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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT

YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

AND THEIR IMPACT ON GRADE LEVEL TEACHING

PREFERENCE

A DISSERTATION

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By

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PREFERENCE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND
ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Middle level education programs need qualified, specifically trained teachers to best

address the needs of their young adolescent learners. However, despite extensive

information as to what constitutes appropriate middle level teacher preparation, there

remains a shortage of specifically educated middle level educators. This study seeks to

determine if that shortage is impacted by the beliefs that education majors have of young

adolescents. Having validated knowledge of preservice teachers' beliefs about young

adolescents and how those beliefs affect their choice of teaching level allows teacher

education programs to design experiences that address these beliefs, or may encourage

educators to address other reasons for the specifically educated middle level teacher

shortage.   It also seeks to examine whether preservice teachers' beliefs about young

adolescents are impacted by the existence of a state requirement of middle level teacher

certification. The major findings indicate that preservice teachers in both locales hold an

overall stereotypically negative view of about young adolescents which is not impacted

by the state licensure requirement. The study also reveals a greater sense of self-efficacy

for teaching at the middle level evidenced by preservice teachers enrolled in a specific

middle level teacher preparation program.

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT YOUNG ADOLESCENTS AND
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Chapter 1

The Research Problem

Background of the Problem

The middle school movement is quite simply a movement to reorganize public

education around the cause of improving early adolescent education (Lounsbury, 1991).

It grew out of recognition of early adolescence as a critically important transitional period

of life that requires schools which specifically address the nature and needs of youth.

Prior to this, young adolescents (children generally from 10-14 years of age) were most

often educated in schools that were, in fact and in practice, junior highs, where the

schedule, subject-focused configuration, and teaching methods were essentially the same

as in high schools. As understanding grew regarding the developmental needs and

learning styles of the young adolescent, many educators, notably W. M. Alexander and

John Lounsbury, began to campaign for more student-focused schools at the middle level.

Educators identified structures, curriculum, and methodology best suited to support the

developmental tasks of young adolescence.

The basic tenets of what came to be called the Middle School Philosophy can be

found in several sources. Two of the most influential and on-going are *This We Believe*,

a consensus statement first issued in 1982, which was updated and reprinted in 1992 by

the National Middle School Association (NMSA) and *Turning Points*, a report first

issued by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development in 1989. In 2003, NMSA

revised *This We Believe* to reflect new developments in education and in the practice of

middle level education. The result, *This We Believe—Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* describes NMSA's vision for a successful school in 14 characteristics (see Appendix A). It is worthwhile to note, apropos of this research, that the first characteristic listed for a successful middle school culture is "Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so" (NMSA, 2003, p. 7). *Turning Points: Educating Adolescents for the 21st Century* contained eight recommendations for improving the educational experiences of all middle level students and became the mainstay of middle level educational reform (see Appendix B).   Anthony W. Jackson and Gayle A. Davis (2000) revisited those original recommendations in light of new research about what works at the middle level. They authored *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*. This work presented a design for improving middle grades education in seven recommendations (see Appendix C) which they refer to as design elements for the structure, staffing, methodologies, climate, governance, and curriculum of a successful middle grades school. Again, the importance of having teachers who are specifically educated for teaching in the middle grades, was stressed as a key element (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

In response to the middle level literature's demands for teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, some states sought to require middle school and junior high teachers to obtain middle level licensure in order to assure appropriate educational preparation for teaching at this level.   Colleges and universities in those states created extensive teacher preparation programs to educate teachers in best practice at the middle level. Educators generally agreed on the essential components of a successful middle level teacher preparation program. They felt it should provide teachers with a thorough

knowledge of the nature and needs of early adolescents, a study of middle level

curriculum, instruction, and specialized methods, a broad academic background which

includes a concentration in at least two academic areas, and early and continuing field

experiences in good middle level schools (Alexander & McEwin, 1998; Clark & Clark,

1994; Kellough & Kellough, 1999; Scales & McEwin, 1994). NMSA and The National

Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) developed guidelines (see

Appendix D) for teacher education curriculum at the middle level and revised them in

1995 (Swaim, 1996).

Statement of the Problem

Despite such advances in educational theory and practice, there remains a shortage

of specially trained educators at the middle level. While progress has been made in this

area, in a 2001 study conducted by McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins, only 24% of the

746 middle level schools surveyed had 76-100% of their faculty specifically prepared to

teach young adolescents. Perhaps even more disturbing is the statistic at the other end—

of those same schools, 45% still had a fourth or less of their faculties educated for

teaching at the middle level. "The lack of teachers who wish to teach at the middle level

and who have the specialized professional preparation to do so expertly has continued to

be a primary barrier to the full success of middle schools", states McEwin, Dickinson,

and Jenkins (2003, p.59). Since it appears that the "know-how" is out there, it begs the

question, "Why aren't there more teachers specifically prepared to teach middle school?"

Since recent studies document the strong positive connection between teachers'

knowledge and skill and students' learning level (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2000;

Wenglinksy, 2000), it becomes even more crucial in our age of accountability and high

stakes testing to discover why there exists such a shortage of specifically trained middle

level teachers.

Upon investigation, it is apparent there are several factors at work to create this

shortage. First, overlapping, optional or nonexistent middle level preparation continues to

persist due to state licensor regulations (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996). While many states

have adopted some sort of voluntary middle level endorsement or licensure, the required

licensure categories remain simply elementary or secondary. This large spread allows

teachers and administrators greater flexibility of teacher placement, but often does not

adequately prepare incoming teachers to teach at the middle level. What happens all too

often is that pre-service teachers plan to teach elementary school or high school and

prepare accordingly (Cooney, 2000). Pre-service teachers who seek an elementary

degree most commonly have in mind teaching at an elementary school, not a middle

school or junior high. And likewise, most often the young educator seeking secondary

certification is planning on teaching high school. When a placement is not forthcoming

at the desired level, the beginning teacher often accepts a position at a middle school or

junior high school. All too frequently, their lack of preparation for teaching young

adolescents results in a less than satisfying teaching and learning situation. Results of

research done in 1989 by the Carnegie Council indicated that many teachers of middle

school students dislike their work and found that assignment to middle school was often a

last resort for teachers who are prepared to teach elementary or high school students.

McEwin (1992) confirms this concern as he observed, "A perennial roadblock to

excellence in middle level education is the practice of staffing middle level schools with

teachers and other professional personnel who have no special preparation for teaching or

working in other ways with adolescents" (p.374). This fact may have a great deal to do with the lack of teacher satisfaction in teaching at the middle level. In a study conducted by Stahler (1996) which compared a group of middle level student teachers who were prepared in a middle school teacher education program with a group of middle level student teachers who were prepared in an elementary or a secondary teacher education program, the results clearly indicated that the student teachers with special middle school preparation knew more about early adolescents, were familiar with the literature and developmentally appropriate practices for middle level learners, and had a more positive attitude toward middle level teaching than those who were prepared in a more general program (Stahler, 1996).

Secondly, in states where there is no middle level licensure, most colleges and universities are reluctant to offer coursework specifically designed for middle level preparation. They indicate that there are not sufficient numbers of students requesting these classes and adequate enrollment would be a problem. The reason for this is unclear. It could be that since a middle level license is not required in most states, the students do not see the value in investing time and money in classes they are not required to take. Additionally, as mentioned previously, the majority of teachers who wind up teaching middle school did not intend to teach at that level initially. The question of why they did not intend to teach at the middle level speaks to the purpose of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what beliefs preservice teachers hold about young adolescents and how these beliefs may affect their choice of teaching level. In order to answer this question, the beliefs pre-service teachers hold about young

adolescents must be identified, and information about whether these beliefs affect their choice of teaching level must be gathered and analyzed. Next I want to determine how these students constructed these beliefs. Finally I want to compare the effect of state requirement of middle level licensure on pre-service teachers' beliefs about adolescents. I am interested in knowing if the mere fact of a state's requirement of middle level licensure introduces to the education major the idea of early adolescence as a distinct developmental stage for which a teacher should prepare, and if that makes a difference in their beliefs about young adolescents.

Research Questions

The primary question of the study asks what beliefs do education majors hold regarding young adolescents. To further explore this and to develop some significant use of the information, some additional questions must be answered:

1. How did these education majors develop these beliefs?

2. To what extent do these beliefs affect their choice of teaching level?

3. To what extent do the students' beliefs about young adolescents differ in a state that requires middle level licensure as compared to a state that does not?

This study acknowledges research which has found that the beliefs that teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments which in turn influence their teaching behaviors and practices (Pajares, 1992). Indeed, beliefs are thought to be the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives (Bandura, 1986; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Many educators agree that pre-service teachers bring to the education classroom previously constructed ideas and beliefs about students, teaching, and learning, although they are not always aware of these ideas nor able to articulate

them (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swindler, 1993; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990;

Hollingsworth, 1989). Accepting this premise, it becomes paramount to explore

education majors' perceptions and beliefs about young adolescents if information about

these education majors' behaviors regarding choice of teaching at the middle level is

desired.

Significance of the Study

Because relatively little information exists about pre-service teachers' beliefs

about adolescents and the impact of those beliefs on choice of teaching level, this

research study will serve to fill in some gaps in our knowledge of education majors'

decision making. It may validate or dispel certain assumptions that may be made

regarding education majors' motivation in choosing or not choosing to teach at the

middle level. Researchers have found that the beliefs held by pre-service teachers when

they come into the program are subject to change when the education majors are

presented with instruction in child development and provided opportunities for

observation and apprenticeship (Snider & Fu, 1990; Stremmel, Fu, Patet & Shah, 1995).

Consequently, acquiring some answers to the above questions will provide direction to

modifying teacher preparation programs to encourage middle level preparation. Knowing

the impact of state middle level licensure on education majors' attitudes toward teaching

at the middle level may help to influence state licensure requirements in order to provide

more qualified teachers to middle grades schools. According to *No Child Left Behind*

(NCLB, 2002) all students deserve highly qualified teachers. Cooney and Bottoms

(2003), in a study done for The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)--Making

Middle Grades Work, define highly qualified teachers for middle grades classrooms as

teachers who know academic content and how to teach young adolescents. They call for states to eliminate overlapping certificates at the middle level and institute a required middle level certificate. Their research has found that "when states have overlapping certificates--such as K-8 or 7-12--preparation programs rarely focus on the middle grades." The problem then surfaces that "teachers with these broader range certificates typically lack the expertise they need to work with young adolescents; they do not feel qualified to teach middle grades students, and they look for opportunities to transfer to other schools and grade levels" (p.10). Middle school teachers themselves support specialized middle level professional preparation as needed and desirable (Scales & McEwin, 1994; McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000). In order to fill the demand for specially prepared middle level educators, states may need to actively recruit young people to become middle level teachers and provide incentives for school and colleges to improve content knowledge and teaching practices in the middle grades (Cooney, 2000).

Clearly, the sooner education majors determine that this is the age level they would like to teach, the sooner they can begin to prepare appropriately. By identifying the beliefs that education majors have regarding young adolescents and why they hold these views, teacher preparation programs can address any misconceptions the students may have that influence them negatively toward working at the middle level. If there are negative perceptions of young adolescents that affect the education majors' choice of teaching level, then we need to understand how they developed those perceptions to know how to address that in teacher preparation programs. If a lack of experience with young adolescents is identified as a factor in creating these misconceptions, then teacher preparation programs can build in more opportunities for education majors to observe and

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work with young adolescents in a positive environment. Too often the first real experience with young adolescents that our secondary or elementary majors have is during their student teaching. It is not unusual to hear a student teacher say, "I never thought I'd like teaching middle schoolers, but I have to say, it's been a really good experience." How sad that this revelation comes at the end of the student's teacher preparation. Had that positive connection been made early on in the student's teacher education, the student could have targeted learning about methods and curriculum that are most effective with this age group. There is some evidence that such early exposure to middle school students does have an impact on the beliefs of pre-service teachers (Finders, 1999). If the results of the research indicate that education majors do not hold a negative view of young adolescents, then teacher preparation programs at the middle level can eliminate this a source of the problem and move on to investigating environmental factors such as school climate, work load, and school governance, etc. as possible causes of the middle level teacher shortage.

<center>*Limitations of the Study*</center>

Personal Experience

My experiences in education at the middle level for over 20 years and my observations regarding teacher preparedness for teaching at the middle level influence my perspective in this research. I also bring my strong commitment to developmentally appropriate middle level practice as described in the afore-mentioned documents, *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* and *Turning Points 2000.*

University Location

The study's setting at only two universities, both of which are located in suburban areas of the southern United States, presents a possibly regionally influenced and somewhat limited view of education majors' attitudes about young adolescents. This affects the ability to generalize the findings to education majors as a whole.

Teacher Education Programs

The difference in the two universities' education programs preclude accessing education majors at the exact same point in their educational preparation, although steps to address this are taken through the attempt to engage students in the study through their enrollment in a similar beginning education course.

Definitions

Perceptions

Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language defines "perception" as "1. awareness of objects or other data through the medium of the senses; 2. the process or faculty of perceiving; 3. the result of this; knowledge, etc. gained by perceiving; and 4. insight or intuition, as of an abstract quality " (1966, p. 1085). For the purpose of this study, the fourth definition is most appropriate and is what is intended when referring to pre-service teachers' perceptions of young adolescents.

Beliefs

In addition, in the literature surrounding the subject of teacher decision making and motivation, the terms "beliefs," "perceptions," and "attitudes" are often used interchangeably. As Pajares (1992) writes:

> It is for this reason that articulate conversation must demand not only clarity of thought and expression but also preciseness of word choice and meaning.

