social justice takes a contextualist, instrumentalist position that art must be about and for something

more other than just being decorative for its own sake" (p. 9). Instead, he argues that "[c]urriculum needs to go beyond the prepackaged curricula and narrow agendas often imposed by state and national guidelines. It should be built on empathy, democracy, and critical practice" (p. 15). Through civic engagement opportunities, teachers can learn first-hand to become more empathetic practitioners who move beyond the elements and principles of art to embrace the diverse and unique individual cultures that students bring to our classrooms and build a rich and meaningful curriculum from it.

Closing Thoughts

Civic engagement can help educators plan a more balanced educational experience that will allow preservice teachers to develop the skills they require to meet the needs of all K-12 students. Art teachers can create a curriculum that allows diverse students to use art as a tool to express their rich culture and personal stories. It means more than teaching people to use materials to just create beautiful images and objects. It means that art can also be a tool for social change.

I saw my preservice teachers make a remarkable transition in their understanding of what it means to live in extreme poverty and homelessness. This experience forced them out of their comfort zone and into situations where they were the minority group. They experienced what it was actually like to live in a transitional housing center, which left a lasting impact on them. The teachers in training realized that being a caring teacher isn't enough, teachers must understand the environment that their students are living in and respect their cultural differences in order to develop a relationship with their students. They developed

new empathy for children in difficult living situations like the House of Hope and will use their empathy to be more effective teachers of diverse students. This is only the beginning of my journey into civic engagement with preservice teachers. This study opened the doors to a great adventure as I continue to strive to place teachers in training in relevant situations to better prepare them for their future careers.

This study focuses on only a small data sample of preservice teachers from the Midwest. I would like to acknowledge that all the participants in my study volunteered to be part of this study, and this may have affected their answers. My data will confirm that they were informally observed and that this study did not impact their grade in any way. As a result of this study, I saw a transformation in how students felt about teaching in Waterloo and their understanding of what homelessness looks like. Despite the limitations of this study, and in recognition that this is only the beginning of a journey of an ever-changing population, I feel my students shifted their understandings of what it means to be an effective teacher of *all* students.

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW

INFORMED CONSENT

Civic Engagement with Preservice Teachers: Creating Art with Homeless Children

Name of Investigator**:** Wendy Miller, Instructor at The University of Northern Iowa

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through and approved by the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires your consent to participate in this research project. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

I am inviting you to participate in a research study because you are a student in my Elementary Art Education Course (ARTED 2600) at the University of Northern Iowa. The purpose of this research study is to investigate the reflections and experiences of preservice teachers teaching art to children living in the House of Hope homeless shelter.

You will be asked to give the researcher permission to use your e-learning journal written during the semester in order to answer my research questions. You will also be asked to participate in a one-hour interview about your experience teaching at the House of Hope where your answers will be recorded on audiotape using a pseudonym for confidential purposes. You will be interviewed in the art education classroom on campus at the University of Northern Iowa after the completion of the semester.

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last no longer than one hour.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation.

There is no compensation for participation nor will it affect your final grade.

Information obtained during this study, which could identify you, will be kept confidential. The summarized findings with no identifying information may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference. To help protect your confidentiality, all student journals will be given a pseudonym in order to protect your identity and the identity of the facility in which you worked and the students with whom you have had contact with. The final data will not contain any information that can link you directly to our research results. If I write a report or

article about this study or share the study data set with others, I will do so in such a way that you cannot be directly identified.

All information collected during the interview process and from your journal will be kept securely in a locked cabinet. The only person that will have access to this information is Wendy Miller. The information collected will be kept no longer than five years. After such time, it will then be destroyed.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from participation at any time or to choose not to participate at all, and by doing so, you will not be penalized or lose benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you have questions about the study contact Wendy Miller at 319-273-2833 or wendy.miller@uni.edu or Dr. Elizabeth Sutton at 319-273-6260 or email her at elizabeth.sutton@uni.edu if you would like to discuss this study or decide to drop out of the study.
You can also contact the office of the Human Participants Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-6148, for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.

Agreement: **I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.**

_____

(Printed name of participant)

_____

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

_____

(Signature of investigator- Wendy Miller) **(Date)**

APPENDIX B

JOURNAL PROMPTS

- Journal about your thoughts concerning homelessness. What experiences do you have with homelessness? What are your fears, questions, and concerns, and what are you looking forward to when working with homeless children?

- In your journal, make a list of themes that children at the House of Hope may be interested in. Make sure they are thorough enough to explore throughout a unit. Decide on several media or one medium that you want to carry through your unit. Make a list of art lessons/projects/skills/ concepts/techniques to go with these in your journal.

- Think about how you will set up your classroom to ensure safety and comfort while challenging and pushing students to work hard. How will you use this information at the House of Hope art club? What will you need and how will you have to alter your management for this non-traditional teaching experience?

- Journal about what your expectations will be for teaching at the House of Hope. What are you most nervous and excited about? What do you want the children to take away most from this art making experience? How can you help them to achieve this?

- Journal about your first experience at the House of Hope. Tell the story of what happened and which aspects of your plan worked and which had to be adjusted. Were your expectations similar to or different from your experience? What will you do differently the next time?

- What is working well, and what is still very difficult when teaching art club? How are the children reacting to the art projects being planned, and how are you helping them to find success in their work? Share a specific strategy that you will take from this experience and use in your future art room working with children experiencing poverty, homelessness, or other insecurities.

- Journal about your experience at art club. Has your understanding of children in poverty and homelessness changed? What do you see as the most difficult part of being a homeless child? What struggles do you see as most difficult for them, and what are some of the ways the families and the House of Hope are helping them?

- In your journal, reflect on your overall experience at The House of Hope teaching art. Describe your feelings toward the shelter and the children living there. How could you use this experience to guide you as you begin teaching? How could schools better support these children?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were your overall general impressions of teaching art club at The House of Hope?
2. Did your involvement with the House of Hope help alter any beliefs or preconceived notions you had about homelessness? Why or why not? Can you share any specifics?
3. How would you compare this experience teaching art club to your scheduled field experiences?
4. Describe some challenges/rewards that you encountered while working at The House of Hope.
5. While you were making art with the children, were there situations when their homelessness came into conversation? If so, can you describe the situation and share whether you were able to help them express it in their artwork?
6. Can you share some insight you took from this experience that may help guide you as a future art teacher? (For example, strategies to use with children in this type of situation, signs of homelessness, etc.)
7. In what ways could this teaching experience help you when interacting all of your future students?
8. What impact did journaling about your experiences at the House of Hope have on your planning, teaching, and interactions with the children?
9. Did this experience help you better understand the needs of children in our community? Share reasons why or why not?
10. What parts of this course best prepared you for this experience? The journals, the class readings, the discussions, etc.…
11. How diligently did you journal? How much did journaling and discussing our time at the House of Hope help you to make meaning from this experience?
12. How did the class discussion and peer feedback help to shape your interpretations and understandings of the experience?
13. What advice would you give to another art education student teaching at the House of Hope next semester?
14. What additional information would you like to share with me about this experience?

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