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An interpretive inquiry into using adolescent literature to inform
preservice teachers about middle grades students

Degni, Suzanne M., Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1989

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AN INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY INTO
USING ADOLESCENT LITERATURE TO INFORM
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ABOUT
MIDDLE GRADES STUDENTS


by


Suzanne M. Degni

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
1989

Approved by



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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of young adolescent development during the literature component of teacher education by examining the following dimensions: (a) How do students preparing to be middle level teachers perceive young adolescent development? (b) What are the themes, patterns, and unique differences in the perceptions of these pre-service teachers at the beginning of a unit on contemporary realistic fiction? (c) How do they express their perceptions differently as they read contemporary realistic fiction? (d) How do they express their perceptions differently after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?

Data were obtained from 12 pre-service teachers through interviews, journals, and essays. Data were examined to reveal pre-service teachers' perceptions of young adolescent development with the investigator looking for recurring themes, patterns, and unique differences. All three data sources were used to gain insight into participant perceptions.

These pre-service teachers stated at the conclusion of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction that as a result of this study (a) they were more aware of young adolescent

development, (b) they were more aware of the variety of situations in which young adolescents find themselves, (c) they would be able to think of young adolescents both individually and collectively, and (d) they felt they would be more sensitive and knowledgeable teachers.

Implications suggested by the findings of this study for the continued development of a teacher education program included the following: (a) reading, sharing, and discussing contemporary realistic fiction is a means by which pre-service teachers can come to know and understand young adolescents more fully, (b) contemporary realistic fiction is a means by which pre-service teachers' personal and professional perspectives can be enriched and enhanced, and (c) contemporary realistic fiction is a means by which pre-service teachers can come to view themselves as "teacher."

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CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW

I'm all messed up inside.
I feel like a tiny boat
Being tossed around
In a furious storm.
Up and down. Up and down.
Then I capsize
And almost drown.

(Sandy, First Essay)

Early adolescents (10-14) are a unique group of students experiencing tremendous developmental changes physically, sexually, intellectually, personally, and socially. Once regarded as "little high schoolers" or "big elementary students," this special group with distinctive needs has finally assumed an identity of its own. Those familiar with the concept of middle level schooling stress the importance of providing young adolescents with teachers who have received special preparation for teaching them and who are aware of these unique developmental needs. "They [good teachers] are extremely aware of the diversity of early adolescent development, especially the social, cognitive, and physical changes young adolescents experience" (Lipsitz, 1984, p. 119).

Alexander (1984) noted that as early as 1965, educators were calling for specialized education for those teaching young adolescents, advocating that the emerging middle

school created a demand for a new kind of teacher education substantially different from the preparation of elementary or secondary teachers (p. 21). To enable teachers to successfully understand and relate to this special group of students, teacher education programs must help pre-service teachers develop and broaden their awareness of these distinct developmental needs.

Alexander (1984) wrote:

It [the middle school] would also facilitate the reorganization of teacher education sorely needed to provide teachers competent for the middle school; since existing patterns of neither elementary nor secondary teacher training would suffice, a new pattern would have to be developed. (p. 22)

Toepfer (1984) also admonished:

However, we have not adequately communicated the differences in the education needs of children during their approximate 10-14 years life frame from those of their elementary and high school years. Middle level educators must continue to work for the development of this understanding. Establishing a national perspective on transescentals will lay the foundation for creating unique teacher preparation programs for middle level educators. (p. 122)

The literature suggests inclusion of the following components to prepare pre-service teachers for middle level teaching: (a) a thorough knowledge of early adolescents; (b) emphasis on middle level curriculum and instruction; (c) broad academic backgrounds, including concentrations in at least two areas at the undergraduate level; (d) emphasis on specialized methods and reading courses; and (e) early and continuing field experiences in good middle level schools

(McEwin 1984). A thorough knowledge of young adolescents includes an awareness of the following developmental areas:

Physical Needs--Puberty begins during young adolescence and there is a need for teachers to help young adolescents to understand the physical changes taking place. "Young adolescents are very concerned with their physical development. For some, physical development or lack thereof is the dominant, central theme in their lives" (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987, p. 3).

Social Needs-- Family relationships are important and family structure is changing and more complex today. Teachers need to be aware of the changing and complex family and help young adolescents from a wide variety of family backgrounds feel comfortable and well-adjusted.

It is time for us to debunk "myths" about children from "broken homes" and embrace a more enlightened perspective. Broken is a very poor word choice anyway. As a friend remarked "My home used to be 'broken.' Now it is fixed." Young adolescents come from a wide range of family structures and can be well-adjusted, happy and contributing members of society. (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987, p. 30)

Peer relationships also are very important to the young adolescent. Middle level students want to be accepted by peer groups. They want to "fit in."

The social characteristics of adolescents may be viewed as manifestations of bodily changes, as developmental stages, or as reinforcement patterns. In any case, they are marked by the need for acceptance, by powerful peer group influences, by the need for status, by the need for relationships with non-parenting adults, and by the need for independence. (Strahan, 1986, p. 4)

In recent years, middle level teacher preparation and teacher competencies have been identified and noted in the educational literature (Strahan 1980, Walter & Fanslow, 1980). One common theme apparent in a wide range of sources on teaching in the middle school (Van Hoose and Strahan, 1987; Stevenson, 1986; Lipsitz, 1984; George and Lawrence, 1982; Alexander and George, 1981; Strahan, 1980;) is that competent middle level teachers must be aware of and understand the nature of young adolescent learners and their developmental needs. "Because these needs are so dynamic, diverse, and changing, the middle level school culture is extremely complicated" (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987, p. 1).

It is appropriate to consider how and in what ways teachers can come to know and understand young adolescents. This "coming to know" begins in the pre-service preparation programs. Pre-service teachers are exposed to academic courses and participate in field experiences specifically designed to lead them to a greater understanding of young adolescents. The extent to which pre-service teachers are exposed to young adolescent experiences which encourage deliberation and thinking about their critical developmental needs makes a difference. "Everybody has a bridge....For everyone there is a bridge that brings back all the pain of growing up..." (Maya Angelou, 1983). Perhaps, this investigator thought, it is possible to bring pre-service teachers even closer to this knowing and understanding of

what it is like to be a young adolescent today during the literature component of teacher education through the study of a unit of contemporary realistic fiction written for and read by this special group. While introducing pre-service teachers to realistic situations in which young adolescents find themselves is not usually the primary concern of a children's literature course, it might well be another means "to come to know." (See Appendix A For Course Syllabus.)

Focus of the Study

Research has made it clear that an essential component of pre-service teacher preparation is to provide "a thorough knowledge of early adolescents" (McEwin 1984). It was hoped that a greater understanding of young adolescents could be achieved through the study of adolescent literature and more specifically, contemporary realistic fiction written for and about them. Therefore, the focus of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of the developmental needs of young adolescents in the areas of puberty, family relationships, and peer relationships during the literature component of teacher education. More specifically, this study examined the following questions:

How do students preparing to be middle level teachers perceive young adolescent development?

- a. What are the themes, patterns, and unique differences in the perceptions of these

- pre-service teachers at the beginning of a unit on contemporary realistic fiction?
- b. How do they express their perceptions differently during the study as they read contemporary realistic fiction?
 - c. How do they express their perceptions differently after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?

Significance of the Study

An integral part of improving a program in teacher education is to understand the impact a program has on the student. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) pointed out:

There is an urgent need for research in teacher education to turn its attention to closer and more subtle analyses of the impact of university courses, symbols, procedures, and rituals upon the professional perspectives of prospective teachers.... There has been very little direct analysis of the role that the form and content of university teacher education plays in shaping the professional perspectives of students. (p. 10)

This study focused on the need to investigate the impact of the literature component of a particular teacher education program on the pre-service teacher. While the study was of a small number of students, its depth of inquiry provided insights which may contribute to the whole body of knowledge needed to provide practical guidelines for the improvement of programs in teacher education. An underlying purpose of this investigation was to provide a

bibliography of young adolescent literature to the participants in the study for eventual use in their own classrooms.

Basic Assumptions For the Study

Five basic assumptions that were accepted and not investigated as part of this study were acknowledged as follows:

1. Middle level teachers need to be aware of the unique developmental needs of young adolescents.
2. Given assurance of anonymity, students will be open and honest during interviews and in journals in relating their perceptions of young adolescents.
3. Semantic ordered trees followed by interviews provide participants an appropriate source for reflection and discussion about perceptions of young adolescents.
4. Taped interviews combined with data from journals, class work, and reading and discussion will provide additional data for "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1983) of participants' perceptions of young adolescents.
5. An insight into the perceptions of these students will provide information of ways teachers can come to know and understand young adolescents.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of interpretation in this study, an outline of key terms provided a common frame of reference. Scheffler (1980) in The Language of Education identified three types of educational definitions:

1. Descriptive: "used for explanatory reasons to clarify the normal application of terms, to describe prior usage of terms" (p.15-16).
2. Stipulative: "a given term is to be understood a special way for the space of some discourse or throughout several discourses of a certain type" (p. 13).
3. Programmatic: "to embody programs of action" (p. 22).

In this study the following definitions were descriptive:

1. Pre-service teacher- A person enrolled in a college/university undergraduate program which prepares him/her for state certification as a professional educator.
2. Young adolescent- A person between the ages of 10 and 14.
3. College-level children's literature course- A general survey course of all genres of children's literature including criteria for evaluating books and planning ways of using books with children.

4. Contemporary realistic fiction- A story written within the last 20-25 years in which everything-- including characters, setting, and plot--is consistent with the lives of real people in our contemporary world and which allows readers to identify with characters of their own age.
5. Semantic ordered trees- A technique of organizing one's thinking and/or knowledge on a topic through the use of key words organized in a tree diagram.

Research Design

The accomplishment of this study required a methodology which utilized qualitative modes of inquiry. An in-depth case study, a form of interpretive inquiry, was selected to gain insight into the perceptions of a particular group of students of their understanding of young adolescents 10-14 during the literature component of the teacher education program taught by this investigator and to examine the extent an awareness of young adolescents could be created as a result of reading and discussing adolescent contemporary realistic fiction. The case-study approach provided an in-depth examination of an instance in action. As explained by Stake (1978), results of such inquiry have the potential to:

1. move us toward a fuller understanding of the natural experience acquired in ordinary personal involvement;

2. extend explanation of that which we know (propositional knowledge) and increase our understanding of that which is the foundation of what we know (tacit knowledge); and
3. enhance generalizations which develop as a product of experience.

Procedures

The procedures for this study were discussed under three major headings: (a) subject selection, (b) data collection, and (c) data analysis.

Subject Selection

Procedures for this investigation were based on previous research in education utilizing a case study approach (Crow, 1987; Goodman, 1987; Grossman, 1987; Oberg, 1987; Patton, 1980) in which a small group of individuals was studied. In these investigations, the case study approach proved to be an effective means of providing a full perspective of perceptions of a few participants during a common experience. Subjects for this study were the 12 pre-service teachers participating in the literature component of teacher education at Queens College. All participants were white females between the ages of 18 and 20.

Data Collection

The three sources of data collection used in the study were written essays, journals, and interviews. Essays were written by participants at the beginning and at the end of the study. Participant journals were on-going. Interviews were conducted prior to the study and again at the end.

Data Analysis

Data was prepared and analyzed by this investigator in three phases as follows:

Phase 1: Topical Review

The first phase consisted of a topical review of the data obtained from participants in essays, journals, and interviews. All interview tapes were transcribed and all notes taken during interviews were typed. A list of topics identified as important in the review of the literature in the area of early adolescent development provided organizers for the study. These organizers included the following: (a) family relationships, (b) peer relationships, and (c) puberty.

Phase 2: Thematic Analysis at Beginning, Middle, and End of Unit

A descriptive account was given of the perceptions of the subjects at the beginning of the unit of study using two primary data sources (essays and interviews) based on procedures developed by Burgess (1984) and Patton (1980). Multiple copies of the interview transcriptions and notes

were made. A question and answer format allowed the investigator to devise a coding system which permitted the categorization and filing of emerging themes and threads of commonality across and between subjects. Data from documents were coded and integrated into the files. The investigator identified themes and patterns of common perceptions and experiences emerging among subjects and provided "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1983). The investigator also looked for and reported on individual uniqueness and the context of occurrence. Using participant journals, the investigator identified themes and patterns of common perceptions and experiences and noted changes in perceptions over time.

At the conclusion of the unit, the investigator identified themes and patterns of common perceptions and experiences among all subjects based on the three primary sources and using triangulation procedures as proposed by Burgess (1984), Patton (1980), and Worthen & Sanders (1987). Individual differences were also noted.

Phase 3: Interpretation

The investigator sought to interpret the implications of the students' perceptions during the literature component in the context of a teacher education program which seeks to provide a greater and clearer "knowing and understanding" of young adolescents.

Texts by the following experts on case study research have been reviewed for guidelines for conducting this study:

Becker and Geer, 1960; Burgess, 1984; Geertz, 1983; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1980; Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; and Stake, 1978, 1986. Construction and use of semantic ordered trees were investigated through the review of the work of the following authors: Breyerback, 1987, Duffy, 1986, Hermann, 1986, and Strahan, 1987.

Summary

In summary, little research has been conducted in the area of using adolescent literature to inform pre-service teachers about young adolescents. A case study methodology was used to explore the perceptions of a small group of pre-service teachers during the literature component of teacher education and provided comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information for this investigation.

It is the consensus of middle level educators that the unique developmental needs of young adolescents should be addressed equally with educational needs. If the study of adolescent literature can illuminate these developmental needs further and help us better prepare middle level teachers, all the better--for our teachers and their students alike.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of the developmental needs of young adolescents during the literature component of teacher education at Queens College. This chapter presented a review of related research in the areas of young adolescent development, effect of literature on people's perceptions of other people, and contemporary realistic fiction.

The first section of this chapter examined the unique developmental needs of young adolescents 10-14 with emphasis given to physical changes (onset of puberty), family relationships, and peer relationships. The second section focused on the effect of literature on peoples' perceptions of other people. The third section examined adolescent contemporary realistic fiction. All three sections provided background for the study.

Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents

Early adolescents are a unique group of students experiencing tremendous developmental changes physically, socially, psychologically, and intellectually. It is

important that teachers working with this age group be aware of their unique developmental needs and view middle level students individually and not as stereotypes. While realizing that all of the developmental needs of young adolescents are important, interacting and interwoven, this investigator chose to conduct an in-depth investigation into pre-service teachers' perceptions of the physical (puberty) and social (family and peer relationships) needs of this age group. Research in these areas was examined.

Onset of Puberty

Indication that this period of one's life can be both exciting and exasperating may be found in the immense physical changes occurring in most young adolescents. "Bodily changes that occur at puberty are more dramatic than at any stage of life except fetal development and during the first two years" (George & Lawrence, 1982, p.26). Eichhorn (1984) reiterated:

The most evident of the changes which occur at this level are biological. Pubertal change or lack thereof, is striking evidence for transescents that their lives will be dramatically altered (pp. 31-32).

It has been said that young adolescents can be compared to pregnant women--there is more growth going on below the neck than above. Puberty is a time of confusion for most. Growth is varied and rapid. Girls are developing much faster than boys; some students look 18 and act 8; others look 8 and act 18. The average weight gain is eight to ten

pounds a year and some young adolescents grow as much as five inches in height in one year. Sexual development is occurring earlier and earlier and the rate varies from person to person. Variability is a key word found frequently in the literature. Van Hoose and Strahan (1987) pointed out that physical development is a primary concern of young adolescents and that "many students tune in personal concerns and tune out the best teachers" (p. 3).

Young adolescents are reaching maturation younger than ever before. Tanner (1962) noted that the age of menarche has been occurring earlier and earlier with an average increase of four months every ten years from 1830-1960. Middle level students need information about puberty before puberty begins. Lipsitz (1984) wrote "the need for self-exploration and self-definition is intense during early adolescence" (p. 51). Middle level students are constantly comparing themselves with others and are very concerned with what they consider to be physical defects (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987).

Strahan (1986) reinforced this:

Early adolescence is thus a time of marked physical change. The onset of puberty brings a variety of growth spurts in height, weight, and sexual tissue. Such changes produce wide fluctuations in energy levels, and hormone levels. Changes occur at varying rates with the individual (asynchrony) and between individuals (varying maturity levels)....Just by observing his classmates, or even by noting the fluctuations within himself, the early adolescent may feel "out of step."
(Strahan, 1986, p. 2)

Young people are becoming sexually active at a younger age than ever before. The teenage pregnancy rate is increasing and the greatest increase in teenage births is occurring in girls under fourteen. David Elkind (1981) wrote:

About 10 percent of all teenage girls, one million in all, get pregnant each year and the number keeps increasing. About 600,000 teenagers give birth each year, and the sharpest increase in such births is for girls under fourteen! (p. 13).