Educational psychology does not always accord its constructs such precision, and so defining beliefs is at best a game of player's choice. They travel in disguise and often under alias—attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, …to name but a few that can be found in the literature. (p. 309)

The definition of perception seems to lead to a close connection to beliefs. The difference as seen in the eyes of this researcher is that perceptions may lead to beliefs, but do not in and of themselves constitute a formulated concept upon which one would initiate action. This is akin to the shades of difference between beliefs and knowledge. While it is often difficult to distinguish beliefs from knowledge, for the purposes of this study, Nespor's (1987) view of beliefs as being distinct from knowledge in that they have stronger affective and evaluative components is appropriate to the information sought from the research. A definition of belief can be borrowed from Pajares (1992) who says that "a view of belief speaks to an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (p.316). Nespor (1987) drew on Abelson's research which suggests that belief systems frequently include propositions or assumptions about the existence or nonexistence of various types of entities. Often the assumptions that teachers make about student characteristics are conceptualized as entities, inherent and beyond their control and influence. There is frequently no logical process for validating the relevance of beliefs to real-world events and situations as these beliefs are most often derived from "largely automatized and procedural processes of perception which take place without conscious attention" (p. 20). It would seem then that through the perceptual process, individuals take in information and impressions that they form into some sort of a proposition or assumption, but do not necessarily subject these to any sort of evidence or argument akin to what is normally applied to knowledge. Applying this view to Pajares'

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definition of belief, it appears that the individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition must happen in an automatic and affective evaluative way, rather than in the same sense that judgments about knowledge area made.

Young adolescents

Young adolescents are described as young people between the ages of 10 and 14. This period of early adolescence is one of rapid and profound personal changes although there are dissimilar rates of growth among young people of the same gender and chronological age (NMSA, 2003).

Middle level or middle grades

Regardless of the school configuration, middle level or middle grades refers to education of young adolescents in grades five through eight. These grades have been identified because the vast majority of young adolescents in the nation attend middle schools with some organization of these grades. Ninth grade is not included, although some may argue that it should be due to the wide disparity in adolescent development. Nationally, the number of junior high schools where the grade configuration is seventh through ninth is rapidly dwindling (McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 2003).

Summary

Middle level education programs need qualified, specifically trained teachers to best address the needs of their young adolescent learners. However, despite extensive information as to what constitutes appropriate middle level teacher preparation, there remains a shortage of specifically educated middle level educators. This study seeks to determine if that shortage is impacted by the beliefs that education majors have of young adolescents. Having validated knowledge of preservice teachers' beliefs about young

adolescents and how those beliefs affect their choice of teaching level will either allow

teacher education programs to design experiences that address these beliefs, or encourage

educators to address other reasons for the specifically educated middle level teacher

shortage.   It also seeks to examine whether preservice teachers' beliefs about young

adolescents are impacted by the existence of a state requirement of middle level teacher

certification.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

The call for specifically prepared teachers at the middle level has gone

unanswered in many schools throughout the nation. In order to fully understand how that

call came to be and why it is so important, it is useful to begin with a history of

adolescence and the middle school movement. Through an understanding of the

formative issues of the problem, it becomes more apparent why identifying teacher

beliefs, specifically preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents, is an important

issue and how that information can serve to help teacher educators engineer programs

that effectively prepare preservice teachers for a satisfying and successful career at the

middle level.

Adolescence and the Development of the Middle School Movement

At the turn of the century, most schools, especially in the urban areas, were of the

kindergarten through eighth grade variety, and education past this point was primarily

reserved for the exceptional and the upper class (Beane, 2001). However, with the influx

of immigrant children, the schools became increasingly crowded, and more and more

older students were experiencing academic failure in a program that was designed

primarily for younger children. Consequently, many of these youngsters dropped out of

school and joined the work force in the factories of the Industrial Revolution.

Meanwhile the concept of adolescence as a separate and distinct developmental

period in human life, while said to have been introduced by Jean Jacques Rousseau a

century earlier, was not widely advocated (Manning, 1993.) It was not until the 1904

publication of G. Stanley Hall's two-volume work, *Adolescence,* that the age span

between 10 through 15 was identified as a distinct growth stage. Further, Hall called for

these students to be educated separately to accommodate their unique needs. Hall's

theory bolstered the social agenda with a convenient developmental justification.

According to critical theorists, it is important to note that adolescence is a social and

cultural construction whose definition may change over time. Its meaning has grown out

of existing social, historical, economic and political realities and is different in different

cultures and at different historical moments. Current understanding of adolescence in the

United States stems from the social conditions at the advent of industrialism (Saltman,

2005).

Social reformers, eager to enact child labor laws, and social efficiency advocates

whose agenda included a mix of vocational education and "Americanization" for

immigrant children, saw a mutually beneficial alliance with educators such as G. Stanley

Hall, Charles Eliot and the National Education Association's Committee of Ten. These

educators recognized a need to restructure the schools to better meet the needs of

American education. The proposed solution of moving seventh and eighth graders out of

the elementary schools solved the problem of overcrowding, allowed for more college-

preparatory courses for those privileged to be able to continue on to high school and

university, and was advocated by the NEA's Committee of Ten and the elementary-

focused Committee of Fifteen. In the end, however, this new institution, the junior high

school, was created primarily as a social invention, rather than out of recognition of the

needs of the young adolescent (Beane, 2001). With its primary education mission being

to prepare students more thoroughly for success in high school and possibly college, the junior high became essentially a "mini" high school, adopting almost all of the high school's structure, methods, and programs (Lounsbury, 1991). This approach taken in junior highs at their inception remained largely untouched and unchallenged for several decades, despite the progressive movements of the 1930s and 1940s (Beane, 2001).

After World War II, as the population grew and high schools became more crowded, the junior high expanded to include the ninth grade, solving the numbers problem and further cementing the high school model of fixed courses and schedules (Voss & Hatch, 2001). Junior high schools continued to function without regard to the specific needs of the young adolescent. This type of authoritarian, instructor-driven, highly structured and compartmentalized education came to be known as "the factory model," a tip of the hat to what many considered the real work of education—namely to prepare America's youth to take their place in the workforce. The exploratory aspect of education at the middle level, initially proposed by the original junior high school pioneers, Leonard Koos and Thomas Briggs, became relegated to short courses designed to help students better choose their electives in high school (Lounsbury, 1991).

In the meantime the movement to recognize adolescence, especially young adolescence, as a developmentally distinct period and one requiring schools to specialize in structure, methodology, and curriculum, continued to exist and grow. Dissatisfaction with the junior high model and recognition of its failure to provide a supportive and successful learning environment for many young adolescents led to calls for reform by such notables as W. M. Alexander, D. H. Eichorn, John Lounsbury, William Van Til and Gordon Vars (Manning, 1993; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). *The Junior High: A Changing*

View by W. M. Alexander called for extending the middle school downward to the sixth grade and moving ninth to the high school. Alexander's rationale was based on research regarding the younger age at which children were experiencing puberty. He felt that the middle school should be based on social competence, mastery of basic skills, and personal development. He saw the curriculum as being more exploratory than focused on mastery. In his emphasis of the word "middle", Alexander believed schools for young adolescents should not be junior high schools, but a bridge from elementary to high school (George & Alexander, 1993). Eichorn (1966) focused attention on developmentally appropriate education for the young adolescent while Lounsbury and Vars (1978) called for the kind of meaningful curriculum change that would actually move middle schools beyond the traditional academic offerings of the junior high school. They knew that no substantive change in the schooling of young adolescents would occur without curriculum reform. All these educators shared a vision for schools at the middle level that would recognize, adapt to, and serve the needs of the young adolescent. In 1975, the Working Group on the Middle School of the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published its findings in a report called, "The Middle School We Need." It validated the concept that schools at the middle level should address the developmental characteristics of young adolescents in educationally appropriate ways.

Several social factors continued to interact with the calls for change at the middle level. First and foremost was the overcrowding of the elementary schools. The schools were bursting at the seams with baby boomers. The option of building more elementary schools was expensive and only provided a temporary solution. The idea of enlarging the

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high schools, often with the enticement of adding a gymnasium, moving the ninth graders back to the high school and bringing the sixth graders up from the elementary to ease the crowding caught on quickly.   Add to that the concern that junior highs were not meeting the mark academically and that ninth grade coursework which was part of the graduation requirements from high school was in many cases an inadequate preparation for subsequent high school classes. Again social reformers latched onto the schools as a way to achieve societal changes, and mandated desegregation of the schools provided yet another reason to move the sixth and ninth grades. Since these sixth and ninth graders had to change schools anyway, they became likely candidates to be bused sometimes great distances from their homes, to other middle and high schools. Finally, the events and movements of the 1960s and 1970s provided a climate ripe for change (Beane, 2001; George, Stevenson, Thomas & Beane, 1992; Voss & Hatch, 2004).

By 1973, the middle school movement was well established (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). School districts rapidly changed over to the new grade configuration. By the early 1990s there were nearly three middle schools to every junior high. Professional organizations such as the National Middle School Association were formed to support education at the middle level and to promote the middle level philosophy. Educators found that when the middle school philosophy was fully implemented, student behavior and attitudes improved, academic achievement increased, and the school climate was one of cooperation and optimism (Flowers & Mertens, 2004; Voss & Hatch, 2004).

As noted in the introduction to this paper, the definitive description of a successful middle school was first outlined in the National Middle School Association's *This We Believe* in 1982 (which was revised in 1992) and then in the 1989 Carnegie

Council for Adolescent Development's *Turning Points: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century*. These documents called for schools responsive to the needs and characteristics of early adolescents. In order to do this, the true middle level school would employ educators who were knowledgeable about 10-14 year-olds and have a balanced curriculum based on developmental needs taught in a variety of ways, allowing for exploration and self-awareness. The school would make use of comprehensive advisory and counseling programs, appropriate assessment and evaluation measures, cooperative planning and teaming, and a positive school climate (Manning, 1993). By 1992, three major universities had taken the lead in developing curriculum and teacher preparation programs for middle level educators: The Center for Early Adolescence at University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, The University of South Florida's National Resource Center for Middle Grades Education, and The Center of Education for the Young Adolescent at University of Wisconsin—Platteville (Manning, 1993). Research continues there and in other universities and school districts as educators seek the best ways to address the developmental needs of the adolescent.

However, school restructuring, the process of instituting new beliefs and values in the school mission, structure and process, does not come about automatically as a result of adopting a middle school grade configuration (Clark & Clark, 1994). Restructuring presents challenges in three main areas: technical—changes in the curriculum and instruction of the schools, political/social—changes in the culture of the school, in student and parent relationships with schools, and in making it more supportive of change and new ideas, and occupational—changes which create more collegial workplaces and build partnerships and networks with other educational and social agencies, and/or

changes which involve teachers more in the decision-making proves (Clark & Clark, 1994). In order to effect these changes, a long-term commitment must be made and efforts to restructure must be accompanied by adequate "time to learn, to plan, test new ideas, and to maintain lines of communication" (David, 1991, p. 15).

As early as the 1975 ASCD report, it became clear that many schools had changed in name and grade configuration only. "The available research indicates a significant gap between the main tenets of the theoretical middle school concept proposed by leading middle school authorities and actual educational practices in most middle schools" (ASCD, 1975, p. 3). Despite the encouraging research on the effectiveness of the implementation of the middle school philosophy, most middle schools hardly resemble the schools envisioned in the Carnegie and NMSA descriptions. In their book, *America's middle schools: Practices and progress—A 25 Year Perspective,* McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins (1996) charge that the majority of middle schools are in some stage of "arrested development—where the middle school concept has not been completely implemented, or where it was once implemented and has now grown static and unresponsive". What happens all too often is the shuffling of the ninth grade to the high school and the sixth grade to the former junior high, capped with a proclamation that the school is now a middle school. Sometimes this is accompanied by the piecemeal implementation of the elements of the middle level program. Failing to grasp that the middle school concept has interdependent characteristics and must be implemented as an integrated model, too many schools have tried to incorporate only one or two aspects of eight essentials of a successful middle school program as described in the *Turning Points* report, often resulting in less than satisfactory outcomes (Beane, 2001; Dickinson, 2001;

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McEwin, Dickinson, Jenkins, 2003). For instance, a school will decide to try

interdisciplinary teaming which groups as many as four core teachers together with the

same cadre of students with a goal of communicating about these students, developing

and sharing strategies to better serve them, and integrating curriculum wherever possible.

Then the teachers are given little, if any, shared planning time, dooming the team to try to

catch each other on the run, before school, after school, and essentially assuring the

ineffectiveness of the team. Studies have shown that common planning time is deemed

absolutely necessary to the success of an interdisciplinary team because it provides

teachers with an opportunity to plan collaboratively (Warren & Muth, 1995). When

teaching teams have at least 30 minutes of common planning time four times per week,

students were found to have higher levels of student achievement and student self-esteem

than students at less implemented schools (Felner et al., 1997). When elements of the

middle school philosophy are inadequately implemented, the outcomes are often not what

were anticipated and the program is unfairly dubbed a failure and not worth the money or

time it takes.

Need for Specifically Educated Middle Level Teachers

Another fundamental way in which the middle school philosophy has been

consistently under-implemented is the practice of staffing middle level schools with

teachers and other professional personnel who have no special preparation for teaching or

working in other ways with adolescents. Results of research done in 1989 by the

Carnegie Council produced some disturbing findings in regard to teaching at the middle

level. It reported that many teachers of middle school students dislike their work and

found that assignment to middle school was often a last resort for teachers who are

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prepared to teach elementary or high school. While there has been tremendous growth in the number of middle level schools, this has not been accompanied by a significant increase in middle level teacher preparation programs. Alexander and McEwin (1989) reported that in a national study of 670 middle level schools less than 25 percent of all the teachers in the responding schools had special preparation for teaching at the middle level. This may have a great deal to do with the lack of teacher satisfaction in teaching at the middle level.

Having special preparation seems to make a significance difference. A study compared 30 graduates of the University of Washington Puget Sound Professional Development Center program for middle level preparation with 44 elementary/secondary program graduates, all of whom were placed in middle schools for their student teaching. At the end of the semester, the special middle level program graduates felt significantly more prepared than the other graduates to work with middle level students and felt more knowledgeable about young adolescents and their needs (Yerian & Grossman, 1993). Another study that involved early childhood preservice teachers found that practical experience alone does not appear to have a significant effect of teachers' knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice. A teacher needs to have a solid knowledge base of what constitutes developmentally appropriate practice as well as supervised practical experience in order to develop a true understanding of what is developmentally appropriate for her students (Snider & Fu, 1990). This is true for those teaching at the middle level as well.

Given that high levels of teacher efficacy have been found to be associated with mastery-oriented instructional practices and higher student expectations in middle school

classrooms, it would only seem to make sense to prepare middle level teachers in the ways that help them feel most likely to succeed (Midgley, 1995). The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform policy statement on teacher preparation, licensure, and recruitment calls for creating excellent middle grades teachers who are prepared to teach challenging content to young adolescents, but recognizes these teachers' success is linked to teacher preparation programs that address three critical components: academic excellence, developmental responsiveness and equity and cultural diversity (see Appendix E).

The evidence in support of specifically prepared middle level teachers is mounting. Teacher satisfaction goes hand-in-hand with student achievement. *How Teaching Matters*, an ETS study released in October 2000, found a direct correlation between teachers' classroom practices and student achievement (Wenglinsky, 2000). When students have teachers who are prepared in developing higher order thinking skills, trained to work with special populations including certain age groups, and use hands-on experiences in the classroom, student achievement increases. This study shows that it is not just enough to have extensive subject matter knowledge; teachers must know how to teach their subject and must be able to shape student learning experiences based on the specific learning needs of the student group. The 1999 report prepared by the National Research Council, "How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice," found that teachers must be sufficiently familiar with the population they teach that they can actively inquire into students' thinking and be skilled at working with students' pre-existing and mistaken ideas (Donovan, Bransford, Pellegrino, 1999). Again, this requires a teacher preparation program that goes beyond content familiarity into an in-depth

knowledge of adolescent development and culture. The call for specifically educated

middle level teachers does not only come from theoreticians and organizations. In a

survey of the faculties at two public middle schools in Alabama, 82% of the respondents

felt that transescents (children of approximately 10-14 years of age) had developmental

and unique needs and 80% felt there was a need for specialized instruction of preservice

middle school teachers (Skelton & Harris, 1991).

In recognizing the need for fully prepared teachers at the middle level, several

organizations have developed comprehensive standards and frameworks that define

essential attributes of both middle level teachers and preparation programs. NMSA

teamed with the National Center for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to

establish program accreditation guidelines for middle level preparation (NMSA, 1997).

The National Board for Professional Teaching has standards for obtaining national

middle grades licensure (McEwin, Dickinson, & Hamilton, 2000). Praxis III also has

domains and criteria for teaching young adolescents (Dwyer, 1994). Gaskill (2002) notes

a growing number of states are requiring middle level teacher certification, resulting in a

net 75% increase in the 1990's. Accordingly, while there still remains a shortage of

colleges and universities providing specific teacher preparation for the middle level

(NMSA, 1999), professors such as Penny Bishop (2003) at the University of Vermont

and others are working hard to construct meaningful and effective programs to prepare

those who wish to teach middle level learners. Bishop's program focuses on curriculum

that is relevant, integrative and literacy-focused, pedagogy that is collaborative, varied,

and education that is relational. At the University of Vermont, the teacher preparation

program serves as a model for the education students so that they can actually experience that which they are supposed to emulate.

So the question remains, with what we know about developmentally appropriate education for young adolescents, why aren't there more teachers specifically prepared to teach middle school? The teacher preparation issue is inextricably tied to certification requirements for teaching young adolescents. Starting back with the creation of junior high schools, the failure to staff the schools with personnel specifically prepared to teach at this level has been a continual problem. Teachers whose expectations were to teach at the elementary or high school level were not happy about being assigned to teach in the junior highs and many found it to be an unsatisfactory experience. This certainly did not change when junior highs morphed to middle schools (Dickinson & McEwin, 1998; McEwin & Dickinson, 1996). Consequently, middle level programs must often cope with a revolving door of teaching staff as they recruit, begin to train, then lose teachers—both elementary and secondary trained—who transfer to a school and curriculum for which they are prepared at the first possible opportunity. Partly responsible for creating this situation are certification agencies that have long allowed teachers to have a great variety of preparations to teach middle school. This has perpetuated the problem of inadequately and inappropriately trained teachers and has resulted in the scarcity of specific middle level teacher preparation programs (Gaskill, 2002; Kellough & Kellough, 1999; Scales & McEwin, 1994). One might also speculate as to the hidden message this dearth of preparation programs sends regarding the importance of this segment of our nation's youth. Does the mere institution of a program designed specifically to meet the needs of early childhood, for example, convey the notion that our nation truly values its

young children and wants to provide the best educational opportunities for them? Conversely, when young adolescents are jokingly referred to as "hormones in tennis shoes" and consistently overlooked in teacher education programs, are we designating these young people as not worthy of special consideration? Does the shortage of middle level teacher preparation programs have its roots in a lack of demand for these programs due to a lack of motivation to teach at this level rather than a state requirement of middle level licensure? Does the general public feel that young adolescence is a phase, resistant to teacher and parental influences, which one must simply endure? These questions are among those that have helped shape my research. In considering possible answers to these questions, it became clear that they only mattered if attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs had any impact on teachers' and parents' actions and on students' learning. This then is the topic of the next section of this review of literature.

Teacher Beliefs

　　Approximately 25 years ago, interest in the study of teacher beliefs began to grow. Fenstermacher (1979) predicted that it would become the focus for teacher effectiveness research. Since that time, several researchers have determined that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments which in turn influence their teaching behaviors and practices (Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swindler, 1993; Hollingworth, 1989; Nespor, 1987; Pajares,1992; Stremmel et al., 1995). Indeed, beliefs are thought to be the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives (Bandura, 1986; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). The concept and meaning of "belief" is a difficult one to define, however. Pajares (1992) does an admirable job of describing the many terms that cluster around the concept of belief: attitudes, perceptions, systems,

implicit theories, explicit theories, perspectives, conceptual systems, to name a few. He

builds on research into the nature of beliefs done by Nespor (1987) and personal

knowledge constructs described by Clandinin and Connelly (1987) to assist in drawing a

distinction between "beliefs" and "knowledge." Nespor listed and expounds on four

features of beliefs, first described by Abelson (1979), as being characteristic of the

structure of beliefs: "existential presumption," "alternativity," "affective and evaluative

loading," and "episodic structure." Existential presumption involves the assumption

about the existence or nonexistence of various types of entities. Beliefs about student

characteristics such as "ability," "maturity," and "laziness," would be considered within

the bounds of existential presumption. Nespor points out that used in this way these are

not simply terms used to describe observed behaviors, but rather descriptions of traits to

be virtually unchanging inherent components of the students' personalities. The next

aspect of beliefs is concerned with "alternativity" or an alternate reality creation. This

would be illustrated in a teacher envisioning a kind of classroom that he or she would like

to have, but one that he/she has never experienced. It may represent a sort of fantasy or

ideal to which one aspires, or conversely, a stereotypically negative model also

ungrounded in reality. Beliefs also have "affective and evaluative aspects." While

knowledge systems are more subject to logical processes, beliefs tend to be more

influenced by feelings, moods, and personal preferences. In teaching, this aspect of

beliefs seems to have a great deal to do with how teachers view their subject matter, for

instance, and how much energy they will put into an activity. If a certain aspect of the

subject matter seems trivial or boring to the teacher, he/she may teach it in a different

way than something valued more highly. The same idea holds true for beliefs a teacher

may hold about certain groups of students, their ability levels, or their personal characteristics.

Theories that involve a person's attempts to make sense out of his/her world, the events that happen and why they happen, the possibilities of affecting those events or outcomes, and one's own abilities to effect change and control over those outcomes are fundamental to understanding preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents and how these beliefs impact their choice of teaching level. Attribution theory explains that people seek to discover the causes behind outcomes: the locus--internal or external, the stability or instability of the outcome, and the controllability of the outcome (Weiner, 1985, 1986). In terms of preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents, determining to what they attribute certain behaviors or characteristics of young adolescents may reveal a connection to their willingness to teach at the middle level. If, for instance, the preservice teacher believes that an adolescent's negative behavior is determined primarily by hormonal factors, an internal locus, and that the adolescent is invariable going to stay that way throughout middle school, a stable factor, and that is totally beyond the teacher's control, it would seem plausible that the preservice teacher would see little reward in teaching at that level. The tendency to explain other people's outcomes via internal factors is so strong, in fact, that Ross (as cited in Reeve, 1997) referred to this as the fundamental attribution error. If, however, the belief is that the adolescent's behavior is due to environmental factors, an external locus, which could change with a positive educational experience, the teacher may see himself as the agent to effect that change. The degree to which people feel that they have the skills and ability to cope successfully with the demands presented by tasks or situations is called self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Related to attribution beliefs, self-efficacy beliefs also affect

motivational aspects of behavior. One's self-efficacy beliefs affect what and where a

person chooses to do something, how much effort and persistence he/she will put into it,

what kinds of thinking and decision-making he/she will make while doing it, and how

he/she will feel about it. Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) builds on Bandura's self-

efficacy theory as it recognizes the interacting influences between people, their behavior,

and their environment. Another component of SCCT is that of outcome expectations, or

the personal beliefs one holds regarding the probable outcome of a behavior. Outcome

expectations play a major role in that person's motivation to engage in a certain activity.

The third component of SCCT is that of goals and the part they play in the self-regulation

of behavior. A goal can be described as the determination to do something with the

expectation of causing a particular outcome. The role of perceived barriers in SCCT

refers to career-related barriers that an individual may believe to exist now or in the

future and are not necessarily grounded in reality or factual information (Albert & Luzzo,

1999). It is possible that the results of this study may find that some preservice teachers'

beliefs about young adolescents act as a perceived barrier to the career choice of teaching

at the middle level.

     In an extensive review of research about teacher efficacy, Witcher, Onwuegbuzie,

Collins, Witcher, Minor, and James (2002) found that several studies have found that

high-efficacious teachers have a positive impact on student learning and other positive

teacher behaviors and outcomes. In their own study, however, they found no relationship

between educational beliefs and teacher efficacy. A preservice teacher's sense of teacher

efficacy does appear to be strongly related to the beginning teacher's preparation program

and their confidence in self-described teaching abilities (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow (2002). The preservice teachers' sense of responsibility for student learning, their plans to remain in teaching, and their perceived teaching abilities in areas of discipline, content, methods, ability to cope with change, and self-renewal were all significantly correlated the extent to which the beginning teacher felt well-prepared.

Finally, beliefs seem to stem from "episodic storage" rather than semantically stored knowledge such as principles, structures, etc. The result of this is that beliefs draw their power and legitimacy from particular episodes or events in a person's life rather than abstract information.   Many educators agree that pre-service teachers bring to the education classroom previously constructed ideas and beliefs about students, teaching, and learning, although they are not always aware of these ideas nor able to articulate them (Anderson & Holt-Reynolds, 1995; Bird et al., 1993; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Hollingsworth, 1989). Often these are a result of experiences the pre-service teacher has had as a student (Calderhead & Robson, 1991). Lortie (1975) refers to this as the "apprenticeship of observation."

Pajares (1992) offers a very basic distinction between belief and knowledge: "Belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge is based on objective fact" (p. 313).   This makes beliefs much more elusive to document than knowledge as understanding beliefs often requires inferring information that individuals may have difficulty presenting accurately (Rokeach, 1968).

Taking a Vygotskian viewpoint, exploring the nature of a person's beliefs involves an understanding of the individual's social world that is simultaneously interpersonal, cultural, and historical. To separate these is virtually impossible and so

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renders attributing the development of a particularly held belief to a single factor or event

unlikely (Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993).

Even given the difficulty of examining beliefs, because of the tremendous impact

that beliefs have on people's thoughts and actions, researchers continue to pursue the

task. There is general consensus that people filter and interpret knowledge and experience

through their belief systems and that their beliefs function as a stronger factor in change

or lack of change than does knowledge (Abelson, 1979; Anderson & Holt-Reynold, 1995;

Connelly & Clandinin, 1995; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990; Hollingsworth, 1989;

Matanin & Collier, 2003; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Schommer, 1990; Snider & Fu,

1990; Stremmel et al.,1995; Wilcox, Schram, Lappan, & Lanier, 1991).

While the above cited studies constitute a seminal body of information about

teacher beliefs, more current research has build upon these constructs and added to them

(Ethell & McMeniman, 2002; Lexmond, 2003; Mizell & Harkins, 2003; Zembylas,

2005). Many education programs which seek to influence teacher practice start with an

attempt to assess the beliefs that pre-service teachers hold in order to work more

effectively to assist the learner in merging knowledge and beliefs into a professional

knowledge landscape (Anderson & Holt-Reynolds, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1995;

Nespor, 1985; Lexmond, 2003, Mizell & Harkins, 2003).