Young adolescence can also be a time of confusion in the search for sexual identity.

...Adolescents struggle with their sex role identity. They also are uncertain as to what is abnormal. For example, same-sex friendship is the dominant pattern for this age group but it generates concern for some young people. They may think that their preference for being friends with members of the same sex is abnormal (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987, p. 12).

In summary, the impact of puberty is very unsettling and uncertain for most young adolescents. Middle level teachers must be sensitive to these unique physical changes and the uncertainty that accompanies them.

Family Relationships

Family structure is changing rapidly, becoming much more complex and varied. Families consisting of two working parents, single parents, unmarried people living together, and caregivers other than biological parents are common and increasing. Middle level teachers need to be aware of this changing family structure and look beyond the stereotyping.

Sibling relationships are also changing with the complexity of this new family structure and provide fertile ground for conflict.

Farson (1969) has identified the following eight areas in which there has been significant change in the structure of the American family in the last twenty years:

1. The shift from the extended kinship system to the nuclear family.
2. The disappearance of the family functioning as a unit in the economic, religious, and social spheres.
3. The trend from lifetime monogamy to "chronological polygamy and polyandry."
4. A loss of influence, so that the family today is considered a secondary, rather than primary, group of orientation.
5. Major family life-cycle changes due to changing social conventions and longer life expectancies.
6. The upheaval connected with the changing roles of women-- roles which become less and less family-oriented.
7. The corresponding increase in egalitarian relationships between husband and wife.
8. The generally acknowledged fact that the family is surrendering some of its socialization influence to various other social institutions and informal groups.
(pp. 30-33)

Elkind (1981) also added that separation and divorce affect one in three marriages and wrote, "Thus almost half of American children under eighteen are likely to live in single-parent homes" (p. 41). Members (and most especially

young members) of this changing family structure should be treated with sensitivity.

It is time for us to debunk "myths" about children from "broken homes" and embrace a more enlightened perspective. Broken is a very poor word choice anyway. As a friend remarked "My home used to be 'broken.' Now it is fixed." Young adolescents can and do come from a wide range of family structures and be well-adjusted, happy and contributing members of society. (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987, p. 30).

The search for self takes the young adolescent beyond the family into broader realms of interactions and relationships, but family relationships with their powerful influences will continue to remain with them.

Whatever the quality of the relationship between the family and the young adolescent, wherever he goes, the family will go also, and be a part of him. We can never go home again. It is also true that we can never leave home. (Lipsitz, 1977, p. 71)

Surely, the family unit, whatever its unique form or composition, plays a critical part in the development of the young adolescent, but this period in one's life is also a time of breaking away. Family relationships are still very important, but so is the need to assert independence from parents--to look beyond. The time has come. The young adolescent is shifting from family to peer orientation.

Peer Relationships

The importance of the peer group is well-known among those who are acquainted with young adolescents. They want and need to be accepted by these peer groups--to fit in, to belong.

The social characteristics of adolescents may be viewed as manifestations of bodily changes, as developmental stages, or as reinforcement patterns. In any case, they are marked by the need for acceptance, by powerful peer group influences, by the need for status, by the need for relationships with nonparenting adults, and by the need for independence. (Strahan, 1986, p. 4)

In a recent study dealing with peer pressure, Clasen and Brown (1987) offered the following reasons why young adolescents feel the need to belong to peer groups:

The group becomes a place for trying out roles and ideas. It is a source of feedback on behavior, attitudes, values from someone other than parent or behavior figures. Perhaps more importantly, it is a form of recognition of one's value within a social unit beyond the family. (p. 21)

Peer groups with their powerful influences can have both positive and negative affects on young adolescents.

Van Hoose and Strahan (1987) wrote:

Acceptance by friends and others who are the same age is a central concern in the lives of young adolescents. In the extreme, a young person may be willing to commit acts of violence, take drugs, become sexually precocious, or become dependent on alcohol to be accepted by peers. (p. 30)

The message is clear. Physical changes during puberty, changing family relationships, and the need for peer acceptance are all critical and vital areas in the development of the young adolescent. Middle level teachers must be sensitive to the individual experiences encountered by young adolescents in each of these important developmental areas.

Effect Of Literature On People's Perceptions
of Other People

The question of how literature affects people's perceptions has been addressed by many researchers and studies reveal literature is a powerful means of transmitting ideas, feelings, and perceptions. Studies have been conducted regarding the effect of literature on stereotyping. The next section examines how literature affected peoples' perceptions of other people and was a means of breaking down stereotyping in the following areas: (a) gender, (b) cultural groups, and (c) handicapped.

Gender Stereotyping

Language is the medium for passing along our perceptions of gender. Within the last twenty years, research into gender stereotyping in literature has burgeoned with studies being conducted on award winning books and basal readers alike. Exposure to stories (including those in basal readers) and books in the early years of childhood was found to have an influence on gender concept. Flux, Fidler, and Rogers (1976) reported that children as young as five were positively influenced by the use of egalitarian books encouraging them to establish their own identities without regard for their sex by providing them with positive role models both male and female with diverse abilities and opportunities. Research by Berg-Cross

and Berg-Cross (1978) also revealed that non-sexist literature caused a measurable positive attitude change in subjects as young as four. Non-sexist literature helped young readers realize that their potential lies in their abilities and is not determined by their sex.

Cultural Stereotyping

Literature was also a means by which a group of inner-city high school students was able to reach a higher level of understanding of a people, time, and place.

In "I Don't Want to Be a Bystander": Literature and the Holocaust, Meisel (1982) related how she used literature as a basis for bringing her New York City multi-ethnic high school junior and senior students to a higher level of knowing and understanding of a period of time in which half of them knew nothing. Limited to a nine-week time frame, she selected a variety of literature on the subject of the Holocaust. She wanted her students to develop an understanding of the people and times, to examine certain relationships (father and son, victim and executioner, victim and victim, survivor and society), and to develop statements about the nature of humanity. The class participated in reading, discussing the literature, and viewing films. At the conclusion of the nine-week study they were brought to their final question.

In what way does this literature help us understand how and why the Holocaust occurred? Can we, as students and

citizens of the world, use this understanding towards the establishment of a more humane world? (p. 44)

Meisel (1982) concluded:

It is difficult for me to evaluate the depth and degree of understanding that occurred in those nine weeks. I can only say that many students were outraged by the torture and torment of the Cambodians and Vietnamese boat people. They came to me and asked what they could do to help; they wrote letters. Many became involved because, as one student explained, 'I don't want my kids to say, 'What did you do, Mommy?' I don't want to be a bystander.' That fact that any one of them became involved with today's moral issues is proof enough that the unit and the literature worked. (p. 44)

Native American Indians have also been subjected to stereotyping in literature. May (1983) undertook a study using literature as a means of informing fifth and sixth grade gifted students and helping them develop positive attitudes about Native Americans. The following questions were the focus for the study:

1. Could children subjected to popular culture's onslaught of stereotypic Native American images be informed through a literature study?
2. Could a carefully designed literature program emphasizing Indian culture and beliefs help children develop positive attitudes toward Native Americans? (pp. 790-91)

May (1983) used an in-depth study and discussion of carefully selected literature about Native Americans, films, speakers, and artifacts. The participants also were involved in skit writing and performance.

At the conclusion of the study, the researcher looked for evidence of learning. "Did the course cause the students to think anew, and to view Native Americans more

positively?" (p. 794). It had. May (1983) concluded, "By using the growing number of nonstereotyped children's books and films on Native American cultures, teachers can help break down the old stereotypes" (p. 794).

Handicapped Stereotyping

The handicapped are another group portrayed infrequently in literature and often negatively. Britton and Lumpkin (1984) report that people with handicaps were under represented and featured in only 2% of the basal stories used in their study. Improving students' attitudes toward the handicapped is a concern of educators and literature is a means with which this can be achieved.

Dobo (1982) in her article, "Using Literature to Change Attitudes Toward the Handicapped", agrees that literature can help children overcome their fears and grow to accept disabled peers. Dobo cited previous work by Fassler (1975) in which he wrote, "'Books encourage growth of positive attitudes on the part of normal children toward those who are handicapped'" (p. 291). Dobo (1982) provided a synthesis of other work dealing with using literature to change attitudes about the handicapped and suggested:

Teachers can use what already exists in almost every elementary school--an inexpensive yet valuable tool for improving children's attitudes toward the disabled--the children's literature section of the school library.
(p. 290)

Dobo (1982) also wrote that education about the handicapped resulting in both cognitive and affective change

was needed. Literature is one very important means of transmitting information in both of these areas (p. 292).

Many research studies have shown literature to have a powerful impact on people's understanding and perception of others and in breaking down stereotyping in areas of gender, cultural groups, and the handicapped. Literature might also be a means by which pre-service teachers can avoid stereotyping of young adolescents. Literature effects values, attitudes, and behavior toward others. Literature can breathe life into the human condition. Parr (1982) wrote:

...I believe literary study is an especially effective way to engage students in the complexities of such matters as consciousness, freedom, choice, and responsibility. Again and again, regardless of time and place, literature gives life to the problems of being human. (pp. 18-19).

Adolescent Contemporary Realistic Fiction

There are two ways of spreading light:
to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

- Edith Wharton
Vesalius in Zante

Literature can be both the candle and the mirror that give insight into our own lives and the lives of others--the human condition. Literature helps people find out who they are, where they have been, where they are going, and ways to get there. Literature helps to explore the human dilemma.

Contemporary realistic fiction written for and about young adolescents portrays real people in real-life

situations in the contemporary world as we know it. It can point the way and lead the reader down the road from childhood to adulthood.

Literature is one means by which the adolescent can explore the passage from childhood to adulthood. The processes of physical and emotional development that mark the separation from childhood are common themes in novels written for preteens and young teens. (Reed, 1985, pp. 142-143).

Young readers can see themselves in the book's mirror. They can see themselves by the light of the book's candle. Characters within the story are faced with realistic problems (family, peers, self) with which young adolescents are coping today. They are concerned with

growing up today, and finding a place in the family, among peers, and in modern society. All aspects of coping with problems of the human condition may be found in contemporary literature for children" (Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987, p. 464).

These books are among the most popular and most controversial of literature written for young readers. Before the 1960's, nontraditional families, conflict with self and others, sexuality, and ethnic groups were portrayed infrequently. This new realism portrays characters in true-to-life situations coping with an array of problems, anxieties, and frustrations--from homework assignments to divorce. Contemporary realistic fiction while breaking down the stereotypic young adolescent experiences can be the reader's window on the world and shine light on the human condition. This section will examine the following areas:

(a) value of contemporary realistic fiction, (b) controversy surrounding contemporary realistic fiction, and (c) criteria for selection and evaluation.

Value

Realistic fiction written for the young adolescent has many values and serves many purposes for readers including the following discussed by Norton (1987):

1. Realistic fiction allows readers to identify with characters their own age who have similar interests and problems.
2. Realistic fiction helps readers discover that their problems and desires are not unique and helps them face situations knowing they are not alone.
3. Realistic fiction extends readers' horizons by broadening their interests, allowing them to experience new adventures, and showing them different ways to view and deal with conflicts in their own lives.
4. Realistic fiction can help readers who are facing emotional problems cope with fear, anger, or grief. (Caution: Realistic fiction should never be used to replace professional help in situations which may warrant such intervention.)
5. Realistic fiction can stimulate discussion and help readers share feelings and solve problems.
6. Realistic fiction provides readers with pleasure and escape. (pp. 379-380)

(Huck et al., 1987) also identified the following values of adolescent contemporary fiction:

1. Realistic fiction serves readers in the process of understanding and coming to terms with themselves as they acquire "human-ness."
2. Realistic fiction helps the reader to enlarge and deepen compassion and to see the world from a new perspective.

3. Realistic fiction may reassure young people that they are not the first in the world to have to face problems.
4. Realistic fiction can illuminate experiences that children have not had.
5. Some books also serve as a kind of preparation for living.
6. Realistic fiction for children does provide many role models, both good and bad, for coping with problems of the human condition. (pp. 464-466).

Young adolescent contemporary realistic fiction can serve as an emotional outlet for readers. Peck (1975) notes that these stories often center on the variety of feelings experienced by this age group in their relationships with peers, siblings, parents, and other adults. This literature can show the reader that he or she is not alone in facing problems, searching for answers, and hopefully finding solutions.

Young adolescent contemporary realistic fiction can be a bridge that helps readers cross from the world of the young child into that of the maturing adult--with fictitious contemporaries who are making the journey themselves or who have already made it.

Children everywhere have the same needs and emotional responses. By seeing similarities and differences, children are laying the groundwork for a better understanding as adults. They can learn from books that the diversity of life is one of its miracles. (Sutherland & Livingston, 1984, p. 574)

While no research has focused specifically on the effect of contemporary realistic fiction on pre-service

teachers, a recent study by Culp (1985) held particular interest for this writer because it involved perceptions formed by middle school and high school students concerning the extent they felt literature influenced their attitudes, values and behavior toward other people. The literature these students referred to in each response was contemporary realistic fiction.

Culp (1985) in 1984 administered an introspective, retrospective questionnaire on their reading in middle and high school to 228 English 101 students between the ages of 16 and 20 at an urban university. Responses were analyzed and compared to responses of freshman English students in the same university, using the same questionnaire, in 1975.

The following four questions and responses from the Culp (1985) study were of specific interest to this writer:

1. Have any stories, novels, plays, or poems you have read in an English class since the sixth grade impressed you so that you can say that they affect your feelings, thoughts, beliefs, or actions? If you answered yes to number 1, name the work(s) you can recall. As clearly as you can, explain how each influenced you.

In response to this question, 73% of the participants in the 1985 study reported that they had been affected by at least one work they had read in an English class compared to 80% in the 1975 study. Culp (1985) reports a sample response from the English 101 students:

The Outsiders made me feel bad for putting down lower class people. (p. 32)

2. Have any of the stories, novels, plays, or poems you have read on your own affected your feelings, etc.

In response to this question, 68% of the participants in the 1984 study reported having been affected by at least one work which they read on their own compared with 78% in 1975. Culp (1985) reports a sample response:

Where the Red Fern Grows. I thought this book was heartbreaking and to this day it still gets to me. I'm an animal lover and I feel really close to them so my feelings about this book were extremely sad. (p. 33)

3. Have you ever experienced an identification with any of the characters you have met in the literature you have read and discussed in an English class?

In response to this question, 43% of the students participating in the 1984 study reported having identified with one or more characters they had read about in an English class compared to 37% in 1975. Culp (1985) reports a sample response as follows:

Mrs. Jones in Mr. & Mrs. Bo Jo Jones. Sometimes I feel that everyone is against me except my boyfriend, as she did. This led to trouble for her, but I can cope with this because I know it's just my feelings. (p. 33)

4. Have you ever experienced an identification with any of the characters you have met in the literature you have read on your own?

In response to this question, 54% reported identification with characters in works they had read on their own. The 1975 study revealed the same percent of students reported identification. Culp (1985) reports a sample response as follows:

I identified with Mark, Kathy, and Bryan in That Was Then, This is Now. Bryan was a dreamer, Mark was a realist, Kathy was caught in the middle. I identified with all three of the characters because they all had aspects of my personality. (p. 33))

Although showing a decrease in number of works read and extent of influence between the 1975 and 1984 studies, Culp (1985) concluded: "The amount of reading done is still positively related to the influence of literature..." (p. 34). Students in the Culp study responded that they experienced identification with the characters in the stories that they read.

It would not be fair, however, to stress solely how these books can enrich and expand the life of the young adolescent, and omit mentioning, however briefly, areas of concern and controversy surrounding some of them.

Controversy

"The degree to which realistic fiction should reflect the reality of the times leads to controversy as writers create characters who face problems relating to sexism, sexuality, violence, and drugs" (Norton, 1987, p. 382). There are many issues relating to contemporary realistic fiction--the most controversial and censored of all literature written for young readers. There is no single and simple solution to the controversy, for what one group may consider controversial another may not. Although this paper is not primarily concerned with the controversy surrounding young adolescent contemporary realistic fiction,

some primary issues which surfaced frequently in the literature were considered by this writer. The following areas were found to be of considerable concern and a cause of controversy: appropriateness, stereotyping, sexuality, and categorization.