Considering this information, it would seem that research would abound

regarding pre-service teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about all manner of

topics. Although more studies have been conducted in this area in recent years, it

continues to be under-represented in the field of educational research. Hollingsworth's

(1989) study of preservice teachers' prior beliefs and cognitive change in learning to

teach represented an attempt to look holistically and systematically at a group of education students' intellectual processing as they went through a teacher preparation program. She and her research team began with developing baseline profiles of prior knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning. They then went on to try to isolate specific program, personal, and contextual influences that affected changes in preprogram beliefs. They felt they could better identify effective and suggested teacher education program elements if they had a more thorough understanding of the nature of intellectual growth. Bird, Anderson, Sullivan, and Swidler (1993) documented Bird's attempts to surface and challenge ideas that a group of elementary education majors held about teaching, learning, schooling, and learning to teach. He discovered how difficult it is to engage learners in reexamining their existing beliefs about teaching and learning and consider alternative beliefs in the educational literature.   Recently, Zembylas (2005) has focused on the importance of exploring teacher emotion in understanding teaching.

Other materials exist and, like the research for this particular study on young adolescence, are focused specifically on particular goals within teacher preparation. Stremmel, Fu, Patet, and Shah (1995) sought to understand the images of teaching that prospective early childhood teachers brought to their formal teacher preparation in order to help them think critically about how these images affect their teaching decisions and understandings of young children. Anderson (1995) documented Holt-Reynolds work with prospective teachers' beliefs in teaching about content area literacy. Florio-Ruane and Lensmire (1990) challenged future teachers' assumptions about children and writing. Thomas and Pedersen (2003) examined pre- and post- images of science teachers and science learning experiences that preservice science teachers bring to science methods

courses. Matanin and Collier's study (2003) involved a longitudinal analysis of preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching physical education. Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, and James (2002) were interested in preservice teachers' beliefs as they related to their perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers. Wilcox, Schram, Lappan, and Lanier (1991) focused on using a learning community to change preservice teachers' knowledge and beliefs about mathematics education. They felt that through the give-and-take of shared communication, the learner's currently held views are challenged and the potential created to lead to the construction of more acceptable and powerful views.

Beliefs about Adolescents

In examining the literature involving teacher beliefs, it seems that most of the research has clustered around beliefs about teaching and learning, and not so much about the learners themselves. Lesko (2005) cautions that educators currently engaged in restructuring secondary schools to become more humane and worthwhile learning environments may find their efforts undermined if they fail to examine the commonsense assumptions regarding students. In particular she fears that the heavy emphasis in much of the middle school literature on the self-esteem and hormonal issues of the young adolescent causes teachers to question whether these heavily burdened students can possibly respond in any intellectually successful way. Only a handful of studies have focused on beliefs about adolescents and those were centered predominantly on parental attitudes rather than teachers' beliefs (Buchanan & Holmbeck, 1998; Buchanan & Hughes, 2001; Freedman-Doan, Arbreton, Harold, & Eccles, 1993; Holmbeck & Hill, 1988, Lexmond, 2003). These findings have, however, provided some interesting insights that may apply to teachers' beliefs as well. In Buchanan and Hughes (2001)

study, they found that beliefs and expectations about adolescents were more positive than negative, but still reflected a more negative view than might be warranted by actual adolescent behavior. In general, parents have more positive target-based behavioral expectations than category-based beliefs. In other words, "most adolescents do such and such, but my child is the exception." In an extensive social policy project from Frameworks Institute (2000) called *Strategic Frame Analysis: Reframing America's Youth*, a comprehensive analysis of parental attitudes, surveys of the general American public and reviews of media coverage revealed that most Americans have a negative view of adolescents as troubled, at-risk youth and will consistently overlook positive data even if it dominates the story. When confronted with their own experiences that do not fit the negative framework they have, people tend to justify their own experiences as being exceptional. They also will suspect positive data as being inaccurate or exaggerated in order to maintain their belief structure (Aubrum & Grady, 2000; Gilliam & Bales 2001). A similar study was conducted at eight Canadian universities in 1981 and even back then this phenomena of believing the media stereotype about adolescents rather than the documented good news was present (Travis &Violato, 1981). The belief also appears to exist in American society that adolescence is a time of "storm and stress" (Buchanan & Holmbeck, 1998; Holmbeck & Hill, 1988; Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992). Even though research indicates that less than 10% of families with adolescents endure serious relationship difficulties during adolescence and that only 5-30% of adolescents experience serious developmental difficulties (Holmbeck & Hill, 1998), developmental theorists have long characterized adolescence as a hormonally charged troubled time. G. Stanley Hall (1904) actually coined the 'sturm und drang" or storm and stress image back

when he first introduced the idea of adolescence as a specific period of human

development. He, however, seemed to have a more optimistic view of adolescence than

has transpired over the years.

> The social instincts undergo sudden unfoldment and the new life of love awakens. It is the age of sentiment and of religion, of rapid fluctuation of mood, and the world seems strange and new. Interest in adult life and in vocations develops. Youth awakens to a new world and understands neither it nor himself. Self-feeling and ambition are increased, and every trait and faculty is liable to exaggeration and excess…These years are the best decade of life. No age is so responsive to all the best and wisest adult endeavor. In no psychic soil, too, does see, bad as well as good, strike such deep root, grow so rankly, or bear fruit so quickly or so surely. (Hall, 1904/1954, p.108)

Hines (2003) identifies three specific characteristics of this storm and stress image:

parent-adolescent conflict, emotional lability or moodiness and risk taking behaviors. He

speculates that perhaps one of the reasons that so much attention has been focused on

adolescents' negative behaviors is that much early research centered on those adolescents

whose behaviors were likely to gain attention, thereby creating a false stereotype of a

homogeneous population of adolescents experiencing great amounts of "storm and

stress." In his dissertation, Hines examined the current research, however, and found

that it does not tend to support a pervasive rebellious characterization of the typical

adolescent nor does it support storm and stress as universal (Arnett, 1999; Buchanan,

Eccles, & Becker, 1992; Hines, 2003; Laurson, Coy & Collins, 1998). Instead low to

moderate conflict appears to be the norm. It is suggested that such aspects of the

adolescent period marked gradual changes and modifications in abilities or behaviors

already present (Hines, 2003).

These researchers are concerned that if parents and teachers subscribe to negative

stereotypes of adolescents that this will create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although more

recent research has called the self-fulfilling prophecy theory into question, there does still seem a significant connection between the way that inaccurate beliefs can lead to less-than-effective parenting and teaching approaches (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996). Arnett (1999) has found that researchers tend to over-emphasize the endorsement of the general public of "storm and stress" as characteristic of young adolescents. This may be true as in Buchanan's and Hughes' research, they found parents endorsing both positive and negative characteristics of adolescence simultaneously. Additionally, although parents did see adolescence as a time of difficulty, they felt that they and other adults could still make a meaningful impact on adolescents (Buchanan & Hughes, 2001). The study did find that negative stereotypes are endorsed to a greater degree than they should be based on real-life estimates. The stereotyped and exaggerated image of adolescents as wild, risk-taking, depressed, is based in part on the reality of a small segment of the population and seems to be what is usually sensationalized by the media (Amudson, Lichter & Lichter, 2000; Arnett, 1999; U. S. News & World Report, 2005). Buchanan & Hughes (2001) found that when parents internalize these stereotypes and use them as a basis for their expectations for their adolescent's behavior, in some cases this may have the ability to produce behavior consistent with their expectations. Their research also showed that pre-adolescents' predictions of their adolescent experience was by far the greatest determinant of the behavior experienced during that time. If the child anticipated a difficult time, it was more likely to occur and conversely, if a generally positive experience was expected, that was the more usual outcome. Therefore, when parents communicate negative stereotypes or expectations regarding the child's adolescent period, they are in fact sowing the seeds for more storm and stress than might typically be

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experienced. Children more frequently held negative stereotyped category-based beliefs

than did their parents, however, which may be due to reliance on media depiction of

teenagers (Aubrun & Grade, 2000; Amundson, Lichter & Lichter 2000). Lounsbury

(1991) argues that the general public's lack of understanding and appreciation for the

tasks of adolescence may be a result of the "rolelessness" of young adolescents in today's

society. In the current structure of the family and work force, too many adolescents do

not have clearly defined roles to fill in the home and community.

Research indicates that many teachers appear to hold these negative stereotypical

beliefs about young adolescents also (Bostrom, 2000; Buchanan, Eccles, Flanagan,

Midgley, Feldlaufer & Harold, 1990; Holmbeck & Hill, 1988). Hines (2003) found that

the more experienced a teacher was, the more often he/she subscribed to negative

stereotypes of adolescents. This may be due to an environmental mismatch as educators

in secondary schools have a strong orientation toward control with more experienced

teachers expressing stronger beliefs in control and discipline (Midgley, Feldlauger &

Eccles, 1988). This emphasis on control would be a direct challenge to adolescents'

need for self-determination, resulting in more rebellious-type behavior. The theories and

beliefs that a teacher has as a part of the general knowledge that he/she brings to the

classroom act as a filter through which teachers perceive, process and act upon

information in the classroom (Clark & Pederson, 1986).   This results in a kind of

"Catch-22" for the young adolescents because, as Hines observes, "Teachers' responses

to certain behaviors may encourage the demonstration of other problematic behaviors

which in turn serve as confirmation for storm and stress views of adolescence" (p.61).

Dekovic (2002) notes that adolescent students' perceptions of their educational ability affect them more than how they actually perform and that they form those perceptions in large part by how their teachers' view them. If the teacher attributes lack of success to innate qualities, then the student is less likely to try. Also impacted by teacher beliefs is the shaping of student goals. If the teacher focuses on task goals, rather than ability goals, the middle school student is more likely to develop better adaptive learning habits. As noted above, another developmental need of young adolescents is self-determination. However, Dekovic has found that young adolescents often have fewer opportunities for self-determination than they experienced in elementary school.

That the beliefs and expectations that teachers bring to the classroom can have negative effects if they are employing a negative stereotype about young adolescents was demonstrated in a nationwide survey of middle school administrators and teachers about academic diversity in the middle school. The researchers reported beliefs that would appear to result in under challenging advanced middle school students. The overwhelming majority of responding educators believed middle schoolers to be more social than academic, to be concrete thinkers, to be motivated primarily by extrinsic situations, and to work best with routine. What is even more disturbing is the belief of nearly half the principals and teachers that middle school learners are in a plateau learning period—which they see as justification for the idea that basic skills instruction, low level thinking, and small assignments are appropriate (Moon, Tomlinson & Callahan, 1995).

Preservice Teachers' Beliefs about Adolescents

So it appears that in addition to discovering preservice teachers' beliefs about

teaching and learning, it is worthwhile to examine their beliefs about their prospective

students. Finders (1999) tackled this question head on in her first day of a class called

Teaching English in a Middle School/Junior High by asking her students to write about

their expectations, worries, and what they anticipated in working with middle school

students. Their answers revealed a predominantly negative view which centered on

control issues almost to the exclusion of other areas of discussion such as cognitive

development or class content. She soon realized that if she were to be able to effectively

teach the middle school course, she was going to have to work on the assumptions that

led to such single-minded concerns. She chose to use the anonymously recorded stories

that preservice teachers tell to uncover their beliefs about middle school students and

appropriate teaching methods. She found that the predominant description her students

gave of young adolescents was that they are out of control, with raging hormones that

causes them to lose all ability to reason. Her students had no knowledge or awareness of

adolescence as being a socially constructed life stage, nor of the historic, economic,

social and cultural complexities that impact and mold the lives of adolescents. Finders

found that the term "adolescence" created a filter that restricted viewing the students as

individuals. Her students often described adolescents homogeneously and used metaphors

such as "packs" and "herds" without regard to other characteristics such as race, class,

gender, personal interests or abilities. Much attention was focused on the perceived

energy level of adolescents and how to control it rather than tap it. When faced with their

own experience as adolescents, the most common remark was "I wasn't typical," which

seems in accordance with others' findings on personal exceptionalities to the stereotype. The only time the students identified themselves with their stereotypical image of adolescence was when they recalled instances of negative behaviors they exhibited as adolescents. This phenomenon carried over into the middle school classroom observations the students made. When the middle school students' actions did not match the stereotyped image the college students held, they described the students as "extraordinary" or "amazing." When two or three students were disruptive, their behavior was quickly generalized to the whole class.

Changing Teacher Beliefs

Clearly these findings are distressing to the college professor teaching middle school curricula for if the preservice teacher adheres so rigidly to this view of the adolescent as having lost all intellectual capabilities for a period of time and primarily needing to be controlled, then learning about curricula and methodology has no meaning nor useful purpose, and teaching about it is a waste of time. Schwartz, Slate and Onwuegbuzie (1999) assert that one of the purposes of a teacher education program is to have candidates identify their beliefs and begin examining and adjusting these beliefs on the basis of research, theory, exemplary practices, and philosophical approaches to education. How likely is it that the beliefs and attitudes that education majors bring to their teacher preparation program can be identified and modified? The literature on teacher beliefs and the success of education programs in modifying teacher beliefs indicates that, while certainly not impossible, it is not easy to do (Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Finders, 1999; Matanin & Collier, 2003; Pajares, 1992; Zeichner, Tabachnick & Densmore, 1987). It is necessary to create educational experiences that

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encourage this kind of self-reflection and growth. Because of her discoveries about her students' beliefs regarding young adolescents, Finders (1999) realized that teacher educators must make the constructions that preservice teachers bring to their education program central to the course. She deduced that preservice teachers need to develop an understanding of how both language and culture influence their lives and their classrooms. Britzman (1986) recognized this need in her examination of the teacher's biography and social structure in teacher education. She declared, "Critical consideration must be given to what happens when the student teacher's biography, or cumulative social experience, becomes part of the implicit context of teacher education" (p. 443). Marso and Pigge (1991) found that teacher educators need to pay more attention to how students' feel about their prospective students, teaching area, and teacher training experience if they wish to impact prospective teachers' attitudes. A common thread that seems to run through many of the documented reports of teacher preparation programs and their efforts to influence change in preservice teacher beliefs is the need for self-assessment strategies that promote reflective thinking practices (Anderson & Holt-Reynolds, 1995; Britzman, 1986; Cole & Knowles, 1995; Finders, 1999). For the benefit to occur, however, according to Cole and Knowles, teacher educators must structure the reflective thinking activities in such a way that leads the preservice teacher to identify and recognize the true worth of examining their own experiences. Conducting this reflective thinking within a community of learners intensifies the process and leads to the construction of more acceptable and powerful views (Wilcox et al., 1991). If teacher preparation programs are successful in helping preservice teachers develop informed theories and beliefs, the beginning teachers successfully sustain these beliefs by being

involved in a supportive cohort of similarly situated colleagues upon actually entering the teaching field (Canniff, 2003).