Appropriateness refers to limits of good taste. Excessive violence, graphic detail, explicitness in bodily functions or sexual relations are areas in which questions of "how much is necessary" need to be asked. Topics once thought taboo for adolescent readers are not so today and this is fitting. But this new freedom brings new challenges. "Childhood is not the innocent time we like to think it is (and probably never was). Although youth may not need protection, it does still need the perspective that literature can give" (Huck, et al., 1987, p. 466). A well-written book can add perspective in areas once considered taboo, but human emotions should be emphasized and not the acts themselves. In other words, violence may be understood, but not condoned, explicit references used for understanding, but not for shock.

Appropriateness depends on many factors including age level of the reader and ability to comprehend concepts.

Sutherland and Livingston (1984) wrote:

What is appropriate for the reader of any age depends on such factors as reading ability and comprehension of concepts, subject interest, age and sex, and individual preferences for particular writing styles, subjects, or kinds of humor. (p. 574).

Stereotyping (both male/female and ethnic) is another major concern. Stereotypes develop from what was once considered the norm. Books written to reflect a particular time frame should do so and authentically, but books written to reflect contemporary times should not include stereotyping. "All stereotyping is dehumanizing, for it treats individuals as a group without regard to individual differences, personalities, or capabilities" (Huck, et al., 1987, p. 468). Huck, et al. continue, "A book should not be criticized, then, for being historically authentic or true to its traditional genre. However, we have every right to be critical when such stereotyped thinking is perpetuated in contemporary literature" (p. 468). Huck cautioned against books written solely to preach or teach with the primary purpose being to promote an ideological position rather than writing that evolved from the author's own experiences and feelings.

Sexuality is another area of controversy in contemporary realistic fiction. The contemporary world reflects an increasing awareness and frankness about sexuality and so does adolescent contemporary realistic fiction. Sexuality, once taboo in young adolescent literature, is a subject about which much has been written within the last twenty years. It is also fertile ground for controversy. Topics such as pre-marital and extra-marital sex, concerns about sexual development, homosexual

experiences, and sex education have all been topics of books for young adolescents.

And finally, the issue of categorization must be considered. Huck, et al. (1987) suggested that there are really two issues to be considered in the categorization of books--topic (or aspect stressed) and age appropriateness. First, Huck notes, "It is a disservice both to book and to reader if we apply a label and imply that this is what the book is about. Readers with their own purposes and backgrounds will see many different aspects and strengths in a piece of literature" (p. 470-471). A book may stress a particular aspect, but this is by no means the only aspect worth stressing. Books can and should be listed under a variety of different categories. This point should be well remembered when the reader of this paper examines the books soon to be mentioned and the categories in which they are placed.

Second, Huck, et al, (1987) stressed that it is useless to label books as specifically for one age level and not another.

Realistic fiction is often categorized as for upper elementary or middle grade and junior high or young adult (YA) readers. Yet, anyone who has spent time with 9- to 14- year-old readers has surely noticed the wide ranges of reading interests, abilities, and perceptions present. Betsy Byars' The Pinballs and Judy Blume's Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. have challenged and entertained readers from fourth grade through high school. To suggest that these titles are "for 10- to 12- year-old readers" would

ignore the ages of half of the readership of these popular authors. (P. 471)

Munson (1986) also cautioned:

But sticking too rigidly to suggested age levels can keep children from discovering important insights. A librarian admitted that after the sudden death of her son, the children's novel A Taste of Blackberries by Doris Buchanan Smith gave her great comfort and peace. (p. 63)

Sutherland and Livingston (1984) reinforced that it was unadvisable to label books for a specific age level stressing that there should be no narrow restrictions on ages of readers to whom literature may appeal.

It may be concluded that any one book can be placed in many categories and appeal to many age levels. Huck (1987) suggested that most often the age of the main characters determines potential use in the classroom. The books selected for this investigation, although placed under specific categories (puberty, family relationships, and peer relationships), may be placed under more than one category.

Criteria For Selection and Evaluation

Although adolescent contemporary realistic fiction is often surrounded by controversy, McClenathan (1979) suggested that these books should not be avoided for the following reasons: (a) a book about relevant sociological or psychological problems gives young people the opportunity to grow in thinking processes and to extend experiences, (b) problems in books can provide readers with opportunities for identification and allow others opportunities to empathize

with peers, and (c) problems in books invite decisions, elicit opinions, and afford opportunities to take positions on issues.

Norton (1987) offered the following criteria (in addition to basic literary criteria) for evaluating realistic fiction:

1. The content should be honestly presented; sensationalizing and capitalizing on the novelty of the subject should be avoided.
2. A story should expose personal and social values central to our culture, while at the same time revealing how the overt expression of those values may have changed.
3. The story should allow the reader to draw personal conclusions from the evidence; the author should respect the reader's intelligence.
4. The author should recognize that today's young readers are in the process of growing toward adult sophistication.
5. The language and syntax should help reveal the background and nature of characters and situations.
6. The author should write in a hopeful tone; a story should communicate in an honest way that there is hope in this world.
7. Children's literature should reflect a sensitivity to the needs and rights of girls and boys without preference, bias, or negative stereotypes. Males should be allowed to show emotions, females should be allowed to demonstrate courage and ambition. Girls and boys should not be denied access to certain occupations because of their sex. Children should sense that they can be successful in many occupations.
8. If violence is included in the story, does the author treat the subject appropriately? Does the author give the necessary facts? Are both sides of the conflict portrayed fully, fairly, and honestly? Is the writing developed with feeling and emotion?

Does the author help children develop a perspective about the subject?

9. A story should satisfy children's basic needs and provide them with increased insights into their own problems and social relationships.
10. A story should provide children with enjoyment.
(pp. 390-391)

Summary

Young adolescence has been shown to be a time of enormous fluctuation and diversity. Concerns about pubertal changes, family relationships, and peer acceptance are dominant in the minds of most young adolescents during the 10-14 years.

Puberty is a time of tremendous change (Strahan, 1986; George & Lawrence, 1982; Eichhorn, 1984; Tanner, 1962; Elkind, 1981; Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987). Maturation is occurring earlier and earlier (Tanner, 1962; Elkind, 1981) and the search for self is intense (Lipsitz, 1984).

Family relationships are changing and becoming more complex (Farson, 1969; Elkind, 1981; Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987; and Lipsitz, 1977). Dealing with this changing family structure can be perplexing and frustrating for young adolescents and prove to be an unsettling experience if they are not made to feel that many different family structures are acceptable and worthwhile.

The need for acceptance by peers and peer relationships are in the forefront during this period of reaching beyond

family. Young adolescents are turning to peers for support and kinship and a sense of belonging and connectedness (Strahan, 1986; Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987; Clasen & Brown, 1987).

Literature has been shown to be successful in affecting peoples' perceptions of other people and in breaking down stereotyping (Culp, 1985; Flux, Fidler, & Rogers, 1976; Berg-Cross & Berg-Cross, 1978, Britton & Lumpkin, 1984; Meisel, 1982; Parr, 1982; Barnum, 1977; May, 1983; Dobo, 1982; Fassler, 1975) and may prove to be a means by which pre-service teachers can come to know and understand young adolescents more fully, sensitively, and individually.

Adolescent contemporary realistic fiction written for and about the young adolescent is abundant and readily available for study and discussion. It is one of the most popular genres with young adolescent readers today, has many values, and serves many purposes (Reed, 1985; Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987; Munson, 1986; McClenathan, 1979; Norton, 1987; Peck, 1975; Sutherland & Livingston, 1984).

A review of these related areas, critical and relevant to background for this study, has provided valuable information applicable to the research for this paper.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this investigation, pre-service teachers' perceptions of young adolescents were elicited in three distinct but highly integrated ways. The first explored the students' perceptions of young adolescents through the use of essays written in the literature class. The second involved the use of on-going student journals to explore students' thinking and reflections during the unit of study. Finally, the students' perceptions of young adolescents were examined in individual interviews conducted prior to the unit of study on contemporary realistic fiction and immediately afterwards. The data collected from essays, journals, and interviews were treated as follows:

1. The data collected from essays, journals, and interviews were analyzed thematically to determine recurring similarities and unique differences of students' perceptions of young adolescents during the contemporary realistic fiction unit.
2. The data were examined to reveal any changes over time in students' perceptions and understandings of young adolescents.

3. The perceptions of the students were interpreted personally in response to the basic research questions outlined in Chapter I:
How do students preparing to be middle level teachers perceive young adolescent development?
 - a. What are the themes, patterns, and unique differences in their perceptions of these students at the beginning of a unit on contemporary realistic fiction?
 - b. How do they express their perceptions differently during their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?
 - c. How do they express their perceptions differently after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?

This investigation was conducted by the instructor of EDU 305 Literature For Children at Queens College. This is a required course for all pre-service teachers traditionally taken early in their professional program. It is a semester-long course which includes a general survey of children's literature focusing on all genres including a four-week unit on contemporary realistic fiction which is the focus for this study. As part of regular coursework during the contemporary realistic fiction unit, all students enrolled in the class were required to examine books that

depict realistic situations in which young adolescents find themselves, read six of the novels, prepare an annotated bibliography to share with the class, and share three of the books in an oral presentation. Students could select from but were not limited to books from a list generated by the instructor to include areas of puberty, young adolescent family relationships, and young adolescent peer relationships. (See Appendix C For Complete Book List.) Examples of the books included the following:

Puberty- Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. by
Judy Blume

Family relationships- Mom, the Wolfman and Me by
N. Klein

Peer Relationships--The Chocolate War by R. Cormier.

The 12 students registered for the class were approached and invited to participate in this study. Students were assured that participation was strictly voluntary and grades would not be affected whether they participated in the study or not. This investigator gained consent of the 12 students to obtain copies of any journals and papers written in class and other projects and documents generated during their coursework. (See Appendix E For Consent Form.) All names were changed in reporting this investigation. All participants were white females between the ages of 18-20 enrolled in the literature component of teacher education. Data were presented in the form of a case study describing, analyzing, and drawing conclusions

from the information as it pertained to the students collectively.

Essays

As part of regular coursework, the 12 pre-service teachers enrolled in the literature component of professional education wrote essays during the study of the different genres of children's literature including contemporary realistic fiction. Essays were written prior to the beginning of the study of the literature in each unit and again at the conclusion of the unit. The topic, My Perceptions Of Young Adolescents, was used for the two essays written during the contemporary realistic fiction unit. For the purpose of this paper, only the two essays relating to young adolescents and written during the contemporary realistic fiction unit were included and analyzed. The following paragraph provides an illustration of information from these essays:

When it comes to family situations, most young adolescents differ greatly. Some come from wonderful, loving, understanding and supportive homes where they get the security they need. Some young adolescents come from troubled, broken homes with alcoholism, drugs, abuse, divorced parents, or even live in foster homes. (Lou, Second Essay)

Journals

In addition, and as part of regular coursework, the 12 pre-service teachers enrolled in the literature component of professional education kept daily journals. Directions for

the journal entries were stated on the class syllabus as follows:

Students will be required to keep journals during the literature study reflecting feelings and perceptions developing during the study of the different genres. Journals will be collected at the completion of each genre. (See Appendix A For Complete Course Syllabus.)

Journals are personal documents produced spontaneously in which an individual provides a first-hand account of thoughts, events and feelings which are considered important (Burgess, 1984). Journal entries were made during all genres of literature studied in the class including the four-week contemporary realistic fiction unit. Journals were to consist of "personal reflections of an insider's account of thoughts and feelings" (Burgess, 1984, p. 172) occurring during the study of literature. Journals were solicited in that they covered a specific period of time and activities (Burgess, 1984). All journals were collected and examined at the conclusion of each genre. Since the focus of this study was adolescent contemporary realistic fiction, only participant journal entries during this unit were included and analyzed. The following provides a type of illustration of journal entries available for analysis:

I have to read A December Tale now! I've thought about this book all weekend and now I understand it better. Myra was bribed for a long time to keep Henry's beatings a

secret, but finally tried to do something in the end. It's so scary and disturbing to me that some real children lead lives like Myra's. What is saddest to me is that for some, that is the only life they know. (Sandy's Journal)

The data obtained from essays and journals were analyzed, coded, and integrated into the files with the investigator looking for regularities and recurring themes (Burgess, 1984; Patton, 1980; and Worthen & Sanders, 1987).

Interviews

Each of the participants was interviewed by the course instructor/investigator for approximately one hour on two separate occasions. The initial interview took place prior to the study of contemporary realistic fiction. The final interview was conducted after completion of the study. The questions which structured the interview were open-ended and designed to encourage dialogue. Participants were requested to create semantic ordered trees (Strahan, 1987) based on their perceptions of young adolescents prior to and at the conclusion of the study. These were used for reflection and discussion. (See Appendix B For Semantic Ordered Trees.)

The interviewer began the initial interview by asking the participants to share feelings, knowledge, and views about young adolescents and young adolescent experiences. The investigator discretely used probing questions to include the areas of family relationships, peer relationships, and puberty. The final interview began by having the participants discuss their perceptions of young

adolescents as reflected in their semantic ordered trees. The investigator again used probing questions to encourage subjects to relate present feelings about young adolescents and young adolescent experiences particularly in the areas studied.

The questions and responses were recorded on tape to provide a precise and accurate record. The following questions provided a common set of topics for the interviews:

Initial Interview Questions

1. Please share with me some of your thoughts about young adolescents 10-14.
2. Share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by puberty.
3. Please share with me your thoughts about the kinds of family relationships young adolescents are experiencing in our world today.
4. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by family relationships.
5. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by peer relationships.

Final Student Interview Questions

1. You made a semantic ordered tree at the beginning of the study of contemporary realistic fiction and I see that you have made revisions to the tree

since you have finished the study. Please share with me as thoroughly as possible your thoughts on this tree and the changes you made.

- a. What experiences did you have this semester which relate to the category headings on your tree? What has been the significance of these experiences to you personally and professionally?
 - b. What experiences have you had which relate to your choice of items under each heading? What has been the significance of these experiences to you personally and professionally?
2. Please share with me some of the key issues under discussion in your literature course.
 - a. How do you see these relating to you personally and professionally?
 - b. What kinds of experiences were provided for you in the classroom to aid your understanding?
 3. Share with me what you know about 10-14 year olds now that you didn't know a few months ago.
 4. Viewing your experience this semester in the literature course, what growth do you see having occurred in yourself personally and professionally?
 5. Please share with me how you think young

adolescents are affected by puberty.

6. Please share with me your thoughts about the kinds of family relationships young adolescents are experiencing today.
7. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by family relationships.
8. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by peer relationships.

The individual responses were recorded in a question-and-answer format with a coding system devised to permit categorization. The following response to the interview question--Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by peer relationships--provides a type of illustration from an interview available for analysis:

I think that peers are one of the more important things in their lives. They are different during this time and their friends are going through the same things. I think their peer group takes over where the family left off and becomes a source of companionship, advice about sexuality and other things. (Betty, Initial Interview)

All three data sources--essays, journals, and interviews--were used to gain insight into (a) participant perceptions at the beginning of the study of contemporary realistic fiction, (b) participant perceptions during the study, (c) how these participants expressed themselves differently after their experience with contemporary

realistic fiction, and (d) implications for teacher education.

Analysis

Data were prepared and analyzed in three phases outlined in Chapter I as follows:

Phase 1: Topical Review

The first phase consisted of a topical review of the data obtained from participants in essays, journals, and interviews. All interview tapes were transcribed and all notes taken during interviews were typed. A list of topics identified in the review of early adolescent literature provided organizers for this study. They included the following topics: (a) responses to the onset of puberty, (b) young adolescent family relationships, and (c) young adolescent peer relationships.

Phase 2: Thematic Analysis At Beginning, Middle, and End of Unit

At the beginning of the study of the contemporary realistic fiction unit and using first essays and initial interviews, the investigator looked for themes and patterns of common perceptions and experiences emerging between all the subjects as well as clusters of subjects in an attempt to provide "thick description" (Geertz, 1983). Individual uniqueness and differences in perceptions among subjects were also reported. All interview tapes were transcribed

and all notes taken during interviews were typed. Using a question and answer format, a coding system was devised which permitted the categorization and filing of emerging themes and threads of commonalty across and between subjects as suggested by Burgess (1984) and Patton (1980). Examples of common themes emerging from the first essays and initial interviews included perceptions of "puberty being a time of confusion for young adolescents," "family relationships as primarily supportive," and "concern with negative peer influence." Unique differences in the perceptions of participants were also reported. An example of a unique difference was one participant response that she "did not know how young male adolescents were affected by puberty."