Some studies have found that formal education classes which go beyond simply subject area content can have an impact on teachers' knowledge which in turn may influence their teaching (Snider & Fu, 1990; Wilkins & Brand, 2004), while a study conducted by Mary Kennedy (1991) Director of the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning, found the success of the teacher education program depends more on the content and character of the program rather than the structure of the program. Her research once again affirms the importance of the beliefs that preservice teachers hold when entering a teacher education program and how the teacher education program addresses those beliefs. Lexmond (2003) found that with extensive intervention, she was able to bring a group of preservice teachers to a more positive view of young adolescents, but that their fundamental understanding of the young adolescent still centered around an intellectually incompetent, biological view.

In order to confront her students' negative beliefs about young adolescents, Finders developed a blend of educational experiences. First, she had her students recall their own experiences in school as young adolescents. Then she had them read about the history of the concept of adolescence and about current changing views of adolescents in today's society. The next piece was an assignment for the students to work closely with some individual adolescents. Finders wanted her students to really get to know some young adolescents and to observe them in a variety of situations. These experiences were designed to dissipate the students' homogeneous view of adolescents and help them gain understandings of adolescents' diverse experiences. Her students tutored at a local

middle school and conducted a series of interviews with young adolescents in their

favorite places such as a video arcade, gym, or home as well as at their school. The

students each created an ethnographic portrait of a young adolescent which were shared

in class and used the knowledge about young adolescents gained through these

investigations as a basis from which to critically explore their own beliefs and the

influence of language and discourse in the classroom.

Anfara, Rosenblum, and Mahar (2002) report on a similar experience with

preservice teachers at Temple University. These students were asked to reflect on their

greatest anxieties about teaching in a middle school before the start of their student

teaching experience. Their responses included worries about inability to relate to the

students because of the changes occurring in the students' lives, their behavior, and their

age. At the end of the student teaching term, most of the preservice teachers, even the

ones who had been reluctant to student teach in a middle school, reported having had a

positive experience. Many of the student teachers commented about the satisfying and

gratifying interpersonal relationships they formed with their students; several mentioned

it was a different experience than what they had expected.

Intuitively it seems as if gaining more knowledge about a subject or even a group

of people would go a long way in changing a person's belief system about that subject or

group of people. However, this is not always the case. In courses and workshops about

cultural differences, for instance, largely descriptive and informative but highly

generalized material provided to teachers can unwittingly reinforce, rather than change,

hidden prejudices (Kennedy, 1991). Without an opportunity for reflection and discussion

of the information's implications for teaching students of diverse cultural backgrounds,

the information was outside the learner's context of knowledge and as such accorded a low degree of pertinence to the his/her teaching methods. Add to the mix the difficulty of getting prospective teachers to examine their closely held beliefs about teaching and learning in such a way that encourages them to allow change and new beliefs to supplant some previous developed theories. This is not an easy task and one that is documented in Bird et al.'s (1993) description of Bird's innovative beginning teacher education class. He found himself engaged in a "pedagogical balancing act" between establishing an unfamiliar mode of self-reflection and engagement with the text in order to promote the indepth examination of new ideas while refraining from assuming an authoritarian information dispenser as the classroom teacher. His students spent far too much energy and anxiety in trying to figure out "what the teacher wanted" in terms of the writings they were expected to do, and so succeeded in muting their own voices to adopt the voice of the text in hopes of getting a good grade. The frustration of having student identification and expression of their preconceived beliefs about teaching and learning as a goal only to see that subverted by the complexity of the assigned learning tasks and the formulaic pursuit of a "good grade" is evident in the Bird article and must surely exist in other teacher education programs that seek to engage students in the often unfamiliar task of self-reflection. The difficulties Bird and others have encountered with this task may be why some researchers have argued that while teacher educators readily advocate that teachers should have a thorough knowledge of their students and use this knowledge to be responsive to their learning needs, most teacher preparation courses do not include the attempt to identify or understand students' past experiences or implicit beliefs about teaching and learning (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). Anderson and Holt-Reynolds

(1995) suggest that one way to address this concern is "for teacher educators to inquire into their own practices, study their students in the particular situations in which they teach them, and develop practical theories about how prospective teachers' beliefs are likely to enter into that situation to affect what and how prospective teachers learn" (p. 2).

Understanding what motivates undergraduates to choose teaching as a career may be helpful in designing initiatives to interest education majors in teaching at a particular level. Research that has been done in this area indicates that there are three main reasons why people choose teaching as a career (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). They are 1) altruistic reasons such as seeing teaching as a worthwhile and important job, a desire to help children succeed, and a desire to improve society; 2) intrinsic reasons which cover aspects of the job itself and an interest in a particular subject matter; and 3) extrinsic reasons such as vacation time, status, working conditions, etc. The degree of match between why a person chooses a certain job and the reality of that job has a great deal to do with job satisfaction. In a study of minority recruitment into the teaching profession, the intrinsic reasons greatly outweighed the extrinsic reasons for the students who chose teaching as a career (Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). The idea of giving service to the community and helping students played a major role in the education majors desire to teach. It would seem, then, that any attempt to influence teachers' choice of teaching level would also need to appeal to the factors that led the students to choose teaching as a career initially.

Summary

Anderson and Holt-Reynolds' recommendation for teacher educators to develop

practical theories about how preservice teachers' beliefs affect their learning situations is

at the heart of this research project into preservice teachers' beliefs about young

adolescents. Because of the impact that teacher beliefs have been shown to have on

teacher behavior and the influence teacher behavior and expectations have on student

attitude and achievement, it seems prudent and useful to determine what beliefs

prospective teachers have about young adolescents and how this information can be used

to guide teacher education programs. It is a commonly used technique in introducing

new material in the classroom, to do a "K-W-L" with the students, a quick look at what

they already know (or think they know) about the subject, what they want to find out,

and, completed after the lesson, what they learned. The first part is an element of the

total enriched assessment picture which, if skipped, can result in a misdirected,

unnecessary, or unengaging lesson. In order for teacher educators to even begin to

prepare preservice teachers for work at the middle level, we cannot overlook the need to

unearth and examine their beliefs about the young adolescents they will teach.

In the following chapter, I will describe the methodology of this study. An initial

survey of education majors from two universities located in different states enrolled in a

foundations of education class asks the students to respond their beliefs about

descriptions of characteristics and behaviors of young adolescents.   Follow up interviews

allow the formation of these beliefs to be explored. Analysis of the interviews reveals

common beliefs and the source of their origin. The information gleaned from these two

types of inquiry forms a basis for a framework of educational experiences that promote a

deeper understanding and appreciation of adolescent issues and behavior.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Introduction

This study has grown out of a strong belief in the necessity and validity of developmentally appropriate education at the middle level provided by professionals specifically educated in the needs and learning styles of young adolescents. With the complexity and volume of information available in any given field, specialization has come to be a necessity. It would seem to be advantageous if preservice teachers could identify their preferred teaching level midway into their teaching preparation so that they could tailor their studies to learning about the specific physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs and processes of the age group they are preparing to teach. However, due to the many grade configurations serving the young adolescent, middle level education has not had widespread success in preparing teachers of this age group. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders may be all or partially housed in an elementary, middle, or junior high school, and may be combined with one or two other grades as in a fifth and sixth year center, or have the ninth grade added to the seventh and eighth grades to form a junior high school. Subsequently, the teachers teaching these grades may have anything from an elementary to secondary to K-12 teaching certificate, depending on the subject area. The result of this diversity is a lack of consistency in the education of those who are teaching young adolescents and an absence of teachers who are specifically prepared to teach the children they are assigned to educate.

If this situation is to change as many middle level educators and organizations have demanded (Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development,1989; Gaskill, 2002; Lounsbury & Vars, 1978; Manning, M. L. ,1993; McEwin & Dickinson, 1996; National Middle School Association, 1999), more education majors need to be recruited into planning to teach at the middle level early enough in their education preparation that they can take the coursework and have the educational experiences that will adequately prepare them to work successfully and confidently with young adolescents.

Those who would advocate for an increase in specifically prepared middle level educators need to take a lesson from the corporate world. We need to learn more about preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents if we are going to be able to educate them on the benefits and rewards of working with this age group. Once we have garnered some definite information about the prevailing attitudes and beliefs of preservice teachers regarding young adolescents, it would be helpful to learn how these attitudes and beliefs came into being. The last step will then be to decide how this information can be used in middle level teacher preparation programs and their recruitment of education majors.

Design of the Study

Mixed Methods Design

As noted in *An Introduction to Educational Research*, both quantitative and qualitative analyses involve judgments relating to their constructs--quantitative analysis centering on a hypothesis or statement of explanation and qualitative analysis being more reflective of the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of people the researcher has interviewed

or observed (Langenbach, Vaughn, & Aagaard, 1994). In deciding on the use of a mixed methods design, I concluded that because of the varied aspects of the research questions, the whole story was best told by gathering and analyzing data using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of quantitative data also served the purpose of enabling corroboration of the qualitative data, and the qualitative data provided richer detail, allowing further elaboration and development of analysis (Rossman & Wilson as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus the combination of types of data provided more comprehensive information than either of them alone (Langenback, Vaughn, & Aagaard, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through their participation in an on-line survey and subsequent quantitative analysis of the survey results, I sought to identify what prevailing beliefs preservice teachers currently hold about young adolescents. In using two data pools from different settings, I was able to compare these beliefs. The first data sample was a group of approximately 75 education majors currently enrolled in a foundations of education class at a major southwestern university. The second data sample was a group of similarly situated students at a southeastern university. The main difference between the two groups is the licensing requirements for teaching in their respective states. In one state, there is not a specific middle level licensure requirement other than to meet the content hours or pass the subject area test necessary to be considered highly qualified. In the other state, in order to teach at the middle level, a teacher must hold a specific middle level license. It is possible that a significant difference ($p \leq .05$) in beliefs about young adolescents may exist in an educational environment that acknowledges this age group as distinct and requiring of specialized preparation. Additionally, in the survey I asked the participants to identify their beliefs of the descriptors as being positive or negative traits

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or behaviors. By grouping and analyzing the responses, I was also able to address the assumption based on existing research that preservice teachers hold a negative view of young adolescents.

However, this portion of the study only answered half the research questions and did not provide all the information needed to be useful to middle level teacher preparation programs. It was also necessary to know how the preservice teachers participating in the survey developed these beliefs. This information would be very difficult and limiting to access using quantitative methods, so I used qualitative methods and treated this portion of my research as a multiple case study with within-case analysis, using with-in case displays to depict the causal network (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and cross case analysis due to the two different settings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because all of the subjects of the study belong to the bounded context (Miles and Huberman, 1994) of education majors also known as preservice teachers enrolled in an entry level foundations of American education class at their respective university, the unit of study was the beliefs about adolescents that this group holds. Of the approximately 150 respondents to the survey who agreed to be interviewed--20 interviews, ten per group-- were coded and analyzed for "categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases" (Merriam, 1998, p.195). Each interview was treated as a single case and described via a with-in case display. Next all the cases within that university group were compared and parallels drawn in the hopes that dominant themes would emerge. Finally, the cases from both sets were submitted to a cross-case analysis to better understand the belief system as a whole and to see if either set revealed a more positive or negative view of young adolescents, a greater willingness to teach in the middle level, and/or any other set

of beliefs or observations about young adolescents that were not shared with the other set. It is possible, depending on the responses given in the interviews, that some indication may be discovered that those differences stem from the licensing environment of the states in which the universities are located. Thus, this research seeks to discover what these preservice teachers believe about young adolescents and to get some idea of why they feel that way. While Lincoln and Guba (1985) make the absolutely defensible case that due to the complexity of intentions and actions of human behavior, determining causality is not a workable concept, there does remain the possibility of identifying some linkage between events that result in the formation of particular beliefs (Bandura, 1986; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Essentially, the research is looking for the causal attributions of the beliefs that preservice teachers give to young adolescents (Weiner, 1985,1986). Do these preservice teachers attribute the traits and behaviors of adolescents to controllable or uncontrollable causes (Weiner, 1979, 1986), and how did they come to those conclusions? Knowing that beliefs are culturally influenced (Vygotsky, Piaget, & Bandura as cited in Tudge & Winterhoff, 1993), it might be helpful to identify the source of that cultural influence. It may originate from other teachers, the media, parents, state requirements, personal experience with adolescents, self-analysis; there are many possibilities.

University Settings

The first group of preservice teachers to be studied was recruited from students enrolled in a foundations of education class at a large state university in the Southwestern part of the United States. The foundations class is one of the earliest required classes for education majors and is taken by all the preservice teachers, regardless of their preferred

teaching level or subject. The rationale for targeting this group of students is that if the beliefs about young adolescents that preservice teachers bring to their decision making about teaching young adolescents are to be assessed at the point at which they may have the greatest influence on that decision, then the ideal is to catch them before that decision has been made and before any subsequent education courses may have provided information about young adolescents.

The university is located in one of the older communities in this relatively young state. The city serves not only as home to the university, but as a suburban community of the state's capital located approximately 20 miles away. Its student body comes from all 50 states and more than 100 foreign countries. It is first in the nation among public universities in enrollment of National Merit Scholar freshmen and prides itself on its continual recruitment of these young scholars. The university is a doctoral degree-granting research university with 19 colleges offering 136 bachelor's degrees, 94 master's degrees, 51 doctoral degrees, five graduate certificates, and one professional degree. It has campuses in three of the state's largest cities, enrolling about 31,000 students in its various degree programs. The student population is comprised of 78% white, 22% minority and 6% international students, and is taught by approximately 1,830 full-time faculty members and around 1150 part-time faculty and graduate assistants.

The College of Education as described in the NCATE report on the university's College of Education website "is comprised of three departments, which have within them multiple programs. Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum (ILAC) houses the majority of the teacher education programs including elementary education, early childhood, language arts education, math education, science education, social

studies education, special education, and reading specialist.   The unit has certification programs with other Colleges, the College of Fine Arts (music education), the College of Arts and Sciences (foreign language), the School of Library and Information Studies (School Library Media), and College of Allied Health (Speech Language Pathology)." Demographically, the College of Education enrolls approximately 750 undergraduate students, with approximately 20% of these being minorities and only .02% being international students.

It does not offer a middle level education program nor is any reference made to middle level preparation anywhere on the website. This is reflective of the state's requirements for teacher certification at the middle level. While the state offers a middle level certificate in several content areas, it is not a requirement to teach at the middle level as elementary (1-8) or secondary (6-12) certificates are all that is necessary. The exception is mathematics at the middle level where the elementary certified teacher is required to have a middle level endorsement consisting of additional content hours in order to teach mathematics at the middle level.

The university's Teacher Education Plus program is an extended program with the education major graduating after the senior year, then enrolling as a graduate student for the fifth year of the program which consists of the student intern experience and additional coursework. Students may apply for admittance into the TE-Plus program after they have accumulated 24 hours of college study. The particular course from which the study participants were recruited is one of the initial courses in the teacher preparation program. All education majors, regardless of their intended area of focus, are required to take this course as part of their teacher preparation program.

The second group of students was drawn from a university in the southeastern part of the United States. The southeastern university is located in a city which is almost one third smaller than the southwestern university and is about an hour and a half away from the state's capital. The university's population is about 23,000, however, which puts it only somewhat smaller than the southwestern university. When the two campuses where the students in the study go to classes are compared, the population size is very similar.

The southeastern university has 105 bachelor degree programs, 71 masters, 4 special programs, 1 medical doctorate and 16 doctoral programs. It has approximately 1400 full time faculty; there were no figures separately available for the part-time faculty and graduate students. Demographically, the two schools are similar. The southeastern university's population is approximately 21% minority and it has fewer international students. Fewer students are from out of state than at the larger, southwestern university…approximately 13.5% versus 23%. The southeastern university was founded as a teacher school in 1907 as a way to alleviate the teacher shortage in its state. It is a constituent institution of the state's largest university system.

The College of Education at the southeastern university has been recognized by the US Department of Education as one of four cutting edge teacher preparation programs in the nation. It has approximately 920 students in its undergraduate education program and about 17% of those are minority students. Its teacher preparation programs are all NCATE accredited and include programs in elementary, middle grades, special education, science, and business and vocational education which lead to teacher licensure. Students start with an exploratory education class as sophomores, but do not

start into the formal teacher preparation program until they have completed their initial

course requirements, very similar to the southwestern university's program. According

to a professor in the middle level education program at the university (A. Bullock,

personal communication, September 8, 2005), the course from which the students were

recruited for the study is the equivalent foundations course to the one at the southwestern

university, although it is titled differently. All education majors are required to take this

course as part of their teacher preparation program, regardless of their preferred teaching

level, just as in the southwestern university's college of education. This university's

teacher preparation program culminates after the student graduates and has completed

his/her intern experience.

The main difference in variables between the two university environments as far

as this study is concerned is that the southeastern university is located in a state which

does require middle level licensure in order to teach sixth through ninth grade. The

elementary license overlaps at the sixth grade and the high school license overlaps at

ninth grade, but there is no overlap at all at the seventh and eighth grade. The

significance of this is that the individual who is interested in teaching enters the

educational program already accustomed to seeing middle level as a distinct group.

Whether this will impact the preservice teacher's beliefs about young adolescents

remains to be seen.

Methods

   Collection of Data

As Pajares (1992) indicated, it is not easy to design a way to discover people's

personal beliefs. It is often desirable to use more than one source of data to uncover the

patterns of belief systems that may exist (Yin, 1994; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). But another important reason exists for coming at this research question from a couple of different directions. In exploring preservice teacher beliefs, this study must center on personal experience. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) provide a clarifying insight into the study of personal experience, writing that it is a study that is "simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward, and forward" (p. 417). This is certainly true of the nature of this inquiry. The inward direction requires the participants to reflect on their own beliefs and try to identify them. Overtly thinking about the characteristics and behaviors of young adolescents is something they may not have done before. The outward direction comes from several environments in which these beliefs were developed, from the school the participant attended as a young adolescent to the university the participant attends to the state in which it is located. Backward and forward refer to the passing of time. The participant's experience that may have led to the development of a belief is in the past, may be confirmed in the present and the main reason that any of this matters is that it may impact the future, or the "forward" direction.

Selection of participants

As mentioned previously, the education majors in both groups were targeted to be enrolled in a foundations of education class. Targeting students at this level of their teacher preparation served a dual purpose. First, it seeks to standardize the two groups for purposes of comparison by accessing them at approximately the same entry point in terms of educational instruction. And secondly, it is to obtain information about their beliefs regarding young adolescents that they brought with them into the teacher preparation program. By surveying this information prior to any classes that they have

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taken regarding adolescent development, it is more likely that the information will be

more reflective of their emotional and value-based assessment uninfluenced by

intellectual explanations of adolescent behavior that they may or may not buy into. Their

enrollment in the class did not guarantee their participation in the study. The students

were emailed an invitation to participate in the study. This online invitation included

information about the study and the informed consent material. If the student chose to

participate, he or she was directed to a website that contained a survey of descriptors of

young adolescents. The last question on the survey requests the respondent to indicate

willingness to participate in a follow-up interview to elaborate on the extent and source of

the views expressed in the survey. If the respondent answers this question affirmatively,

he/she was contacted via email to see if he/she was still agreeable to participating in a

follow-up interview and was also asked to identify his/her teaching program of study

preference at this point in his/her education (i. e. high school, middle school, elementary,

early childhood, or other). No other biographical information was obtained at this point

or earlier in the survey. Those students who responded were then separated into two

groups: a secondary group (including high school and middle school) and an elementary

group (including elementary and early childhood). The respondents who identified a

teaching program that would result in a kindergarten through 12th grade certification

(special education, art, music, physical education, for example) were not used as these

students' interviews could not be fairly classified into specifically the elementary or the

secondary groups. Five names were drawn at random from each group. Due to the small

number of possible interviewees, a simple method of random selection was used. Each of

the possible interviewees in each group was assigned a number from one to ten. These

numbers were written individually on small slips of paper and put into a paper sack. The researcher's spouse was asked to draw five from each group. Once these names were selected, an email was sent to each of the possible interviewees chosen establish a convenient time for a telephone interview. Interviews with three of the chosen twenty respondents could not be completed due to scheduling conflicts and a change in career choice. Using the process described above, three replacements were chosen and those interviews successfully completed. The reason the decision was made to be more purposeful (Patton, 1990) in the selection of participants for the interviews is that the research indicated this to be the most appropriate sampling strategy because of the search for insight and the need for a representative sample that will yield the most extensive data. The southeastern group ended up with one female early childhood major, three female elementary majors, two female and one male middle school majors, and two female and one male high school majors. The southwestern group was comprised of two female early childhood majors, three female and two male elementary majors, and three female secondary majors.

   The survey and subsequent quantitative analysis.

   The survey component is comprised of a 108 questions that first asks participants to rate 54 descriptors of adolescent traits and behaviors on a Likert scale of one to five, with one being not very descriptive of most young adolescents and five being highly descriptive of most young adolescents. Participants were then asked to go back and rate each of the descriptors on a Likert scale of one to five with one being an undesirable or negatively perceived trait or action and five being a highly desirable or positively perceived trait or action. The survey was modified from an instrument developed by

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Buchanan and Holmbeck (1998). These two researchers felt the field of study regarding beliefs about adolescence was hindered by the lack of a standard scale to measure expectations. To that end, they constructed a survey that measured individuals' category-based expectations for adolescents' personality and behavioral attributes. Category-based expectations are often stereotypes that fit a whole category of people and are influenced by society. Their survey also included a portion that focused on target-based expectations, ideas about what a certain adolescent, a son or daughter, niece or nephew, might do. As this study is concerned with the preservice teachers' category-based expectations, the portion involving the target-based expectations was omitted from the survey used in this research.

Even though Buchanan and Holmbeck (1998) developed their survey to measure parents' beliefs about adolescents, it is particularly appropriate for this research as the descriptors were constructed based on college students' responses to an open-ended questionnaire asking them to describe what they felt were the "stereotypical" and the "average" adolescent. The resulting descriptors were then subjected to ratings by more college students and some parents. Data gathered from this second pass was then assessed for internal reliability, test-retest reliability, and construct validity. Though the researchers ultimately desired to use the survey instrument with parents, they justified the use of college students in its development because "as young adult members of society, we expected their responses to mirror, at least in part, the ideas of the broader society in which they live, as well as their own recent experiences and impressions" (p. 610).

Besides deleting the portion about target-based expectations, a Likert scale rating was substituted for the percentage ratings that Buchanan and Holmbeck used (see

Appendix F). In their survey, respondents were asked to judge what percent of

adolescents displayed the behavior or trait in question. The respondent then had several

choices from 10-100% in increments of ten to consider. After consulting two more

experienced researchers, the decision was made to use a five point Likert scale, where the

respondent simply has to decide between degrees of fit…very descriptive, somewhat

descriptive, and so on. In order to address the question of whether preservice teachers'

beliefs about young adolescents reflected a negative stereotype, the respondents are asked

to review each of the descriptors and indicate the degree to which they feel the descriptor

is a desirable or undesirable trait or behavior, again using a one to five Likert scale to

determine the degree of fit.

The survey was uploaded to a website that hosts research surveys, and the

education majors in the foundations classes at both universities who agree to be contacted

regarding participation in the research project were sent an online invitation to take the

survey. The participant was then directed to the survey website, entered an identification

code given to him/her in the contact email, and, after reading and agreeing to the letter of

consent, the participant proceeded to complete the survey. The survey tool allowed the

participant to exit the survey and later re-enter to continue taking the survey, but would

not permit changes to answers previously given. The survey also allowed the participant a

"no answer" choice if he or she did not wish to reply to that particular question

The survey responses for the characteristic/behaviors variables were first analyzed

as one set to provide an overall view picture of the preservice teachers' beliefs about

young adolescents as measured by the survey. The data set was then split into two groups

in order to be able to compare the means on each variable for significant differences

(p≤.05). Each group's data were analyzed to determine the descriptive statistics for each variable and its frequency distribution which allowed for easy comparison of the two groups' range of responses. Outliers were noted in several variables, however although the outliers represented exceptions to the general trend, there was no indication that the outliers were aberrant scores resulting from data entry error or from not being part of the same population. Therefore, the outlying responses were left in as part of the data set for those variables (Glass & Hopkins, 1996). An independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that education majors enrolled in an education foundations class in a state with a middle level licensure requirement (Group1) would have a significantly different (p≤.05) view of young adolescents than education majors enrolled in a similar class in a state those does not require middle level licensure (Group 2). Next in order to determine a positivity/negativity index of each of the variables, means were calculated for each group's ratings of the desirability or undesirability those same descriptive words and behaviors.

The data was then subjected to a factor analysis. Factor analysis is recommended when studying the correlations among a large number of interrelated quantitative variables. (SPSS Inc., 1999). By grouping the variables within each factor that are more highly correlated with variables in that factor than with other variables in other factors, a picture of the data emerges which can suggest some major themes to explore in the next step of analysis, the qualitative case study.

In order to produce an assessment of the group's overall positivity/negativity perception of young adolescents, a procedure which compared attributes as impacted by the degree to which these attributes were identified as desirable or undesirable was

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developed. Since the survey instrument contained 32 negative variables and only 22

positive ones, any attempt to arrive at an overall assessment of the preservice teachers'

positive or negative view of young adolescents using these 54 variables would naturally

be skewed to the negative. Consequently, to develop a balanced set of descriptors,

correlation coefficients were determined between the variables to show the relationship

between the variables. Variables with a correlation significance of .5 or higher were

identified as essentially measuring the same construct. Using the results of the factor

analysis and the correlation analysis, a list of 36 attribute variables, 18 identified as

undesirable and 18 as desirable, was constructed. The means of each of the attribute

variables were multiplied by the corresponding mean of the desirability of the attribute.

The desirability variable was recoded from a Likert scale of 1 to 5 to a scale of -2 to 2.