During the study of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction, participant journal entries were analyzed with the investigator noting changes over time in student thinking and broadening of perceptions. An example of student perceptions changing over time included the following response:

It's hard to believe that these kinds of peer relationships really exist. My heart really went out to Jerry as he faced the Vigils [The Chocolate War], and I admired the way he stood his ground and would not give in. (Toni's Journal)

Personalization of books by participants was also reported. An example of a participant personalizing a book included the following:

When my parents got divorced a million years ago, a family friend gave me a copy of Judy Blume's It's Not the End of the World. It helped me sort out my feelings and to realize that I wasn't alone in the world after all. (Lou's Journal)

At the conclusion of the unit, the investigator looked for and reported themes and patterns of common perceptions and experiences among all subjects based on the three primary sources and using data triangulation procedures as proposed by Burgess (1984), Patton (1980), and Worthen and Sanders (1987). Data triangulation (the use of multiple sources of information) permitted the investigator to evaluate and cross check findings for this study and helped insure a comprehensive perspective. While participants expressed richer and broadened perceptions of young adolescent development within the identified topics-- puberty, family relationships, and peer relationships, they also began to perceive "self" with a new frame of reference. Participants began to think of themselves as "teacher" and talked and wrote of "their students" and "their classrooms." Common themes noted in essays, journals and interviews of all participants included the perception that teachers need to be aware of appropriate books to share with their students and use as tools in their teaching. Examples of this common theme included the following :

We talked about the values of contemporary realistic fiction. I think the best value we discussed was letting children know through literature that they are not alone in the problems they each have. (Liza's Journal)

The investigator looked for and reported on individual uniqueness and the context of occurrence. The following is an example of individual uniqueness:

Young adolescents are at a difficult stage because they are somewhere between being children and being adults, and it seems to be the worst of both worlds. (Lou, Second Essay)

Phase 3: Interpretation

The investigator sought to interpret the implications of the students' perceptions during the literature component in the context of a teacher education program which seeks to provide a greater and clearer "knowing and understanding" of young adolescents.

In summary, the data analysis process consisted of a topical review of collected data; a discussion of student perceptions at the beginning, during, and at the conclusion of the unit; and personal interpretations of those perceptions. The basic research questions which directed the study structured the presentation of the interpretations and conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

It was the best of times.
It was the worst of times.
It was the age of wisdom.
It was the age of foolishness.
It was the epoch of belief.
It was the epoch of incredibility.
It was the season of light.
It was the season of darkness.
It was the spring of hope.
It was the winter of despair.
We had everything before us.
We had nothing before us.

Charles Dickens
A Tale of Two Cities
(Sandy, Second Essay writing
about her young adolescence)

As Sandy's comments indicate, participants expressed their perceptions of young adolescents in a number of different ways. Procedures described in Chapter 3 provided a means to gather and analyze data from essays, journals, and interviews in exploring the following research questions:

How do students preparing to be middle level teachers perceive young adolescent development?

- a. What are the themes, patterns, and unique differences in the perceptions of these pre-service teachers at the beginning of a unit on contemporary realistic fiction?

- b. How do they express their perceptions differently during the study as they read contemporary realistic fiction?
- c. How do they express their perceptions differently after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?

The three phases of data analysis were discussed in detail in the following sections of this paper.

Topical Review

The first phase consisted of a topical review of the data obtained from participants in essays, journals, and interviews. All interview tapes were transcribed and all notes taken during interviews were typed. The review of the literature on young adolescents suggested this age group (10-14) had distinct developmental needs--physical, social, psychological, and intellectual. To enable teachers to successfully understand and relate to this special group of students, teacher education programs must help pre-service teachers develop and broaden their awareness of these distinct developmental needs. While agreeing that all developmental needs are important, this investigator identified the following three areas of particular interest: (a) young adolescent family relationships (social), (b) young adolescent peer relationships (social), and (c) the young adolescent experience with puberty (physical). Using

these topics as organizers (families, peers, and puberty), this investigator reported the perceptions of pre-service teachers during each of the following three time frames of this study: (a) the beginning of the study of contemporary realistic fiction, (b) during the unit of study, and (c) at the conclusion of the study.

Participant Perceptions Beginning of the Unit

First essays and initial interviews were used to examine participant perceptions of young adolescent development prior to the unit on contemporary realistic fiction. As reported previously, pre-service teachers were asked to write an essay before the unit as part of their regular coursework. The topic, My Perceptions Of Young Adolescents, was used for the essay. Essays revealed pre-service teachers possessed a common general view of young adolescents based on personal experiences. Recurring themes and commonalties were noted in the first essays in each of the topics (families, peers, and puberty).

Each pre-service teacher was interviewed for approximately one hour prior to the unit on contemporary realistic fiction. These initial interviews also suggested that pre-service teachers possessed a common general view of young adolescents based on personal experiences. These personal experiences provided the basis for comments and discussions. The questions which structured the interviews

were open-ended and designed to encourage dialogue. The interviewer began the initial interview by asking the pre-service teacher to share feelings, knowledge, and views about young adolescents and young adolescent experiences. The investigator discreetly used probing questions to include the topics of family relationships, peer relationships, and puberty.

The following analysis of the first essays and initial interviews offers insight into participant perceptions prior to the study of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction by topic:

Families

"I don't think it is as much of a 'Beaver Cleaver' situation as it used to be"
(Carrie, Initial Interview).

The first essays written before the study of contemporary realistic fiction revealed the pre-service teachers perceived young adolescent interactions within families to be important and family units were a source of support, motivation, and conflict. Pre-service teachers perceived families as primarily caring, nurturing, and loving.

Eight of the first essays reflected the recurring themes of family and family relationships as evidenced by the following selected excerpts:

All in all it [young adolescence] can be a growing and enriching time provided they have a loving family to help them through. (Carrie, First Essay)

I was fortunate to have a warm, loving family life. I had support and motivation in every aspect. (Alice, First Essay)

They rebel and reject parental guidance and love while at the same time these are the things they so greatly need. (Betty, First Essay)

Individual uniqueness was reported in the following participant response noting that some families could be abusive:

I think growing up is hard enough dealing with the important aspects in life rather than dealing with what some are thrown into--to name a few divorce, suicide, abuse. (Judy, First Essay)

During the initial interviews, pre-service teachers perceived family relationships as primarily supportive and a place for young adolescents to find role models. Participants perceived family units as two-parent, divorced parents, and stepparents. Support and non-support of family was perceived to affect school relationships and behavior. Young adolescents were also perceived to use older siblings as role models. All 12 pre-service teachers noted the importance of family relationships as evidenced by the following selected excerpts from initial interviews:

I think young adolescents think family is important, but they won't really admit that it is. It is the "in" thing not to get along with your family. There is a lot of quarreling about what they want to do and their parents don't think they are old enough yet. I think they really rely on their family for support at this time. The family should really give them that support. I think if a young adolescent has supportive caring parents that understand the things that they are going through, they are able to better adapt to it. They are more secure and more willing to adapt to new things and try new things. A lot of what young adolescence is, is

trying new roles and stuff. I think that if they have parents that don't understand what they are doing, that they would not be able to deal with people in school because they don't have that stable background. (Lou, Initial Interview)

A lot of young adolescents are dealing with working parents, divorce, separation. There are a lot of step-parents, boyfriends, girlfriends. Two kids in my elementary school [extended day program] wanted to team me up with their divorced dad. It was sad. (Alice, Initial Interview)

I see two extremes [family relationships] in the teen age years. One where the young adolescent is very close to the parent. For instance, a girl feels very close to her mother and could go to her and ask her about sex, periods, talk to her about boys. And then there is the other extreme where the young adolescent feels that he or she cannot talk to a parent at all. They have to seek out other adults. I had a real special teacher in high school that was my confidant and everything. A lot of my friends had a lot of trouble with their parents. Sisters and brothers clash because everybody wants to feel like they have the world by the tail and can handle everything that comes along. It think it is a real turbulent time for families. (Sandy, Initial Interview)

Individual uniquenesses were reported in the following responses noting the extended family unit, effect of family relationships on school behavior, and family as capable of abuse as evidenced in the following excerpts:

The American family is changing. I read somewhere recently that only 27% of our families are the traditional ones. Most of the students don't have the traditional two-parent families. There are step-parents to deal with. Kids are becoming a lot more dependent on siblings, themselves. We have latch-key children that have to take care of themselves. There are a variety of types of family relationships--maybe mother and grandmother, aunts or uncles. Some children aren't having family experiences at all. The parents don't have time and they are spending lots of time by themselves. (Lucinda, Initial Interview)

I think what happens within the family bleeds over into every aspect in their lives. So like when they come to school, if they are having a problem at home, they are going to bring that problem to school. With a class of 28-30 kids, I think it would be hard for a teacher to pick up the fact that a student is having trouble at home. I think it really affects their performance. It affects their self esteem. If two parents are getting a divorce or separated, even at that age, a young adolescent thinks it is partially his fault that the family is breaking down. They don't know what to do to make it better. (Sandy, Initial Interview)

I don't think it is as much of a "Beaver Cleaver" situation as it used to be and that is taking its toll--the latch-key kids, those from split homes, abusive situations. A lot of this hasn't gone on as much in the past or when it has, it wasn't talked about. (Carrie, Initial Interview)

Peers

"Should I do what everybody else is doing?
To be cool or not to be. That is the question
of young adolescence" (Janet, First Essay).

The first essays also revealed participants perceived the importance of peers, the need for young adolescents to belong and fit in with peers, and conflict within peer groups. Participants perceived peers as primarily positive and that most young adolescents belonged to some kind of peer group.

Six of the first essays reflected the recurring theme or peer relationships as evidenced by the following selected excerpts:

For the first time, the young adolescent must be concerned with status symbols. Never before did the young person have to worry if he had the right clothes, enough money, or a VCR. Should I do what everyone else is doing? To be cool or not to be? That is a question of young adolescence. (Janet, First Essay)

This is a time when they are trying to fit in with others their age. (Liza, First Essay)

Their peers are an important part of their life. (Mary, First Essay)

Individual uniquenesses were noted in two essays reflecting the negative side of peer relationships as evidenced by the following excerpts:

Most slip through these years of acne and peer pressure fairly easy, but for some it is pure torture. Peer relationships are often very cruel and merciless in their taunting or teasing of someone less liked or less fortunate than themselves. (Carrie, First Essay)

It is a time of uncertainty and insecurity for most people which is why I feel that so much importance is placed on being accepted by one's peers. This may be good or bad depending on the types of peers or "friends" one has. (Lucinda, First Essay)

Initial interviews reinforced that pre-service teachers perceived peer relationships as important and provided role models, companionship, a sense of belonging, and acceptance for young adolescents. Participants reported both negative and positive influences of peer relationships. Pre-service teachers' perceptions of the importance of peer relationships to young adolescents were evidenced in the following selected excerpts from initial interviews:

I think there is a lot of pressure there. Pressure to fit in and to belong and be part of the group. They have to decide if they are going to go along with their friends. Drugs and alcohol play a big part. They want to be in the "in" group. (Lucinda, Initial Interview)

I think, especially now that they are going through all these changes, that what their friends think are the most important things to them. It's not just their parents anymore. They want to know what their friends think. They want to be accepted and do what everyone

else is doing. They want to be cool. They want to fit in. They have a tendency to get into things that their parents don't approve of because everyone else is doing it and they want to feel accepted. (Toni, Initial Interview)

Peer relationships are the crux of being a teenager. I work with seventh and eighth graders at church and it is fun to watch them interact with each other. They are constantly watching everybody else to be sure they are doing the right thing. If I ask a question and nobody raises his hand, then I am not going to get an answer. If one person raises his hand, then others will. They think it is O.K. (Sandy, Initial Interview)

Unique differences were noted in three initial interviews with participants suggesting that not all young adolescents were accepted into peer groups, and the variety of peer groups as evidenced in the following excerpts:

I think they [peers] can be very helpful in some ways and very destructive in others. A lot of times if a child is overweight others might taunt him and call him names. Even you [I], yourself [myself], inadvertently may do that because it is such a habit or whatever. This can hurt and be harmful. The helpful way is that friends and family is [sic] what it is all about. The most important things. They can help you through a lot of tough times, especially if you don't have a really strong family relationship. (Carrie, Initial Interview)

As I said before, they are trying to feel accepted by their peers and they want to be accepted so they feel like they have to do the things along with their peers. It is a hard time. Should you go along with your peers and be accepted or be your own individual self and be an outcast? So it is a frustrating time because you don't know what to do. There's a strong influence there. At that age you are thinking about clothes and all. When I was in seventh grade, the alligators [IZOD] and POLOS were real popular and if you didn't wear those, you were not within the "in" crowd. You had pressure from your peers as to what kind of clothes you would wear. You know, how you should look. I was able to wear those kinds of clothes, but you know it was bad on those people who weren't able to afford

those clothes and they may have been nice people. But because of that reason, they were not in the "in" group. (Mary, Initial Interview)

It is very hard to go to school and feel like you don't fit in. There is [sic] the nerd crowd, the quiet crowd, the jocks, the preps, the rednecks. I think there are a lot of classifications. Each person is proud of his own clique. If they are in a clique they aren't proud of, it can be damaging. Rednecks, granted they may be happy about being a redneck, but a couple in the group may not. It might really hurt. (Liza, Initial Interview)

Puberty

"Being not quite ready, but getting there"
(Betty, First Essay).

Participants perceived puberty as a time of confusion, transition, and difficulty for most young adolescents.

Puberty was also perceived as a time of both physical and emotional adjustment and growth.

Eleven of the first essays reflected the recurring themes of puberty including physical development, emotions, conflict, and sexuality as evidenced in the following selected excerpts:

I feel that the young adolescent years are the hardest in a person's life. One of the biggest concerns they have is whether or not they are normal. Their bodies begin to change quickly, and they start to have feelings that are all new and frightening. Young teens are full of questions they are afraid to ask, feelings they are afraid to feel, and ideas they are afraid to reveal. They need help to get through the laughter and tears of their "who am I" years. I wrote this when I was 13 years old.

I'm all messed up inside.
I feel like a tiny boat
Being tossed around
In a furious storm.
Up and down. Up and down.
Then I capsize
And almost drown. (Sandy, First Essay)

Your physical and emotional states feel as if they are being pulled in several different directions at one time and you are continuously on an emotional roller coaster. In the world of young adolescents, things are in a continuous state of change. Since everything is always changing, it is difficult to have a fixed set of values or ideals. I don't know if young adolescents like being young adolescents or not. I know I hated it. (Lou, First Essay)

I perceive young adolescents as very emotional creatures. They are driven by things they do not understand. They long for self discovery and awareness yet at the same time they reject opportunities for this, due to rebellion or confusion.

Young adolescents are not really in control, yet they think they are, feel they are, and try to go overboard to show that they are, actually revealing they are not.

Physical development does not sometimes equal mental or intellectual development. Their bodies are ready for adulthood, but their minds are not. Being adolescent is being not quite ready, but getting there. It's almost a paradox. (Betty, First Essay)

Initial interviews reinforced that all 12 pre-service teachers perceived young adolescents to be struggling with both physical and emotional changes occurring within their lives. Young adolescents were perceived to be both confused themselves and confusing to others. Young adolescence was perceived as a period of transition and rapid growth and a time filled with emotional ups and downs.