The recoding allowed the new product variable to reflect the degree of

desirability/undesirability placed on the trait or characteristic by the group. By summing

the products, then dividing them by the number of variables, an overall estimate of

positivity/negativity was obtained.

     The interview and subsequent qualitative analysis.

     Due to the geographical distance between the two groups of students, a telephone

interview was selected as the most feasible way to conduct the interviews that could be

replicated with both groups. While the telephone interview lacks the opportunity to

observe the participant's body language, it balances this drawback with the interviewer's

non-verbal communication having any influence on the interviewee. Being aware of the

potential for interviewer bias, great care will be taken to avoid "co-authoring the

interview" (Miles & Huberman, 1994), by restating or reframing the participant's words.

The purpose of an interview is to find out what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, p.278). Thoughts, feelings, and intentions cannot readily be observed, nor in the case of belief development is it possible for the researcher to be present at the incidence or experience from whence the belief was formed. So the only recourse is to ask people questions about these events and experiences. The interview allows the researcher to "enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 1990, p. 196). The interview was designed as a semi-structured interview with certain questions already in place (see Appendix G). The duration of the interviews was on the average twenty minutes; however, two of the interviews lasted as long as one hour. The length of the interview was largely dependent upon the degree to which the interviewee elaborated on the responses. The use of semi-structured interviews to gather this data served as an effective tool, because specific information from all the respondents was elicited. There was a highly structured portion to the interview, but the exact wording or sequence of the follow-up questions could not be determined ahead of time as they were dependent on the nature of the response received. This more closely resembles an unstructured or informal interview (Merriam, 1997). The information the participant provided in the survey was also accessible to the researcher, and as such provided a source for some of the follow up questions in the interview. Additionally the survey response was used as a comparative check on the interview response. The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed for review and analysis.

These interviews formed the basis of an instrumental collective case study (Stake, 1994), where the individual case was not the focus but rather the specific issue, i. e. preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents. Each case was examined to provide

insight into the issue and to contribute to the formation of a picture of the group as a whole.   These insights may lead to theorizing about the nature of preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents, however, such a leap may not be feasible without more extensive sampling.

Each interview was coded, then diagrammed to provide an easily understandable within-case causal analysis for each case. As Abbott finds (as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994), the causes of any particular event are always multiple. Ragin (as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994) further states that causes are not only multiple but combine and affect each other as well as the actual event or outcome. Compounding the problem is that the result of multiple causes is not the same in all contexts, and, conversely, different combinations of causes can sometimes turn out to have similar effects. The researcher must be careful not to alight too quickly on an explanation or cling too firmly to an initial set of constructs. After extensive study and review of the coded interviews and the within-case analyses, categories for a cross-case analysis began to emerge and were plugged into a case level display for a partially ordered meta-matrix. A case level display was built for each group using the same categories.   Finally, the two case level displays were compared to find notable similarities and differences.

The method of constant comparison was used in that data was coded and sorted into categories as they defined themselves. Then through repeatedly comparing the content of the categories, the properties of the categories were defined until they could be described conceptually. These findings are presented in Chapter 4.

Summary

   In order to be able to get a more complete picture of preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents, a mixed methods study was conducted using survey, existing research, and interview data. The comparison of two groups of university students allowed for greater strength of the findings and permitted some possible conclusions to be drawn regarding the influence of middle level certification on incoming education majors perceptions of young adolescents. Chapter four describes the findings of the research and the themes derived from the surveys and interviews.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

The findings describe the beliefs that preservice teachers in this study hold about young adolescents. It also provides some insight into how they came to develop those beliefs, and how those beliefs impact their choice of teaching level. An additional research component consists of comparing the responses of two groups of preservice teachers from two different states, one of which requires specific middle level licensure to teach at the middle level and the other which accepts elementary or secondary preparation for teaching at the middle level.

The survey data and the interviews suggest that preservice teachers do have a rather stereotyped and somewhat negative view of young adolescents, although this seems to derive from beliefs about the stage of development more than from the actual nature of the young adolescents themselves. As gleaned from the interviews, the attributional elements that make up the individual's belief about why young adolescents "are the way they are" vary from person to person. Also helping to form their beliefs about young adolescents were the preservice teachers' own experience as a young adolescent and their experiences as adults working and interacting with young adolescents. To a lesser degree than anticipated, comments about media and "they say" information helped to shape some preservice teachers' beliefs. The interviews reveal that several factors feed into the preservice teacher's choice of teaching level. These can be grouped into three main categories: curriculum preference, age preference, and self-

efficacy issues. Each category contains substructures relating to experience, perceived personality traits, and ability levels.

Finally the question of differences and similarities in beliefs about young adolescents between the two groups of preservice teachers is answered. Here the benefit of the interview data provides a very important piece to this puzzle that appears to be more of an optical illusion than a straightforward snapshot. Although the overall picture of preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents does not appear to be different based on the survey data, the existence of a middle level teacher preparation program choice in the state that requires middle level licensure produces a notable difference in teacher enthusiasm, commitment, and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching young adolescents as indicated via the preservice teacher interviews.

What does come through quite clearly is that while there exists some ambivalence and at times outright disapproval of young adolescents, there are still many teachers who care deeply about young adolescents and find in them several positive characteristics and behaviors. It is also evident that there remains a much smaller number who feel they are disposed to teach them or feel adequately prepared to do so.

Quatitative Analysis

Data Preparation

The on-line survey resulted in 164 total responses from both the university settings. This amount included nine responses collected from one of the university settings during the Spring 2005 semester as well as 70 responses from the Fall 2005 semester and 85 responses collected from the other university students during the Fall 2005 semester. Cases that did not include any survey responses on the second half of the

survey were eliminated in order to avoid an imbalance in the import given to the

responses provided in that portion of the survey. Originally only the Fall semester

responses were to be considered for analysis, however, in order to arrive at an equal data

set, determined to desirable for an accurate comparison of the two groups to be made, the

completed Spring responses were included. Because the Spring 2005 responses were

also collected from students enrolled in the same foundations class as the Fall 2005

respondents, it was determined after consultation with a university professor and graduate

student in statistics, that due to their similarly situated experience, these cases could

reasonably be added to the group without harming the integrity of the analysis. This

resulted in a data set of two groups of 70 cases each. A grouping variable was added and

an assignment of one was given for the southeastern university cases and an assignment

of two was given to the southwestern university cases in order to permit subsequent

grouped statistical analysis of the data via SPSS software.

   Results of total data set analysis

   Descriptive statistics were obtained for each variable (see Table 1) and, as noted

above, although some outliers were identified, due to the absence of any indication that

these were aberrant scores resulting from data entry error or non-population membership,

the outlying responses were not eliminated. There were no mean responses in the one to

two range, with the lowest mean rating, 2.26, on the "uses drugs" variable. The highest

mean rating, 4.57, was derived on the "concerned with looks" variable. The

characteristics and behaviors judged to be most descriptive of most young adolescents as

defined by a mean score of four or higher were conforms to peers, confused, distractible,

easily influenced by friends, emotional, faddish, insecure, into clothes, listens to music,

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materialistic, spends time with friends, tests limits, eats junk food, watches lots of TV,

and concerned with looks.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Active	3.89	.85	140	Adventuresome	3.90	.89	140
Ambitious	3.33	.90	139	Anxious	3.95	.90	140
Awkward	3.97	1.01	140	Caring	3.24	.82	139
Conforms to peers	4.43	.77	140	Confused	4.09	.93	140
Considerate	3.04	.81	139	Depressed	2.85	1.00	137
Distractible	4.01	.86	138	Easily infl.by friends	4.46	.71	140
Emotional	4.15	.84	140	Energetic	3.96	.82	139
Faddish	4.10	.88	134	Friendly	3.54	.60	140
Fun-loving	3.78	.76	140	Generous	3.01	.75	139
Hard-working	3.01	.71	139	Helpful	3.22	.75	139
Honest	3.01	.79	140	Impulsive	3.98	.77	140
Insecure	4.13	.80	140	Int. in school	2.77	.83	140
Inquisitive	3.38	.75	132	Intelligent	3.82	.70	137
Into clothes	4.27	.81	139	Listens to music	4.52	.72	140
Materialistic	4.20	.91	140	Rebellious	3.77	.92	140
Reckless	3.32	.89	137	Restless	3.67	.82	137
Rude	3.07	.80	140	Selfish	3.24	.81	139

Descriptive Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Sexually active	2.90	1.03	136	Smokes cigarettes	2.69	.91	136
Social	4.16	.73	140	Spends time w/friends	4.40	.72	138
Stubborn	3.84	.85	139	Takes risks	3.64	.87	140
Tests limits	4.07	.78	138	Uses alcohol	2.63	1.03	135
Uses drugs	2.26	.90	136	Gets along w/people	3.46	.71	140
Lonely	3.11	.90	137	Parties	2.94	1.05	139
Talkative	3.96	.77	139	Displays healthy behavior	3.01	.81	140
Eats junk food	4.47	.70	138	Exercises regularly	2.58	.85	139
Watches lots of TV	4.26	.80	139	Eats nutritious food	2.47	.80	139
Concerned w/looks	4.57	.67	138	Gets adequate sleep	2.66	.93	139
Desirability Variables	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Sample Size**	**Variable**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Sample Size**
Active 2	4.34	.74	134	Adventuresome2	4.13	.71	134
Ambitious2	4.33	.83	132	Anxious2	2.58	1.15	132
Awkward2	2.12	1.07	128	Caring2	4.51	.82	134
Conforms to peers2	2.70	1.34	133	Confused2	2.34	1.05	132
Considerate2	4.48	.79	130	Depressed2	1.48	.80	132
Distractible2	2.00	1.03	132	Easily infl. by friends2	2.26	1.21	133
Emotional2	3.07	.89	132	Energetic2	4.29	.76	133
Faddish2	2.63	1.06	130	Friendly2	4.56	.77	133
Fun-loving2	4.51	.74	132	Generous2	4.50	.85	133
Hard-working2	4.54	.77	133	Helpful 2	4.53	.79	13

Desirability Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Honest2	4.57	.92	133	Impulsive2	2.85	1.02	132
Insecure2	1.82	1.00	133	Interested in school2	4.28	1.02	133
Inquisitive2	4.05	1.03	125	Intellligent2	4.42	.79	132
Into clothes2	2.80	1.10	133	Listens to music2	3.88	.88	132
Materialistic2	2.17	1.23	133	Rebellious2	2.27	1.21	132
Reckless2	1.70	1.05	133	Restless2	2.24	1.08	132
Rude2	1.48	.88	133	Selfish2	1.58	.95	133
Sexually active2	1.65	1.00	127	Smokes cigarettes2	1.44	.89	131
Social 2	4.27	.65	133	Spends time w/friends 2	4.25	.68	133
Stubborn2	2.34	.94	133	Takes risks 2	3.15	.90	132
Tests limits2	2.80	.97	132	Uses alcohol2	1.53	.97	130
Uses drugs2	1.37	.83	131	Gets along w/ people 2	4.45	.77	132
Lonely 2	1.70	.88	131	Parties2	2.27	1.11	132
Talkative2	3.65	.91	130	Displays healthy behavior 2	4.41	.93	133
Eats junk food 2	2.46	1.00	133	Exercises regularly 2	4.02	1.06	133
Watches lots of TV2	2.44	1.04	133	Concerned w/ looks 2	2.92	1.02	130
Gets adequate sleep2	4.27	1.02	132				

Note: Descriptive Variable refers to degree that the behavior or trait is descriptive of most

young adolescents; 1 being least descriptive and 5 most descriptive.

Desirable Variable refers to the degree that the behavior or trait is considered to be

desirable or undesirable; 1 being least desirable and 5 most desirable.

While certainly not a very positive portrait of young adolescents, it should be noted that with the exception of interested in school, eats nutritious food, exercises regularly, and gets adequate sleep, the lowest means (below three, not very descriptive of most adolescents) were given to what could be considered to be the extreme behavior variables of depressed, sexually active, smokes cigarettes, uses alcohol, uses drugs, and parties. Descriptors such as anxious, awkward, impulsive, rebellious, reckless, restless, rude, selfish, stubborn, takes risks, and lonely were said to be descriptive of an average number of young adolescents with a mean score of between 3 and 3.99. In terms of positive behaviors, active, adventuresome, ambitious, caring, considerate, energetic, friendly, fun-loving, generous, hard-working, helpful, honest, inquisitive, intelligent, social, displays healthy behavior, and gets along with people all feel within the 3 to 3.99 range, although generous, hard-working, honest, and displays healthy behavior just made it with an exact score of 3.01 on each them. These results would seem to indicate a somewhat negative view of young adolescents among the preservice teachers surveyed. This view is mediated by the rating of desirability that the education majors placed on each variable. In other words, even though the majority of adolescents are only viewed to be moderately helpful, for example, this is still considered to be a really good thing, and the fact that several of them are helpful may offset the belief that doing drugs is a really bad thing that only a few of them do. Results of this analysis are presented later in this section.

Results of comparison of groups analysis

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that preservice teachers enrolled in a foundations of education class in a state with a middle level licensure requirement would have a significantly different (p=.05) view of young

adolescents than preservice teachers in a state without a middle level licensure requirement. As shown in Table 2, the test was not significant on all of the variables except for one, talkative $\underline{t}$(2.23), p=.027, resulting in a finding counter to the research hypothesis. It should be noted that three other variables, rude $\underline{t}$(1.91), p=.057, easily influenced by friends $\underline{t}$(1.91), p=.058, and generous $\underline{t}$(1.95), p=.053 came close to having a significant difference. However, when consideration is given to the fact that 54 descriptors were evaluated, these findings do not contribute enough impact to dispel the overall similarity of the two group's views.