Puberty was perceived as exciting and frustrating. Two participants perceived young adolescents as being concerned with differences in development between males and females and with differences in development within the same sex. Two participants perceived puberty as a time to deal with sexual and role identity, pressures, and independence. One participant noted that she did not know anything about how

puberty affected young adolescent males. One participant noted that concerns with puberty affected school behavior. Perceptions of pre-service teachers of the young adolescent experience with puberty were evidenced in the following selected excerpts:

I think that [puberty] is why they are so confused. They are not sure what world they are supposed to be in. Lots of times they are treated as adults and lots of times they are treated as children. Emotionally they are up and down. Their bodies are changing and they are not completely sure why. So they are not sure where they are supposed to be. Where their place in life is. (Lou, Initial Interview)

I know that their bodies are going through so many different changes. You know, becoming adult bodies and having to deal with sexuality; make a lot of decisions and deal with that. They have a lot of stress. The hormones are going 90 miles an hour and they are having to deal with a whole lot of other different pressures. It is hard for them to deal with. There is so much put on them. They are trying to grow up. They deal with it in different ways. (Toni, Initial Interview)

The differences in physical development are confusing. Girls are maturing sooner than boys. They want to be like everyone in their group. (Judy, Initial Interview)

Individual uniquenesses regarding the young adolescent's search for sexual identity, the lack of knowledge of male experience with puberty, differences in the rate of sexual development, and the affect of puberty on school were evidenced in the following excerpts:

It is a transition time. They have to adjust to their new physical changes, find out about their sexual identity, and moral issues. Everything that you have been taught before by parents, teachers, and church will be evaluated and sorted out. They start thinking about adult types of things. (Lucinda, Initial Interview)

It is exciting for some. Especially for those whose parents are real open with them. They have talked about it before it happens. They are comfortable and looking forward to it. For others whose parents haven't talked about it at all, it can be scary. You are nervous and do not know what to do. They aren't real comfortable. I don't know about young adolescent boys. (Alice, Initial Interview)

Well, I remember mine [puberty] and I thought I wasn't normal. Body changes occur very quickly especially with girls. Yet, they look around and try to make sure that what they are going through as compared to everybody else is normal. They are starting to have menstrual periods. They are wondering about that. Body change is the main thing. They don't want to change clothes in PE in front of other girls any more because they don't want anybody to see them. (Sandy, Initial Interview)

I think their bodies are going through such changes that they don't understand what is going on at that point. They don't know mentally what is happening to them, but these changes affect how they act with other people and the work they do in school. (Carrie, Initial Interview)

Participant Perceptions During Unit

As part of regular coursework, all 12 pre-service teachers kept daily journals reflecting feelings and perceptions developing during the study of contemporary realistic fiction. Journals offered insight into how perceptions of pre-service teachers evolved over time. Journals were examined, analyzed, and coded with this investigator noting regularities and recurring themes. The journals revealed all 12 pre-service teachers possessed an expanding awareness of the topics--family relationships, peer relationships, and puberty. Two themes emerged during

the unit of study--personalization of books and personal and professional perspectives. It was also noted that pre-service teachers referred in their journals to specific books read and discussed during the unit on contemporary realistic fiction.

Families

"It's so scary and disturbing to me that real children lead lives like Myra's" (Sandy's Journal).

Participants began to perceive young adolescent family relationships as quite diverse and complex. They noted that children were expected to grow up fast and assume great responsibility and in some cases complete responsibility for the family unit. Family structure was perceived to include two-parent families, foster homes, single-parent families, and children struggling to stay together in the absence of parents. Caregivers other than immediate family were noted and considered important. Pre-service teachers perceived family relationships as ranging from loving to abusive. Participants also noted the young adolescent's desire to belong and be loved. Sibling relationships were perceived as important and often the cause of tension. Conflicts and problems noted within families included neglect, abuse, incest, alcoholism, pressure, divorce, and remarriage.

Nine of the journals reflected the recurring theme of the family unit noting varied aspects including family relationships, structure, complexity, and conflicts with an

expanding awareness as evidenced by the following selected journal excerpts:

I just keep thinking about Fran Ellen [The Bear's House] and how she assumed responsibility for Flora at such a young age. All the children in her family had to act like mini grown-ups. It would be difficult to hold a family together without a mother. It portrays the children as living from day to day through the hurt and fear they feel. (Sandy's Journal)

Myra [A December Tale] was bribed for a long time to keep Henry's beating a secret, but finally tried to do something in the end. It's so scary and disturbing to me that some real children lead lives like Myra's. What is saddest to me is that for some, that is the only life they know. (Sandy's Journal)

Betty told the story of a young girl who sees her brother get abused in A December Tale. I felt so sorry for her. You could understand the conflict she was having-- loving her brother and wanting to protect him, yet wanting to "belong" and have the nice things she was receiving as bribes not to tell. Finally the love for her brother wins. I was so happy they ran away. Many foster children don't tell about what is going on because they don't know what will happen to them if they do. (Alice's Journal)

The book Grover was another one that I found highly disturbing. I think I was completely oblivious to some of the more serious situations that children are facing today. Divorce and peer pressure are nothing new to most kids, but I've never even known anyone who has had to face the death of both parents [When the Phone Rang], a parent's suicide [Grover], or a situation [neglect] like the one in The Bear's House. These books really open your eyes to a wide variety of situations. When the Phone Rang was quite disturbing. I can't imagine how devastating that kind of news would be to a family. It touched on a common theme that runs throughout several of the books and that is keeping siblings together. Apparently that is a concern of many children. Having been an only child, I missed out on the kind of bond that links these families together. (Lucinda's Journal)

Peers

"A family does not have to be related"
(Jean's Journal).

Pre-service teachers perceived peers to have both good and bad influence and to be capable of love or rejection. The three-person peer group was noted and the difficulties of interaction and fitting in were included. Friends were perceived as helping with problems and becoming family in some instances. Participants began to perceive the innocent and not so innocent roles of peer groups. Peer groups were perceived as a means of accepting each other's differences and learning to get along. Peers were perceived as people with whom to talk, share, grow, learn, laugh, and cry. Peer relationships were perceived as critical and important. An expanding awareness was perceived by a greater number of pre-service teachers that some young adolescents were isolated by peers and did not fit in with any peer group.

Nine of the journals reflected the recurring theme of peer relationships including both positive and negative influence (including isolation) as evidenced by the following selected excerpts:

It [The Outsiders] showed how kids can band together for the love and security they need. A family does not have to be related. (Jean's Journal)

The Chocolate War was a very disturbing yet enlightening book. Lets you see two sides of the politics in schools which I had never realized existed before. (Carrie's Journal)

I can't imagine a young girl would actually go into the

street or cause a car accident due to her loneliness like in Just One Friend. But unless someone has felt as desperately lonely as this girl, one couldn't understand those actions. It's depressing for me to think about people who are so lonely when there are so many people in the world to love. But it happens and it's sad. (Alice's Journal)

Puberty

"As much as I don't agree with homosexuality, I feel something for the kids" (Janet's Journal).

Puberty was perceived as a time of confusion, transition, searching, questioning, and changing. Sexual and physical development were noted as prevalent during this time frame. The journals reflected an expanding awareness of the young adolescent's search for role and sexual identity. Participants noted such universals as the struggles encountered during puberty for all young adolescents regardless of economic or family background. Physical appearance and especially differences were perceived to be important and a major concern of this age group.

Nine of the journals reflected the recurring theme of puberty including physical development, emotions, conflict, sexuality, role identity, and sexual identity with expanding perceptions as evidenced by the following selected excerpts:

The book Deenie was good in that it dealt with a different type of concern [scoliosis]. At this age, children are very aware of and concerned with their physical appearance. (Lucinda's Journal)

I'll Love You When You're More Like Me is a scary book to me since it touches on homosexuality. I have strong feelings against homosexuality so this brings up a lot of questions to me. I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the

Trip is another book about homosexuality. This subject is still very touchy to me. I don't really know if I would want my kids to be reading this. I think, however, that the mother does not handle the situation right. As much as I don't agree with homosexuality, I feel something for the kids. The mother is entirely too harsh when trying to find out the truth. (Janet's Journal)

In I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip, two young boys have a minor homosexual experience. The book treats it like something some boys go through. The boys simply followed up on some sexual urges. They are not considered bad. (Alice's Journal)

Examination and analysis of the participant journals also revealed the two themes of personalization of the books (including retrospection) and development of personal and professional perspectives. In other words, students internalized themes and messages from the books and related the books to themselves and to their personal past experiences. These themes were common perceptions, all inclusive, and across all topics--families, peers, and puberty. Participants reported that the books reminded them of how life was for them when they were young adolescents and referred to actual titles of books they read or heard discussed during the unit on contemporary realistic fiction. Participants also noted that they thought reading and discussing the books enhanced and enriched their personal and professional perspectives. They wrote that reading the books made them become more sensitive, caring, and understanding people. They also wrote that the books helped them become more aware of what was happening with this age group.

Personalization

"My doctors at Duke Hospital would discuss these books with me, and talking about their struggles made it easier to talk about my own" (Sandy's Journal).

Six of the participants noted the personal impact of contemporary realistic fiction when they reflected on their own adolescence. Pre-service teachers reported that contemporary realistic fiction and some of the specific books studied in this unit helped them deal with personal problems when they were young adolescents including anorexia nervosa, handicaps, physical development, peer relationships, and divorce. The following selected excerpts offer insight into this additional recurring theme of relating books to personal problems:

I have just realized what an impact contemporary realistic fiction had on my life as a fourteen year old. I came close to dying as a result of anorexia nervosa when I was fourteen. After I began to gain some weight (after a low of 69 pounds), reading realistic fiction books on anorexia was part of my treatment. It was encouragement to me to read about other girls who beat it, even though they were not real. My doctors at Duke Hospital would discuss these books with me, and talking about their struggles made it easier to talk about my own. Keesa in The Best Little Girl in the World, and the girls in some of the other books became my friends and helped me get through a tough, traumatic time in my life. (Sandy's Journal)

When my parents got divorced a million years ago, a family friend gave me a copy of Judy Blume's It's Not the End of the World. It helped me sort out my feelings and to realize that I wasn't alone in the world after all. (Lou's Journal)

I could really relate to The Divorce Express by Paula Danziger because I have been on it for over fifteen years now. The idea of having two holidays for everyone is very

familiar. Christmas in my family is a scheduling nightmare, primarily because divorce has run rampant in my family. Not only do I have two families I must see at Christmas, so does my step-brother, and so does his daughter. To get us all in one place at the same time takes tremendous efforts. I have come to find Christmas very tiring and a lot of trouble. I think the "divorce express" is one of the reasons why I don't enjoy this holiday much any more. I can definitely relate to any child that feels the pull between parents. (Lucinda's Journal)

Seven pre-service teachers wrote that the books brought back both painful and happy memories of their own young adolescence. It was perceived that these books helped the reader remember family relationships, peer relationships, and puberty experiences. The following specific excerpts offer insight into this retrospection:

I did [presented] Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. today. I felt like I honestly knew Margaret by the time I finished the book. Growing up is no picnic when things happen to your body that you can't control. I would not be twelve or thirteen ever again!! These were the worst two years of my life. I love these books so much. They bring back lots of memories of my own growing up times. I hated being a teenager more than I ever hated anything else in my life. I remember reading so many of these books, and they helped me through some rough times. (Sandy's Journal)

I really love this new Judy Blume book Just As Long As We're Together. It's a book of friendships, and painful but necessary growth. I was in a relationship like the one described here where three of us were best friends. I cried reading this book because I can vividly remember the pain of feeling left out, even when the other two people are not intentionally doing it. (Sandy's Journal)

As adults, we forget what it was like to go through puberty and adolescence and this book [Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.] is a great reminder. (Toni's Journal)

I can remember feeling many of the things that Margaret felt [Are you there God? It's me, Margaret.] and it brought back some good memories. It's funny how you forget once you get older. (Lucinda's Journal)

Professional Perspectives

"Understanding is the key" (Betty's Journal).

Eleven of the participants perceived the books to be valuable tools and resources for both teachers and teaching. They wrote that reading and discussing these books helped them become more aware of young adolescent development and experiences. Participants also wrote that they desired to share these books with their own students one day. The following selected excerpts offer insight into these added perceptions:

There are many great values to contemporary realistic fiction books. They fill a "need." Although they do not replace professional help (where needed) nor do they provide an "answer" to the situations they deal with, they can be very helpful merely because they make you say "hey, I'm not the only one." Or "maybe someone else knows just how I feel." Such value is important especially to youths in the particular age range we focus on, 10-14. So much change is going on. Books can be a means of thinking things through. A place to go; not perhaps for help or answers as much as merely "a place to go." A place where you can be alone, yet you're never alone. Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. brings back memories. It is so timely to young girls going through this time. The uncertainties, searching, questioning, self-doubts. It is easy to relate to. (Betty's Journal)

Mom, the Wolfman, and Me is a book that should be in classrooms to show kids it's O.K. to have only one parent. (Jean's Journal)

The Alfred Summer seemed like another very touching story about people with physical and mental handicaps. I think that there are many people that need to develop a better understanding of handicapped people. Perhaps more books like this one would help. (Lucinda's Journal)

My own reaction to this book [A December Tale] is very emotional. It deals with child neglect and abuse. It shows how children react to pressures of blackmail, brutal beatings, and abandonment. Lord help children who really go

through this. I feel like I am really developing a greater awareness of this age group. Understanding is the key.
(Betty's Journal)

Participant Perceptions at End of Unit

Essays and final interviews offered insight into perceptions of pre-service teachers at the conclusion of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction.

Pre-service teachers were asked to write their second essay at the conclusion of the unit as part of their regular coursework. The topic, My Perceptions Of Young Adolescents, used in the first essay was also used for the second essay. These essays revealed participants possessed broadened perceptions of the young adolescent experiences within the three frames of reference--families, peers, and puberty.

The final interviews began by having the participants discuss semantic ordered trees (Strahan, 1986) completed at the conclusion of the unit. These trees were used for reflection and discussion. The questions and responses were recorded on tape to provide a precise and accurate record. The individual responses were recorded in a question-answer format. The investigator used probing questions to encourage participants to relate present feelings about young adolescents and young adolescent experiences particularly in the topic areas studied in contemporary realistic fiction--family relationships, peer relationships, and puberty.

The analysis of responses from second essays and final interviews revealed broadened perceptions within the common frames of reference--family, peers, and puberty--and an overall expanded awareness of young adolescents in general. Participants also revealed an expanding awareness of "self" personally and professionally.

The following is an analysis of the second essays and final interviews revealing recurring themes and similarities. Unique differences were also noted.

Families

"We saw a little bit of everything in our books and most of it seemed to be working out pretty good" (Judy, Final Interview).

The second essays revealed the participants continued to perceive families as being important to young adolescents, but the definition of family was broader with participants reporting a wider variety of family structures and experiences. Non-nurturing family situations were also noted by a greater number of participants.

Eight of the second essays reflected the recurring themes of family and family relationships with pre-service teachers reporting changing or expanding perceptions. More specifically, the following excerpts from second essays offer insight into participant perceptions:

What I have really learned from our study is the wide variety of circumstances children in today's world are faced with. Sometimes maybe adults put too great of expectations on young adults who are in bad situations at home. (Betty, Second Essay)

Before our study, I had one definition in my mind for the word "family". Now my definition of family is much broader. It includes a much wider variety of family structures and experiences. (Lucinda, Second Essay)

When it comes to family situations, most teenagers differ greatly. Some come from wonderful, loving, understanding and supportive homes where they get the security they need. Some young adolescents come from troubled, broken homes with alcoholism, drugs, abuse, divorced parents, or even live in foster homes. (Lou, Second Essay)

While participant responses during the final interviews continued to indicate the positive aspect of family life, a broadening of perceptions was reported. While family was seen as providing love, support, security, and role models, a broadening perception of family was noted by participants that some families were less nurturing, non-supportive, neglectful, and abusive. Participants also perceived a broadening perspective of the family unit and its complexity. Family was perceived to be not only two-parent, but also stepparents, single parents, siblings, foster homes, grandparents, or other relatives. Participants reported that prior to the study of contemporary realistic fiction, they possessed a rather common, traditional, stereotyped, middle-class definition of family based on personal experiences.

More specifically, the following final interview responses offer insight into these broadened perceptions of family:

There are many different types of families today--the single parent, foster homes, grandparents. The books A December Tale, The Bear's House, and Where the Lilies Bloom really made me think about the neglected children. These instances of neglect were the most shocking to me. In the book A December Tale the foster home was abusive and the real home neglective. (Betty, Final Interview)

We have seen from the books that people can have a good, satisfying family life regardless of economic class. The Bear's House showed us that sometimes parents just stop being parents for one reason or another. Some kids are coping with parents who are alcoholics, sick, unconcerned. In the book Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack, this upper-class girl was starved for her active, PTA president mother's attention. She did everything to get her mother's attention. (Carrie, Final Interview)

The books brought out that some families are different. In Mom, the Wolfman and Me she didn't want a father. I always thought that having both a father and a mother was the perfect thing. This was no big deal to her. She didn't want a father. I thought, you know, that's neat! Different homes are fine. Different life styles are fine and literature is showing that. Everyone doesn't have to live in the house with the picket fence with a mom and dad, dog, cat, and sister. We saw a little bit of everything in our books and most of it seemed to be working out pretty good. I realize that there isn't one definition of the "right" family. There can be lots of good different family structures. (Judy, Final Interview)

A greater number of participants moved beyond previous perceptions that family had to be related biologically or by marriage and noted that peers were often "family" for young adolescents. Participants also reported that teachers are the primary caregivers and "family" for some children. The following final interview responses offer insight into this new awareness of "family."

I would hope that they would all be going home to supportive families, but I know that's not true. I

will think about what some of them will be facing when they go through their front door to home. Some have families that don't really care what is going on. The Bear's House really touched me. The Outsiders made me realize that some kids don't have supportive families at all. Their friends become their families. So it doesn't always have to be a parent a child gets support from. (Mary, Final Interview)

The other day at the after school program where I work, there was this one little girl in the fifth grade who was always getting in trouble and I had to take her outside the room. She was crying and I thought it was much too hard for the incident that had just taken place in the classroom. I said, "now tell me what is really wrong." Well, she told me, all right. She told me her mom first was divorced and had been living the last two years with a man that the little girl and her brother thought her mom was going to marry. They really loved him. But her mom broke up with him and within a month, the mother was taking the two kids and staying with her new boyfriend at his house. It was so traumatic. She was so so emotional. And then I thought to say to her that a lot of kids go through the same experience and things have a way of turning out all right. Kids do tell their teachers don't they? We may not want to be, but I think teachers are the primary caregivers for a lot of kids. There's just no one there for them to turn to and they have to tell someone. I felt good that through my study of these books and the experiences I had in this class, I knew she needed to hear that other people had experienced similar problems. In fact, I had even experienced something like this and that she would make it through all right. It helped ease some of the pain for her. This was worth the whole literature class [EDU 305]--to know that she needed to hear that and to see her face after I said it. We had a bond. (Alice, Final Interview)

I guess I realize that everyone is capable of loving and sharing regardless of the circumstances they are brought up in. They all need the same things as far as love and caring, support, and understanding. I hope I can provide this for my students. (Judy, Final Interview)

And in one instance, a make-believe house of bears a teacher placed in the back of her classroom became

"family" for one lonely child.

There was this book called The Bear's House that really touched me. This little girl wanted a normal family so bad that she made up one in this little bear's house in the back of her classroom. (Liza, Final Interview)

Peers

"If you are left out or neglected, it can affect your self-worth. It can hurt you through out life" (Mary, Final Interview).

Eight of the second essays reflected the recurring theme of peer relationships with pre-service teachers perceiving that peer relationships can bring joy and stress to young adolescents. A greater number of participants noted that a few young adolescents were "isolates" and did not experience belonging and acceptance with peers. Pre-service teachers wrote that they felt their perceptions of peer relationships changing after the study. The following specific excerpts offer insight into participant perceptions in the second essays at the conclusion of the unit:

Much of their life is centered around relationships and how to get along with others. This is a new concept for them. Childhood is an "egocentric" time. However, young adolescents are expected to get along with one another. This can cause a great deal of stress. On the other hand, though, it can bring joy. Never before in their lives have they had so many people to count on and relate to. (Janet, Second Essay)

Most teenagers also have close friends, or a peer group, that provide some of the love and attention they need. However, there are young adolescents who are "isolates" and have no peers or friends because for one reason or another they are ignored by society. (Lou, Second Essay)

My perceptions of this age group have changed somewhat since the in-depth study. I realize that although family

plays a very important part in the child's life, peers and school play an equally (or almost) important part. In some cases, peers replace family like in The Outsiders. (Carrie, Second Essay)

Final interviews reinforced that pre-service teachers thought young adolescents needed to belong, be accepted, and "fit in" with a peer group and continued to stress that peer groups were primarily positive. A broadened perception of peers in some instances replacing the family unit and providing the security, support, love, and stability needed by all young adolescents was reported by a greater number of pre-service teachers. Participants perceived peers and peer groups as capable of causing feeling of rejection and isolation for young adolescents. Participants noted that prior to the study of the contemporary realistic unit, their definition of peer relationships was rather narrow and based on personal experiences.

The following specific responses from final interviews offer insight into these broadened perceptions:

Sometimes I saw in the books that the peers took the place of family, like in the neglect situations. The peers became a source of stability for them, like in The Outsiders. Peers were good in some cases and bad in others like the ones in The Chocolate War. In the book A December Tale, she wanted to be in a peer group so bad, the one with her foster sister, that she let her little brother be abused by the foster mother. In The Bear's House, the little girl was a loner. She still sucked her thumb and smelled bad. They are affected by peers, but do not belong to a peer group. Jerry in The Chocolate War was like that. (Betty, Final Interview)

Children have a need to belong to someone, some group. The peers are their life lines, surrogate families. We

found in the books we read that most kids do belong to peer groups, either good or bad. We read about a few isolates that didn't belong. I think that most children are categorized even if they don't belong to an actual peer group. (Carrie, Final Interview)

Peers can make it the best for you or the worst. I think it is really important whether your peers accept you or neglect you because it can go on into adulthood. If you are left out or neglected, it can affect your self-worth. It can hurt you through out life. (Mary, Final Interview)

Puberty

"I think a lot of boys are like that. If someone calls them a sissy, they might start questioning their own identity" (Lucinda, Final Interview).

The second essays revealed the participants continued to perceive puberty as being a time of change and transition. Twelve of the second essays reflected the recurring theme of puberty including physical development, emotions, conflict, and sexuality. The following specific responses offer insight into participant perceptions:

I feel that young adolescents live in a different world from everyone else. For a few years, their whole identity and self-concept crumble in front of them. The goal of adolescence is to put it all together again. I can summarize my feelings with a familiar passage:

It was the best of times.
 It was the worst of times.
 It was the age of wisdom.
 It was the age of foolishness.
 It was the epoch of belief.
 It was the epoch of incredibility.
 It was the season of light.
 It was the season of darkness.
 It was the spring of hope.
 It was the winter of despair.
 We had everything before us.
 We had nothing before us.

Charles Dickens
A Tale of Two Cities
 (Sandy, Second Essay)

Young adolescents are very vulnerable today. They are forced to grow up so fast and they are hurried into adulthood. (Janet, Second Essay)

The life of a young adolescent is very difficult and confusing. All teenagers, no matter what area of life they are from, have problems of one sort or another. Most all young adolescents have the same problems when dealing with puberty. Young adolescents are at a difficult stage because they are somewhere between being children and being adults and it seems to be the worst of both worlds. (Lou, Second Essay)

In the final interviews, participants maintained that puberty was a time of transition, change, and frustration. While responses indicated that participants noted all young adolescents experienced concern about physical development and sexuality, a broadened insight was noted that some young adolescents experience a concern about sexual identity and sexuality. One participant noted a foster home situation in which a young girl found herself in a brief encounter with a foster father which left her feeling "bad," "unclean," and "dirty." Broadened perceptions into young adolescent male concerns with puberty were noted. Participants reported that prior to the study of contemporary realistic fiction, they possessed a definition for pubertal experiences based on personal experiences. The following specific responses from final interviews offer insight into these broadened perceptions:

In one of the books I read, The Once In Awhile Hero, the boy was told by one of his friends that he looked like a girl. His best friends were girls and all he had were sisters, so he started to be real concerned with being homosexual or gay. There were not actions

that indicated that he was, but just in his own mind he was worried. I think a lot of boys are like that. If someone calls them a sissy they might start questioning their own identity. I think this is more common than we think. (Lucinda, Final Interview)

In the book Foster Child the girl never had a father until she went into the foster home. She really loved him. He was comforting her when she wasn't feeling well, rubbing her back and she felt like this was so neat and nurturing and then it went on a step too far and this wasn't so great. She had never had any experience with boys her own age and it made her feel real yucky and dirty and bad about it. It was only one experience and it would have been worse, but her foster brother heard what was going on and came into the room and threatened to tell. She ran away from there and it never happened again. But it was a time when she was just starting to develop and it was pretty sad that this had to happen. If a girl who was experiencing this sort of situation read this book, it might help her deal with it. She finally went to live with her best friend and her parents. This was a healthy situation for her. (Alice, Final Interview)

Well, the book that comes to mind with puberty for me is Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret. by Judy Blume. It was presented in kind of a comical way at times but you really saw the struggles that Margaret was going through as to how her body was changing and in her case, how it wasn't changing when she thought it should. She compared herself to other girls her age like Laura who was very developed and seemed to have the perfect body. Even the teacher looked at her a lot. She desired to be more like Laura. She thought she was just awful because she hadn't started her period yet. Her mother could do nothing to make it come faster. If I Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip also by Judy Blume was another book that showed the struggle with sexuality. The boy was trying to sort it all out. I had never thought about what boys go through. This book opened my eyes. I think it's harder for boys. They are worried that all their friends have had a girl and they haven't. They are also worried about development of their bodies and compare themselves to other guys. This book told how a guy was trying to sort out his feelings and decide which way he wanted to go. This book showed me that guys were going through this as painfully as girls. (Sandy, Final Interview)

Pre-service teachers were asked during the final interview what the significance of their experiences with the unit on contemporary realistic fiction had been to them personally and professionally. All 12 participants expressed that the unit broadened their growing overall awareness of young adolescents and added personal and professional perspectives. The participants were beginning to "think and talk like teachers." The following specific responses offer insight into this growing awareness and new personal and professional perspectives which crossed all topics:

Personal Perspective

"You can't always base knowing on your own personal experience" (Lucinda, Final Interview).

Participants reported that they possessed a greater understanding of young adolescents after reading and discussing the books and that they "knew" them better. The following responses offer insight into these personal perspectives:

I think this has made me more aware. It shows me that you really do need to know the children in your class and not take anything for granted. I can really relate to this by reading the books. I can see that with some of these kids, especially the isolates, you don't know what is going on in their heads. I think the teachers are just as guilty as the kids. I think teachers leave some kids in the shadows. They are the last ones picked during kickball. Teachers neglect kids sometimes. I think they get wrapped up in what they are doing. I think you really need to make a conscious effort professionally, to look beyond. I think I am more aware, more tuned in. I think I know these kids better now. We all think we know about puberty and

growing up, family, and peers, but we have a narrow, limited view--a personal view of how it was for us individually. I can think of this group both uniquely now and collectively. Some kids are dealing with pretty common problems, others have really tough ones. If you don't know where kids are coming from, you can't relate to them. I think I have a better understanding of where they are coming from. (Betty, Final Interview)

It has really broadened my insight. I was brought up in a very sheltered environment. (Carrie, Final Interview)

There's nothing that can make you more aware of what's going on than to read about people that are experiencing it. I feel like I can really relate to these kids now. We were all that age at one time, but you forget what it was really like and don't realize that it isn't the same for everybody. Some kids are worried about wearing certain brands of clothes like GUESS [designer jeans] or POLO and others are worrying about just surviving--getting by. (Liz, Final interview.)

Professional Perspective

"They all need the same things as far as love and caring, support, and understanding. I hope I can provide this for my students" (Judy, Final Interview).

At the conclusion of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction, participants were beginning to think of themselves as teachers. They talked like teachers. The following specific excerpts offer insight into this new professional perspective:

I know that I need to be open as a teacher to the fact that there is so much variety in the things they are experiencing. I had such an easy life. I had no idea that some kids were struggling like we read about in the books and going through some of the things they were going through. I know about the types of things to be aware of as a teacher. I see a teacher's role as needing to be a source of acceptance constantly and being able also to give support. The teacher needs to

be a stable secure figure and offer a positive way to look at things. (Alice, Final Interview)

I guess I realize that everyone is capable of loving and sharing regardless of the circumstances they are brought up in. They all need the same things as far as love and caring, support, and understanding. I hope I can provide this for my students. (Judy, Final Interview)

Professionally, I think this is mandatory for every teacher to know. To be more aware of why they act the way they do. Why the relationships are so intense. Why they are so moody, seem to be irresponsible sometimes. I just think it is helpful to be aware and it will help me be a better teacher and supporter. If I see a student floundering, I think I could reach out and be some help. (Sandy, Final Interview)

I think before we studied the books and had the discussions, I was looking at the young adolescent from the surface. I thought about them from what I saw on the outside--the obvious things such as clothes and other material things. But after we read the books, I remembered more of the feelings I experienced at this age. These books brought it all back. I think you forget a lot of things. I don't think we realize how much we forget until we read the books. I led such an average life. I had no major problems to contend with. The books showed us how some of the problems kids are dealing with are manifested in the school setting. I think I am more aware of the wide range of things that might be happening to kids in my classroom. I think being more aware will make me a more sensitive, caring, involved teacher. I am more aware and see more clearly the insecurity, the wondering, the experimenting. I've thought about a lot of things that I never thought about before. My knowledge and understanding of this group have grown, sort of expanded. You think that once you have experienced this time period in your life, you know how it all feels. But it is only a fraction of what's going on. (Mary, Final Interview)

I don't think I will ever be able to look at young adolescents superficially anymore. I realize that they are not just concerned with surface things. They really are real people trying to struggle with their feelings and be real people in life. They are not as artificial as they seemed to be before. Working with students at this age, you have to realize they are going through so much more than some of them appear to

be. As a teacher, I must be able to be aware. I think I will be more aware. I'll never be able to look at them the same. I had such simplistic views of them. I'll know them better. (Lou, Final Interview)

It makes me realize that all teachers will have the opportunity to work with lots of different children coming from lots of different backgrounds and home situations. When I have problems with kids in my classroom, I won't just write them off as being unmotivated or belligerent, or lazy. I think after studying this literature, I realize that there are a lot of problems that crop up that children have to face now days and these problems can be reflected in their school behavior. They can be stumbling blocks to learning. (Carrie, Final Interview)

The following matrix briefly summarizes participant responses across all topics and themes during the three time frames of the unit--beginning, during, and end.

Summary of Participant Perceptions

| | <u>Beginning Unit</u> | <u>During Unit</u> | <u>End of Unit</u> |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| FAMILY | traditional, nurturing, and offering role models | began to view family as more diverse and capable of abuse | family viewed as extended unit more complex |
| PEERS | viewed as offering love, influence, and support | began to view as capable of negative effects | viewed as cause of isolation as well as being "family" |
| PUBERTY | perceived as time of rapid change and stress | began to view as period of decisions and search for self | perceived as period of concern with sexuality |
| PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES | | began to reflect a greater awareness about own self | perceived self as more sensitive and nurturing |
| PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES | | began to talk about teaching and sharing books | perceived self as "teacher" and primary caregiver |

Interpretation

In the first two phases of the data analysis process, the data were reviewed and examined for possible inferences germane to this study. The third phase consisted primarily of personal interpretations which were an outgrowth of the researcher's role as a participant and observer in the literature class. These personal interpretations provided answers for the following questions which focused this investigation:

How do students preparing to be middle level teachers perceive young adolescent development?

- a. What are the themes, patterns, and unique differences in their perceptions of these students at the beginning of a unit on contemporary realistic fiction?
- b. How do they express their perceptions differently during the study as they read contemporary realistic fiction?
- c. How do they express their perceptions differently after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?

As one examines the perceptions of the participants in pre-service education, it is important to gain insight into how these pre-service teachers view the young adolescents with which they will interact upon entrance into the teacher/student relationship in the school setting. A close

look at this data as helpful in making inferences and generalizations pertaining to the questions which gave focus to this study. Review and analysis of responses suggested that change and growth took place in participants in two important areas--personally and professionally. First, participants' perceptions of young adolescent development broadened and grew richer after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction. Second, participants came to view themselves as "teacher" at the conclusion of the unit of study. The following sections include this researcher's personal interpretations of pre-service teachers' perceptions at the beginning of the unit, during the unit, and at the end of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction.

Personal Growth

I'll never be able to look at them the same.

I had such simplistic views of them.

(Lou, Final Interview)

Prior to the unit on contemporary realistic fiction, participants in the study viewed young adolescent family relationships in a relatively stereotyped, traditional manner through a personal frame of reference which was an extension of their own experiences. Responses suggested that participants held a composite perception of family as important, supportive, and nurturing--"Family is there for support and guidance." Home was perceived as a place to find security, role models, and responsibility--"Family

teaches many things like how to relate and deal with growing up." Family relationships were also perceived as causing conflict and rebellion--"Maybe the kids are realizing that they can make mistakes and can have different opinions than their parents." Responses also suggested composite perceptions of the family unit as diverse. "The American family is changing." "There are a variety of family relationships." "A lot of them are dealing with working parents, divorce, separation."

Responses prior to the study suggested that participants shared composite perceptions of the importance of peer relationships. Participants viewed peers as primarily positive and maintained that all young adolescents belonged to peer groups. Peers were perceived to exert pressure and intensify the need for status symbols in order for a young adolescent to fit in and belong to a group--"I think that peers are one of the more important things in their lives." "I think their peer group takes over where the family leaves off." Peers were perceived as offering acceptance and security.

A composite of participant perceptions of puberty prior to the study of contemporary realistic fiction reflected common themes of transition, emotions, and sexuality. Participants used such terms as change, growth, sexuality, and searching for describing puberty. Participant responses reflecting this composite perception of puberty included

"They are aware that they are changing. This is about all I know." "These changes cause fears and anxieties."

"Feelings of inadequacy go along with puberty." Young adolescents were perceived to be dealing with awakening sexuality, and concerned with appearance--"Their bodies are changing and they are not completely sure why." Other problems and concerns related to puberty were described as masturbation, intimacy, and independence--"Everything you have been taught before by parents, teachers, and church will be evaluated and sorted out." Young adolescents were viewed as behaving child-like at times and adult-like at others--"One moment they are trying to be grown up and the other they are being young and returning to children." "The child is still a child inside, but an adult on the outside." Responses suggested that puberty was perceived as exciting, and frustrating. Participants could relate to the young girl experiencing puberty, but were not aware of the affect of puberty on boys.

Responses suggested that prior to the unit on contemporary realistic fiction, participants shared composite perceptions of young adolescent development as an extension of their own personal experiences.

During the unit on contemporary realistic fiction, broadening perceptions were noted in areas of family relationships and the family structure. Journal entries such as "I think I was completely oblivious to some of the

more serious [family] situations that children are facing today" and "It's so scary and disturbing to me that some real children lead lives like Myra's" and "I've never even known anyone who has had to face the death of both parents or a parent's suicide" and "I've never been around low-economic surroundings" indicated expansion and growth in participant perceptions of family relationships.

While maintaining the importance of peers and peer relationships, journal entries indicated a broadening awareness and added perceptions here also. A greater number of entries suggested an added awareness that some young adolescents were isolated and alone. Entries such as "But unless someone has felt as desperately lonely as this girl...." "...lets you see two sides of the politics in schools which I had never realized existed before" and "I am frightened for children who attend schools where groups like the Vigils exist" suggested much broader perceptions of peer relationships evolving during the unit.

While maintaining that puberty was a time of change and uncertainty, such entries as "...went through some tough times losing Fred and resolving his feelings about Aultschler [a man]...." suggested an expanding awareness of young adolescents struggling with role identity.

Participant journals reflected personal growth and a wider, richer, expanded range of participant perceptions of young adolescent development.

A central theme among participant responses was the assertion that contemporary realistic fiction books were a means by which teachers could come to know and understand young adolescents better. Such entries as "This would be a good reference for all teachers to read because it seems to give a good general survey of teenage problems which all teachers should be aware of" and "It's a great tool for teachers..." and "Parents and teachers can read these books also and relate to the children's emotions" were seen frequently in the journals.

Responses from participants after completing the unit suggested that pre-service teachers maintained and extended composite perceptions of young adolescent development.

Participants maintained the importance of family relationships, but embraced a broadened perception of family. A greater number of pre-service teachers described family as not always nurturing and capable of neglect and abuse. A more sophisticated perception of the family unit included non-traditional family structure and foster homes offering both positive and negative experiences for young adolescents. "Before our study, I had one definition in my mind for the word family. Now my definition of family is much broader. It includes a much wider variety of family structures and experiences." "When it comes to family situations, most teenagers differ greatly."

Pre-service teachers also perceived "family" as being

those other than relatives. "A family does not have to be related." "I realize that there isn't one definition of the 'right' family. There can be lots of good, different family structures. Different life styles are fine and literature is showing that. Everyone doesn't have to live in the house with the picket fence with a mom and dad, dog, cat, and sister." "There are few typical or 'average' type family situations. We saw a little bit of everything in our books and most of it seemed to be working out pretty good."

Participants perceived teachers as becoming extended family for young adolescents and in some cases the primary caregivers. "We may not want to be but I think teachers are the primary caregivers for some students."

Participants maintained composite perceptions of the importance of peer relationships but reported broadened perceptions of peers as a cause of rejection and isolation. "It is amazing to realize that a group of young students can so cold-bloodedly rule over other kids' lives with no feelings of guilt. Most people always think of kids as being young and innocent. These kids definitely weren't."

Responses suggested a broadened perception of puberty after the study. While maintaining that puberty was a time of transition, growing sexual awareness, and rapid growth for all young adolescents, participants reported added perceptions of some young adolescents struggling with sexual identity. "These kids often have a struggle with role

identity, sexuality...." "As much as I don't agree with homosexuality, I feel something for the kids." Participants began to describe the young adolescent male experience with puberty. "The boy was trying to sort it all out. I had never thought about what boys go through. This book opened my eyes. I think it's harder for boys. This book showed me that guys are going through this as painfully as girls." A greater number of pre-service teachers perceived young adolescent concerns with differences in physical development. "I feel that the young adolescent years are the hardest in a person's life. One of the biggest concerns they have is whether or not they are normal." Participant responses suggested a broader view of the young adolescent experience with puberty after the literature study.

Professional Growth

"I think being more aware will make me a more sensitive, caring, involved teacher"
(Mary, Final Interview).

Participants began to think of themselves as "teacher" after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction. They began to talk about themselves as teachers and "their own" students, classrooms, lessons, and teaching personalities. Responses such as "I know the types of things to be aware of as a teacher" and "I see a teacher's role as needing to be a source of acceptance constantly and being able also to give support" and "The teacher needs to be a stable, secure figure and offer a positive way to look

at things" offer insight into participant professional growth.

Pre-service teachers began to talk about their students and classrooms--"We will have handicapped children in our rooms, abused children, neglected children, lonely children. We need to know and care about all of them. Otherwise, we can never be sensitive teachers." Another participant wrote "If I see a student floundering, I think I could reach out and be some help" and another "They all need the same things as far as love and caring, support, and understanding. I hope I can provide this for my students." And still another wrote "These books gave me insight into why some kids might not be performing as well as you hoped they would. Maybe some of the behavior problems could be related to some of these other problems. Having this understanding might result in students feeling like they could come and talk to you. I might not be so inclined to put off poor student performance on inability. I know now that there are a lot of factors that might contribute to school performance."

Participants also talked about sharing the books with their students--"...kids can read books about kids that are going through similar situations and even though these books don't provide answers, the reader can see that somebody else is getting through, dealing with it and they can too."

In conclusion, pre-service teachers moved beyond personal experiences in their perceptions of young

adolescent development after the study of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction to embrace broader, richer insights. As one pre-service teacher expressed at the conclusion of the unit--"We all think we know about puberty and growing up, family, and peers, but we have a narrow limited view--a personal view of how it was for us individually. I can think of this group both uniquely now and collectively." Another wrote: "You think that once you have experienced this time period in your life, you know how it all feels. It is only a fraction of what's going on."

At the same time, pre-service teachers began to assume the role of "teacher" and placed themselves in "their own classrooms" with "their own students" after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction. These books written for and about young adolescents 10-14 became a means by which pre-service teachers came to view themselves as "teacher." As one participant wrote "Working with students at this age, you have to realize that they are going through so much more than some of them appear to be. As a teacher, I must be able to be aware. I think I will be more aware."

The implications these student perceptions have for the continued development of a teacher education program were addressed in the concluding chapter of this paper.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

There is an urgent need for research in teacher education to turn its attention to closer and more subtle analyses of the impact of university courses, symbols, procedures, and rituals upon the professional perspectives of prospective teachers....There has been been very little direct analysis of the role that the form and content of university teacher education plays in shaping the professional perspectives of students. (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981, p. 10)

One common theme apparent in the literature was that competent middle level teachers must be aware of and understand the nature of young adolescent learners and their developmental needs (Lipsitz, 1985; Alexander, 1984; Toepfer, 1984; Van Hoose & Strahan, 1987). The literature suggested that an important component of pre-service teacher preparation was to provide teachers with this thorough knowledge of early adolescents (McEwin 1984). It was appropriate to consider how and in what ways teachers could obtain this thorough knowledge--to come to know and understand young adolescents. This "coming to know" begins early in the pre-service preparation programs. Pre-service teachers are exposed to and participate in academic content and field experiences in many of their preparatory courses

already specifically designed to lead them to a greater knowing and understanding of young adolescents. The extent to which pre-service teachers are exposed to young adolescent experiences which encourage deliberation and thinking about their critical developmental needs makes a difference.

They [good teachers] are extremely aware of the diversity of early adolescent development, especially the social, cognitive, and physical changes young adolescents experience (Lipsitz, 1984, p. 119).

Perhaps, this investigator thought, it was possible to bring pre-service teachers even closer to this knowing and understanding of what it is like to be a young adolescent today through the study of adolescent literature and specifically contemporary realistic fiction written for and read by this special group. While informing pre-service teachers of the developmental needs of young adolescents is not usually the primary concern of an adolescent literature course, it might well be another means for pre-service teachers "to come to know."

Little research had been done in the area of using adolescent literature to inform pre-service teachers about young adolescents. Since it is a consensus of middle level educators that developmental needs have to be addressed equally with academic needs, (Van Hoose & Strahan 1987), it is critical that as much information as possible, and in as many ways as possible, be gathered in this area. Since the

study of adolescent literature was already a valuable component of pre-service education, using a portion of it primarily as a means to further expose the developmental needs of young adolescents could provide essential information concerning the development of a more "understanding and knowing" middle level teacher. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of the developmental needs of young adolescents during the literature component of teacher education and more specifically the unit on contemporary realistic fiction and gain insight into the following areas:

- How do students preparing to be middle level teachers perceive young adolescent development?
- a. What are the themes, patterns, and unique differences in the perceptions of these pre-service teachers at the beginning of a unit on contemporary realistic fiction?
 - b. How do they express their perceptions differently during the study as they read contemporary realistic fiction?
 - c. How do they express their perceptions differently after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction?

These questions were investigated in three distinct but highly integrated activities. First, perceptions of pre-service teachers prior to the unit were examined through

essays and interviews. Perceptions of pre-service teachers during the unit were examined through journals. Finally, perceptions of pre-service teachers at the conclusion of the unit were investigated through second essays and final interviews conducted at the completion of the unit.

Limitations

As a teacher educator and instructor for the literature component of teacher education at Queens College, the researcher felt the need and had the opportunity to determine the extent to which exposure to adolescent contemporary realistic fiction might make a difference to pre-service teachers. Functioning as both course instructor and investigator may have been a limitation of this study. Although every effort was made to avoid bias, to insure that pre-service teachers were afforded the opportunity to choose freely whether or not to participate, and to guarantee that class grades would not be influenced by the study, students probably perceived the researcher as instructor. Another limitation might be that time did not permit this investigator to determine the long-term effects the study of contemporary realistic fiction had on the pre-service teachers over time. Shifts in perceptions may occur differently at other institutions since Queens College students are "typically middle class."

Conclusions

This investigator thought pre-service teachers like many others, tended to view the world through their own eyes, bringing meaning to life through personal experiences and interpretations. This was the case at the beginning of the unit on contemporary realistic fiction. Participants talked and wrote about themselves, their own families and experiences with adolescence. Responses such as "when I was 10-14" and "I remember mine" and "my family was loving" reflected these personal views.

During the unit, changes in pre-service teachers' perceptions were directly linked with the study of contemporary realistic fiction. Participants began to refer to specific books read in class when writing in their journals and when talking about young adolescents. They began to reach out beyond personal experiences and prefaced responses with phrases such as "I can't imagine the pain" and "this was so shocking" and "I never realized" reflecting their expanding awareness.

At the conclusion of the unit, pre-service teachers' perceptions of young adolescents had changed, broadened, and expanded. Documents and dialogue reinforced this. As in the Culp (1985) study, participants reported that the study of contemporary realistic fiction had made them more aware. Responses such as "I'll never be able to think of them the same" and "I had such simplistic views of them" reflected

these changing perceptions. One pre-service teacher summed it all up in the following:

I guess what I realize most is that I didn't know as much as I thought. Thus, in working with them, one needs to be very sensitive and open to what their needs may be. There is great variety in their needs. They do need loving, positive, role models, ones who accept them unconditionally.

Participants began to internalize and personalize the books and noted that they experienced identification with characters in the books as did the participants in the Culp (1985) study. They related the books to past personal experiences and reported that the books reminded them of how life was for them when they were young adolescents.

When this unit was planned, the instructor was not sure how students would perceive early adolescents or how the experiences of the course would alter perceptions. Now that these perceptions have been documented, it is possible to reflect upon the course and speculate as to the relationships between shifts in perceptions and the experiences of the course.

Activities occurring after the participants read the contemporary realistic fiction that may have been most instrumental in encouraging these shifts included (a) participants sharing books they read with the class in an oral presentation and (b) the class discussion of the books after they were shared. When asked at the end of the unit about experiences in the class which related to how they

perceived young adolescents, all participants responded that sharing, and discussing the books were the most meaningful to them. Responses such as "It was great hearing the others in the class talk about their books" and "I heard ideas I had never considered before" and "The class discussions opened the books up to closer scrutiny" and "I thought it was very important to have that time after the sharing of the books to comment and talk"--all attest to the importance of the sharing and discussing.

In summary, this investigator concluded from dialogue with pre-service teachers and a close look at data that the study of contemporary realistic fiction offered pre-service teachers an opportunity to reach out beyond personal experiences and embrace a broader, richer view of young adolescents. As one pre-service teacher wrote:

What we need to do is recognize individual students. I see a great need to know students and their situations. These kids are as varied as the situations they come from. We should understand their need for freedom to grow. Yet never forget our responsibility to them. Knowing what they think and like and do has got to make us more sensitive teachers.

The extent to which pre-service teachers are exposed to young adolescent experiences which encourage deliberation and thinking about their critical developmental needs did make a difference. For these pre-service teachers, the study of contemporary realistic fiction provided a very rich opportunity for "coming to know and understand" young adolescents. Their comments indicated they considered their

perceptions of young adolescents to be broader and more sophisticated after the unit and this would enable them to become more sensitive, caring, and nurturing teachers. These findings confirmed studies in related areas by Flux, Fidler, and Rogers, 1976; Berg-Cross and Berg-Cross, 1978; Britton and Lumpkin, 1984; Meisel, 1982; Dobo, 1982; and May 1983.

An exciting outcome of this study was that change and growth occurred in two important areas for pre-service teachers--personally and professionally. First, participants' perceptions of young adolescent development broadened and grew richer after their experience with contemporary realistic fiction. Participants expressed that they "knew this age group better" and "could understand them better." Second, participants came to view themselves as "teacher." This process of participants gradually thinking of self as teacher evolved over time during the study of contemporary realistic fiction. At the beginning, pre-service teachers did not refer to "my classroom," "my students," or themselves as "teacher." By the conclusion of the study, these comments were made frequently--and by all 12 pre-service teachers. The investigator views this as an important contribution to the body of knowledge needed for teacher education.

Recommendations

The information, insights, and understandings derived from this study provided a basis on which to offer recommendations for future educational endeavors, study, and research. The following recommendations for possible future research efforts are made as a direct result of this study:

1. Examine the long term effects of pre-service teachers' exposure to in-depth study of contemporary realistic fiction. One could possibly interview pre-service teachers at various intervals during their pre-service education, again at the conclusion of student teaching block, and after the first year of teaching to determine the effect of the in-depth study of contemporary realistic fiction. Another possibility would be that pre-service teachers continue journals and that these journals be examined at the same intervals.
2. Conduct additional studies into the effect of contemporary realistic fiction on pre-service teachers' perceptions of self and young adolescents.
3. Compare perceptions of pre-service teachers who have had an experience with an in-depth study of contemporary realistic fiction to those who have not.

Other recommendations that are derived directly from the results of this study include the following educational endeavors:

1. Extend the study of contemporary realistic fiction by having participants conduct their own field research. This could be accomplished by having pre-service teachers observe young adolescents in the natural school setting and compare how these young adolescents compare to the characters in the books.
2. Have pre-service teachers write a critical biography. Pre-service teachers were asked during the study how they thought contemporary realistic fiction related to them personally and professionally. The critical biography could be an extension of this.

Implications

These 12 pre-service teachers experienced new and richer insights into young adolescent development after their in-depth study of contemporary realistic fiction. While this study was of a small number of pre-service teachers, its depth of inquiry provided insights which contributed to the body of knowledge needed to provide guidelines for the improvement of programs in teacher education needed to prepare more knowledgeable middle level

teachers. Familiarizing pre-service teachers with contemporary realistic fiction is already a unit of children's literature. It is simple enough to have pre-service teachers read it with an added objective--getting to know middle level students better.

An interesting and exciting outcome of this study was that contemporary realistic fiction was also a means by which pre-service teachers came to view themselves as "teacher." Personal and professional perspectives were enriched and enhanced for the pre-service teachers. Although not a methods and materials course or a psychology course, children's literature at this college was one way these pre-service teachers came to know and understand young adolescent development in a broader, richer manner. This is one teacher educator who will never teach children's literature strictly as a "survey of literature" again.

Summary

Working with pre-service teachers to acquaint them as fully as possible with the students with which they will work has always been one of the goals of teacher education. Programs should be continuously strengthened, enhanced and enriched, elements added, new approaches tried, and knowledge increased, in order to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities for a greater understanding and a greater awareness of themselves and their students.

Adolescent literature, and more specifically contemporary realistic fiction, can be a window into the life and world of a young adolescent and is a means by which pre-service teachers can reach a higher level of knowing and understanding of this age group. Teachers come to know their students in many ways. Why not through contemporary realistic fiction?

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APPENDIX A

COURSE SYLLABUS

EDU 305 Literature For Children

Queens College

EDU 305
Literature For Children
Fall TermCourse Outline and Information

Instructor: Professor Suzanne M. Degni
Office: McEwen 25-A Phone: 337-2200 ext. 481
Office Hours: Mon. 3:00-4:00; Tues 11:30-1:30, 3:00-4:00;
Wed. 1:00-2:00; Thurs. 3:00-4:00, or by appt.

TEXTBOOK: THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD-AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, 2ND EDITION, 1987, Norton, Columbus, Merrill Co.

I. Course Description:

Book selection and integration of knowledge of children and books; including evaluating types of literature and planning ways of using books with children. This course is designed primarily for education majors.

II. Course Competencies and Guidelines:

This course is designed to meet, or in combination with other education courses meet, the following North Carolina Professional Educational Guidelines: Early Childhood Education Guidelines 1,6,10; Intermediate Education Guidelines 1,6,7,8; Professional Educational Guidelines 3,4,8.

III. Course Objectives:

- To learn the values of literature for children
- To study history of children's literature
- To learn standards for evaluating books for children
- To develop and apply specific criteria for evaluating the various types of literature read by children
- To study traditional literary heritage, modern fantasy, poetry, contemporary realistic fiction, multiethnic literature, and nonfiction
- To become more familiar with contemporary realistic fiction currently available through an in-depth study
- To develop motivational and interpretive activities in connection with literature
- To develop skill in using literature in teaching critical thinking, in general, and critical reading, in particular
- To widen knowledge of and learn to appraise more adequately graphic media used by artists to illustrate books

-To identify and evaluate the contributions of contemporary pacesetting authors and illustrators of children's books

IV. Course Requirements:

Students will attend and be prepared for class by completing daily reading and other assignments.

Students will observe in various public and private school libraries.

Students will write one-page essays in class during the study of different genres of literature.

Students will be required to keep journals during the literature study reflecting feelings and perceptions developing during the study of the different genres. Journals will be collected at the completion of each genre.

Students will present a major term project, the purpose of which is to thoroughly research an author or illustrator of interest to the student and present findings in a written research paper and oral presentation to class. Examples of author/illustrator's work are to be shared with class.

Students will present three (3) minor literature projects associated with the topics being studied.

Students will be required to complete outside readings from professional journals and make summaries due at specified times.

Students will have two (2) major tests.

V. Attendance Policy:

More than three (3) unexcused absences result in a reduced grade. Tests or class presentations missed on unexcused absence days may not be made up.

VI. Grades: Grades will be based on tests (2), minor projects (4), major project. Journals, essays (4), and outside reading cards (6) will not be graded, but are necessary for successful completion of the course. No Final Exam.

VII. Grading Scale:

| | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|
| A= 92-100 | C+=80-83 | |
| B+= 88-91 | C=74-79 | |
| B= 84-87 | D=67-73 | F=66-below |

ALL WORK MUST BE TYPED EXCEPT JOURNAL NOTECARDS.

OUTSIDE READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Read short journal articles concerning any aspect of children's literature. Articles should have appeared after 1980. Sources include Language Arts, The Reading Teacher, English Journal, Elementary School Journal, Instructor, and Learning among others. On five by eight index cards, write out key points from the article and be prepared to share thoughts on the article orally and turn in the cards. Students are expected to read and submit six (6) articles. (See syllabus for due dates.)

LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN MINOR PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Artists and illustrators make a valuable contribution to the realm of children's literature. Students will research "picture books" for children and compile an annotated bibliography. Students will share the annotated bibliography with the class as well as examples of the picture books. (Select at least six books.)

2. Contemporary realistic fiction are books that portray life in the contemporary world as we know it today. These books extend children's horizons, and many stories are written about children who have similar interests, concerns, and experiences. Thus children discover that their problems and desires are not unique; when they read about other children in similar situations, they get comfort from knowing that they are not alone. Readers are shown different ways to deal with problems. These books provide a means by which children can gain insights into their feelings and those of others and can stimulate discussion and help children share and solve problems. Realistic fiction also provides a means by which children may discharge repressed emotions and thereby be helped to cope with their fear, anger, or grief. Students will examine books that depict realistic situations, prepare an annotated bibliography to share with the class, and provide examples of such books for class discussion and sharing. Caution: Students need to be aware that realistic fiction should not be used to replace professional help in situations that may warrant intervention. (Select at least six books.)

3. Students will explore different kinds of children's literature for each of the four ethnic or racial groups (Black Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans). Students will share books with the class portraying these ethnic groups. In their examination of these books students will identify what composite picture of that particular ethnic group is presented by that body of literature. This composite picture should reveal (a) the

3. Students will explore different kinds of children's literature for each of the four ethnic or racial groups (Black Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans). Students will share books with the class portraying these ethnic groups. In their examination of these books students will identify what composite picture of that particular ethnic group is presented by that body of literature. This composite picture should reveal (a) the common things shared by the people who are members of this ethnic group; (b) the uniqueness among the people who are members of this ethnic group; (c) the universals which the members of the ethnic group share with other people not members of their ethnic group. Students will share annotated bibliographies and examples of books with the class. (Select at least six books.)

MAJOR PROJECT:

Students will thoroughly research an author of children's books and write a five to seven page research report about findings. Students will present their reports in an oral presentation to the class providing examples of the author's works. The research paper must be typed and in MLA format. The class presentation should be approximately 10 - 15 minutes in length.

| <u>Session</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Source</u> |
|----------------|--|---------------|
| 1 | Course Introduction and Information Homework: Read Chapter 1 | |
| 2 | The Child and Children's Literature Homework: Read Chapter 2 | Chap 1 |
| 3 | History of Children's Literature Homework: Read Chapter 3 | Chap 2 |
| 4 | Eval. and Selecting Literature For Child Homework: Read Chapter 4 | Chap 3 |
| 5 | Artists and Their Illustrations | Chap 4 |
| 6 | Artists and Their Illustrations Homework: Read Chapter 5 | Chap 4 |
| 7 | Picture Books | Chap 5 |
| 8 | Picture Books Homework: Read Chapter 6 | Chap 5 |
| 9 | Traditional Literature Homework: Read Chapter 7 | Chap 6 |
| 10 | Modern Fantasy Homework: Read Chapter 8 | Chap 7 |
| 11 | Poetry (First Three (3) Reading Cards Due Homework: Project 1 Preparation | Chap 8 |
| 12 | Project 1 Presentations | |
| 13 | Project 1 Presentations | |
| 14 | Project 1 Presentations Class Review For Test Chapters 1-8 Homework: Review Chapters 1-8 | |
| 15 | Test Chapters 1-8 | |
| 16 | Essay Contemporary Realistic Fiction Homework: Read Chapter 9 | |
| 17 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | Chap 9 |
| 18 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | |
| 19 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | |
| 20 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | |

| | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 21 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | Chap 9 |
| 22 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | |
| 23 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | |
| 24 | Contemporary Realistic Fiction | |
| 25 | Project 2 Presentations | |
| 26 | Project 2 Presentations | |
| 27 | Project 2 Presentations | |
| 28 | Project 2 Presentations | |
| 29 | Project 2 Presentations Essay Homework: Read Chapter 10 | |
| 30 | Historical Fiction Homework: Read Chapter 11 | Chap 10 |
| 31 | Essay Multiethnic Literature | Chap 11 |
| 32 | Multiethnic Literature | Chap 11 |
| 33 | Multiethnic Literature Homework: Read Chapter 12 | Chap 11 |
| 34 | Nonfiction: Biog. and Informational Books Final Three (3) Reading Cards Due | Chap 12 |
| 35 | Project 3 Presentations | |
| 36 | Project 3 Presentations | |
| 37 | Project 3 Presentations Essay Homework Review Chapters 9-12 | |
| 38 | Review Chapters 9-12 For Test | |
| 39 | Test Chapters 9-12 | |
| 40 | Major Project Presentations | |
| 41 | Major Project Presentations Class Evaluation | |

APPENDIX B
SEMANTIC ORDERED TREES

SEMANTIC ORDERED TREES

Directions For Creating Semantic Ordered Trees

Create a Semantic Ordered Tree. Let the topic for this tree be "My Perceptions of Young Adolescents."

1. Use the words listed below to get started. Circle the words you know well enough to feel comfortable using. Cross off those words you do not feel comfortable using-- even if you have heard the term before. Add to the list as seems appropriate to you

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------|
| lunchroom | Nike | self concept | growth |
| pep rally | acne | emotions | abuse |
| role identity | girls | grandparent | braces |
| stability | sexuality | Aids | neglect |
| teachers | group | television | aunt |
| grades | mother | sex | home |
| drugs | girlfriend | mobility | secret |
| father | church | clothes | money |
| sister | stereo | parties | makeup |
| boyfriend | transition | English | sports |
| brother | telephone | baby | dinner |
| teacher | experiment | inadequacy | bedroom |
| classes | popularity | knowledge | afraid |
| hair | emotions | authority | friends |
| PE | height | success | pizza |
| homework | differences | step parent | belong |
| school yard | food | confrontations | beer |
| administrators | complexion | support | bedroom |
| discussions | development | commonalties | buddies |
| gym | pregnancy | work | glasses |
| library | music | physique | love |
| recess | alcohol | competition | jobs |
| popularity | masturbation | understanding | bike |
| Izod | honesty | enemies | study |
| foster home | pets | weight | clubs |
| behavior | security | Playboy | classes |
| peers | health | apartment | dances |
| intimacy | boys | isolation | radio |
| chores | clothes | responsibility | anxiety |
| puberty | stress | distrust | family |
| homosexuality | mobile home | acceptance | help |
| VCR | respect | grades | suicide |
| support | alienation | non support | freedom |

2. Categorize words in the space below and label each category. You do not have to use all the words on the list, and you do not have to use all the category spaces provided. You may add more category spaces, and you may add to the key word list.

Category 1
label:

Category 2
label:

Category 3
label:

Category 4
label:

Category 5
label:

Category 6
label:

3. Make a semantic ordered tree using your perceptions of young adolescents (on next page).
 1. You do not have to use all the words on the list.
 2. You may add any other words to any category you wish.
 3. You can modify any word in any way to make it fit.
 4. You may use any word as many times as you wish.
 5. You may use the words from a category to organize a "branch" in any way that makes sense to you.
 6. You may make connections between the branches to display how words and categories are connected.
 7. Your tree may be as simple or as detailed as you want to make it.
 8. Explain your semantic ordered tree in detail on the page provided so others may understand your meaning.
 9. Summarize your views of young adolescents on the page provided.

Name _____

Date _____

**SEMANTIC ORDERED TREE
BASED ON MY PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG ADOLESCENTS**

AN EXPLANATION OF MY SEMANTIC ORDERED TREE

APPENDIX C

BOOK LIST

Suggested List of ReadingsPuberty

- Adler, C. The Once In Awhile Hero
- Blume, J. Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.
Deenie
Forever
Then Again Maybe I Won't
Tiger Eyes
- Bridgers, S. Home Before Dark
- Byars, B. After the Goat Man
The Animal, The Vegetable
and John D. Jones
- Childress, A. A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich
- Cunnningham, A. Dorp Dead
- Donovan, J. I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the
Trip.
- Garden, N. Annie On My Mind
- Hall, L. Sticks and Stones
- Hinton, S. E. That Was Then, This Is Now.
- Holland, I. The Man Without A Face
- Kerr, M. E. If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?
I'll Love You When You're More Like Me.
- Lipsyte, R. One Fat Summer
- Meyer, C. C. C. Poindexter
- Peck, R. Don't Look and It Won't Hurt.
- Sherburne, A. Too Bad About the Haines Girl.
- Van Leeuwen, J. I Was A Ninety-eight Pound Duckling
- Windsor, P. Diving For Roses
- Zindel, P. My Darling, My Hamburger

Family Relationships

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Bauer, J. | Foster Child |
| Benjamin, C. | The Wicked Step-dog |
| Buchan, S. | When We Lived With Pete |
| Burch, R. | Queenie Peavy |
| Byars, B. | Good-by Chicken Little The Night Swimmers The Pinballs The Summer of the Swans |
| Christopher, M. | The Fox Steals Home |
| Cleary, V. | Dear Mr. Henshaw |
| Cleaver, V. & B. | I Would Rather Be A Turnip Where The Lilies Bloom |
| Danziger, P. | The Divorce Express |
| Dubellar, T. | Maria |
| Fox, P. | The Moonlight Man Blowfish Live in the Sea One-Eyed Cat |
| Hopkins, L. | Mama |
| Hunt, I. | Up a Road Slowly |
| Hurmence, B. | Tough Tiffany |
| Kerr, M. E. | Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack |
| Klein, N. | Mom, the Wolfman and Me |
| Konigsburg, E. | About the B'nai Bagels Journey to an 800 Number |
| Mazer, H. | When the Phone Rang |
| Myers, W. | Won't Know Till I Get There |
| Mann, P. | My Dad Lives In a Downtown Hotel |
| Myers, W. | It Ain't All For Nothing |

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Miles, V. | The Trouble With Thirteen |
| Neville, E. | It's Like This, Cat |
| Paterson, K. | The Great Gilly Hopkins Jacob Have I Loved |
| Peck, R. | Don't Look and It Won't Hurt |
| Sachs, M. | A December Tale The Bear's House |
| Shreve, S. | Family Secrets: Five Very Important Stories |
| Stolz, M. | What Time of Night Is it? |
| Voigt, C. | Dacey's Song A Solitary Blue |

Peer Relationships

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Blume, J. | Blubber |
| Bonham, F. | Durango Street |
| Bridgers, S. | All Together Now |
| Brooks, B. | The Moves Make the Man |
| Cameron, E. | A Room Made of Windows |
| Cleaver, V. & B. | Grover |
| Cormier, R. | The Bumblebee Flies Away The Chocolate War |
| Greenberg, J. | The Iceberg and Its Shadow |
| Greene, C. | A Girl Called Al Beat the Turtle Drum |
| Hall, L. | Just One Friend |
| Hinton, S. E. | The Outsiders |
| Little, J. | One to Grow On |
| Lowery, L. | Autumn Street |
| Mauser, P. | A Bundle of Sticks |
| Neville, E. | Berries Goodman |
| Paterson, K. | Bridge to Terabithia |
| Peck, R. | Remembering the Good Times |
| Sharmat, M. | Getting Something On Maggie Marmelstein |
| Slepian, J. | The Alfred Summer |
| Stolz, M. | Cider Days |

APPENDIX D
GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL AND FINAL INTERVIEWS

Initial Interview Questions

1. Please share with me some of your thoughts about young adolescents 10-14.

2. Share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by puberty.

3. Please share with me your thoughts about the kinds of family relationships young adolescents are experiencing in our world today.

4. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by family relationships.

5. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by peer relationships.

Final Interview Questions

1. You made a semantic ordered tree at the beginning of the study of contemporary realistic fiction and I see that you have made revisions to the tree since you have finished the study. Please share with me as thoroughly as possible your thoughts on this tree and the changes you made.
 - a. What experiences did you have this semester which relate to the category headings on your tree? What has been the significance of these experiences to you personally and professionally?
 - b. What experiences have you had which relate to your choice of items under each heading? What has been the significance of these experiences to you personally and professionally?
2. Please share with me some of the key issues under discussion in your literature course.
 - a. How do you see these relating to you personally and professionally?
 - b. What kinds of experiences were provided for you in the classroom to aid your understanding?
3. Share with me what you know about 10-14 year olds now that you didn't know a few months ago.
4. Viewing your experience this semester in the literature course, what growth do you see having occurred in yourself personally and professionally?
5. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by puberty.
6. Please share with me your thoughts about the kinds of family relationships young adolescents are experiencing today.
7. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by family relationships.
8. Please share with me how you think young adolescents are affected by peer relationships.

APPENDIX E
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form

I give my permission for my journal, semantic ordered trees, essays, interviews and other materials generated from EDU 305 Literature For Children to be used in doctoral dissertation research.

I understand that my name will not be used in any way.

Name _____

Date _____