Table 2

<u>Independent Samples t Test for the Equality of Means</u>

Variable	t	df	p	Variable	t	df	p
Active	-1.303	138	.195	Faddish	-1.493	132	.138
Adventure-some	-.567	138	.572	Friendly	.978	138	.330
				Fun-loving	.333	138	.740
Ambitious	1.476	137	.142	Hard-working	1.569	137	.119
Anxious	1.223	138	.224				
				Helpful	1.729	137	.086
Awkward	-1.342	138	.182	Honest	.319	138	.750
Caring	-.539	137	.591	Impulsive	.546	138	.586
Conforms to peers	-.658	138	.512	Insecure	.000	138	1.000
Confused	.730	138	.467	Interested in school	.404	138	.687
Considerate	1.155	137	.250				
				Generous	1.949	137	.053
Depressed	.269	135	.789	Inquisitive	-.232	130	.817
Distractible	.893	136	.373	Intelligent	.757	135	.450
Easily influenced by friends	1.914	138	.058	Into clothes	1.862	137	.065
				Listens to music	.582	138	.562
Emotional	.704	138	.483				
Energetic	.210	137	.834	Materialistic	1.688	138	.094

Variable	t	df	p	Variable	t	df	p
Rebellious	1.671	138	.097	Gets along with people	.473	138	.637
Reckless	.797	135	.427				
Restless	.968	135	.335	Lonely	-.460	135	.646
Rude	1.916	138	.057	Parties	1.382	137	.169
Selfish	-.496	137	.621	Talkative	2.231	137	.027
Sexually active	.666	134	.506	Displays healthy behavior	.521	138	.603
Smokes cigarettes	1.268	134	.207				
				Eats junk food	-.495	136	.621
Social	.691	138	.491				
				Exercises regularly	1.054	137	.294
Spends time with friends	-.826	136	.410				
				Watches lots of TV	.027	137	.978
Stubborn	-.214	137	.831				
Takes risks	-.292	138	.771	Eats nutritious food	1.324	137	.188
Tests limits	-.533	136	.595				
				Concerned with looks	.887	136	.377
Uses alcohol	-.198	133	.843				
Uses drugs	.428	134	.669	Gets adequate sleep	1.529	137	.129

p=<.05

Results of the two groups ratings of the degree of desirability of each of the descriptors were also analyzed by means of an independent-samples t-test and are displayed in Table 3. The t-test indicated even greater uniformity between the two groups with only the variable, anxious, yielding a significant difference between the two groups, t(2.38), p=.019.

Table 3

Independent Samples t Test for the Equality of Means

Variable	t	df	p	Variable	t	df	p
Active2	.664	132	.508	Generous2	-.256	131	.799
Adventure-some2	.904	132	.368	Inquisitive2	-.665	123	.507
				Intelligent2	.674	130	.502
Ambitious2	-.350	130	.727	Into clothes2	-.076	131	.940
Anxious2	2.383	130	.019	Listens to music2	1.188	130	.237
Awkward2	1.391	126	.167				
Caring2	.519	132	.605	Materialistic2	.617	131	.538
Conforms to peers2	.832	131	.407	Rebellious2	1.800	130	.074
				Reckless2	2.744	131	.007
Confused2	-.359	130	.720	Restless2	.442	130	..659
Considerate2	.339	128	.735	Rude2	.223	131	.824
Depressed2	.549	130	.584	Selfish2	1.281	131	.824
Distractible2	-.841	130	.402	Sexually active2	-.260	125	.795
Easily influenced by friends2	.300	131	.764	Smokes cigarettes2	-.446	129	.656
Emotional2	.071	130	.944	Social2	.587	131	.558
Energetic2	.471	131	.638	Spends time with friends2	-.409	131	.683
Faddish2	.389	128	.698				
Friendly2	-.077	131	.938	Stubborn2	-1.055	131	.293
Fun-loving2	.234	130	.815	Takes risks2	.083	130	.934
Hardworkin2	-.181	131	.856	Tests limits2	.589	130	.557
Helpful2	.482	131	.631	Uses alcohol2	.960	128	.339
Honest2	-.160	131	.873	Uses drugs2	.653	128	.515
Impulsive2	1.082	130	.281	Gets adequate sleep2	.248	130	.805
Insecure2	.000	138	1.000	Gets along with people2	1.590	130	.114
Interested school	.404	138	.687				

Variable	t	df	p	Variable	t	df	p
Lonely2	1.119	129	.265	Exercises regularly2	1.645	131	.102
Parties2	.113	130	.910				
Talkative2	.450	128	.653	Watches lots of TV2	1.739	131	.102
Displays healthy behavior2	.163	131	.870	Eats nutritious food2	-.037	130	.970
				Concerned with looks2	.000	128	1.00
Eats junk food2	.837	131	.404				

_p=<.05_

Factor Analysis

The dimensionality of the 54 item beliefs about young adolescents measure was analyzed using maximum likelihood factor analysis. Table 4 shows the results of the factor analysis. Three criteria were used to determine the number of factors to rotate: the a priori hypothesis that the measure was multi-dimensional, the scree test, and the

Table 4

Factor Analysis

Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	% of Variances	Cumu-lative %	Total	% of Variances	Cumu-lative %	Total	% of Variances	Cumu lative %	Total
1	9.380	17.370	17.370	8.294	15.359	15.359	7.897	14.624	14.624
2	6.831	12.651	30.021	6.269	11.608	26.968	5.560	10.296	24.919
3	3.402	6.300	36.321	3.066	5.678	32.646	4.172	7.727	32.646
4	2.490	4.611	40.932						
5	2.429	4.497	45.429						
6	2.166	4.011	49.440						
7	2.037	3.771	53.211						
8	1.511	2.798	56.010						
9	1.454	2.693	58.702						
10	1.367	2.531	61.233						
11	1.320	2.445	63.678						
12	1.207	2.236	65.914						
13	1.115	2.065	67.979						

Table 4 continued

14	1.032	1.910	69.890
15	.991	1.834	71.724
16	.934	1.729	73.453
17	.894	1.655	75.108
18	.837	1.551	76.658
19	.804	1.489	78.148
20	.765	1.417	79.565
21	.724	1.340	80.905
22	.690	1.278	82.183
23	.665	1.231	83.414
24	.607	1.124	84.538
25	.585	1.084	85.622
26	.569	1.053	86.675
27	.525	.973	87.647
28	.504	.934	88.581
29	.484	.897	89.478
30	.472	.874	90.352
31	.432	.799	91.151
32	.399	.740	91.891
33	.366	.678	92.569
34	.352	.652	93.221
35	.320	.592	93.813
36	.314	.582	94.395
37	.299	.553	94.948
38	.281	.521	95.469
39	.254	.471	95.941
40	.242	.449	96.390
41	.236	.438	96.827
42	.212	.393	97.220
43	.207	.384	97.603
44	.184	.341	97.945
45	.181	.336	98.280
46	.153	.284	98.564
47	.151	.279	98.843
48	.120	.223	99.065
49	.114	.211	99.277
50	.106	.196	99.473
51	9.732E-02	.180	99.653
52	7.610E-02	.141	99.794
53	6.057E-02	.112	99.906
54	5.057E-02	9.365E-02	100.000

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

interpretability of the factor solution. The scree plot indicated that the initial hypothesis

of multi-dimensionality was correct and indicated three factors accounted for 36% of the

total variance. Consequently, three factors were rotated using a Varimax rotation

procedure. As illustrated in Table 5, the rotated solution yielded three interpretable

factors: negative descriptors, positive descriptors, and extreme or dangerous descriptors.

The negative descriptors accounted for 15.6% of the item variance, the positive

descriptors accounted for 11.6% of the item variance, and the extreme/dangerous

descriptors accounted for 5.7% of the item variance. None of the items loaded on more

than one factor.

Table 5

Rotated Factor Matrix

Factor 1 Negative Behaviors And Traits		Factor 2 Positive Behaviors And Traits		Factor 3 Extreme Behaviors	
Awkward	.308	Active	.379	Rude	.360
Confused	.452	Adventuresome	.286	Sexually active	.713
Depressed	.383	Fun-loving	.505	Uses alcohol	.778
Distractible	.389	Generous	.642	Uses drugs	.813
Selfish	.468	Hard-working	.611	Smokes cigs	.798
Anxious	.337	Helpful	.637	Parties	.725
Conforms to peers		Honest	.359		
	.438	Energetic	.522		
Social	.552	Friendly	.546		
Spends time with		Ambitious	.510		
friends	.584	Caring	.415		
Stubborn	.520	Considerate	.462		
Tests limits	.412	Interested in school	.379		
Lonely	.336	Inquisitive	.409		
Eats junk food	.442	Intelligent	.336		
Watches lots		Takes risks	.430		
of TV	.565	Gets along with people			
Concerned with			.565		
looks	.525	Talkative	.336		
Insecure	.639	Displays healthy behavior			
Into clothes	.620		.432		
Listen to music	.616	Exercises regularly	.445		
Materialistic	.691	Gets adequate sleep	.131		
Rebellious	.545	Eats nutritious food	.413		
Reckless	.507				
Restless	.550				
Faddish	.498				
Impulsive	.418				
Easily influenced					
by friends	.609				
Emotional	.621				

Correlations Analysis

Correlation coefficients were computed among the 54 descriptors of young adolescents' traits and behaviors. Using the Bonferroni approach to control for Type I error across the 54 correlations, a p value of less than .000 (.05/54=.0009) was required for significance. The results of the correlational analyses show that 24 out of the 54 correlations were statistically significant and were greater than or equal to.50. As anticipated, several other items were significantly correlated, but for the purposes of further analysis, only those items which showed large coefficients were identified. These items are reported in Table 6.

Positivity/Negativity Analysis

In an effort to produce a rating of each group's overall assessment of most young adolescents as displaying predominantly positive or negative behaviors or characteristics, a procedure designed by the researcher to calculate this rating. First, the descriptor desirability results were reviewed, noting that there were an unequal number of desirable and undesirable descriptors. As mentioned in the methods section, because there were more negative descriptors included in the original survey than positive descriptors, any composite score based on input from each of these descriptors would inevitably end up skewed to the negative. So, in order to work with a balanced set of descriptors, the results of the factor and correlations analyses were used to eliminate some variables. First the factor analysis identified six descriptors as extreme or dangerous traits or behaviors applicable to only a small number of young adolescents, so these six variables were removed from the set. Next the correlation coefficients of the remaining descriptors were

Table 6

Correlations among the 54 traits and characteristics of young adolescents

	Caring	Conforms to peers	Insecure	Friendly	Helpful	Listens to music	Into clothes
Considerate	.579*						
Influenced By friends		.584*					
Confused			.589*				
Fun-loving				.589*			
Generous					.571*		
Hard-working					.597*		
Materialistic						.539*	.627*
Into clothes						.664*	----

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Table 6 Continued

Correlations between the 54 Traits and Characteristics of Young Adolescents

	Reckless	Sexually Active	Smokes Cigarettes	Uses alcohol	Uses drugs	Parties
Rebellious	.661*					
Sexually Active		-----	.713*	.636*	.616*	.530*
Smokes Cigarettes		.713*	-----	.708*	.674*	.519*
Uses Alcohol		.636*	.708*	-----	.745*	.597*
Uses Drugs		.616*	.674*	.745*	------	.621*

	Takes Risks	Eats Junk Food	Rude	Social
Tests Limits	.648 *			
Watches Lots Of TV		.577 *		
Selfish			.612*	
Spends Time With Friends				.696*

* *p*<.000

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analyzed to identify the descriptors that were essentially measuring the same thing as evidenced by a correlation coefficient of .50 or higher. Eight negative descriptors were then removed from the group that loaded on the first factor in the factor analysis and three positive factors were removed from the group that loaded on the second factor resulting in an equal number of 18 descriptors in the positive and negative columns. The desirability variable was recoded from -2 to 2 in order to reflect the degree to which the variable was considered to be a positive or negative trait or characteristic means of each of the remaining descriptor variables. The means of the descriptors were multiplied by the means of each of the corresponding desirability variables items, then the sums were divided by the number of variables (36),resulting in an overall positivity/negativity rating of -0.94 for the southeastern university group (group 1) and -1.5 for the southwestern university group (group 2). Table 6.1 provides an overview of these calculations.

The ratings of -0.94 and -1.50 respectively still suggest a somewhat negative view of young adolescents, even with a balanced set of descriptors. As might be expected, although there is a difference in the degree of negativity with which the southwestern university group regards young adolescents as a whole, it is not statistically significant.   With the original list of descriptors, as there were more negative behaviors and traits to rate resulting in a larger number of negative descriptors said to be very descriptive of most young adolescents, the overall impression could easily be interpreted as a highly negative view. When the descriptors were analyzed in a more equitable fashion and were combined with the degree to which a certain descriptor was considered desirable, a different picture emerges. If one recalls that both the descriptors were rated on a Likert scale of one to five with one being representing the

Table 6.1
Positivity/Negativity Index

	Group 1 descriptive means	desirability means	product	Group 2 descriptive means	desirability means	product
Awkward	3.86	-0.98	-3.7828	4.09	-1.25	-5.1125
Confused	4.14	-0.87	-3.6018	4.03	-1.09	-4.3927
Depressed	2.87	-1.48	-4.2476	2.82	-1.65	-4.653
Distractible	4.07	-1.29	-5.2503	3.94	-1.25	-4.925
Selfish	3.2	-1.47	-4.704	3.27	-1.65	-5.3955
Anxious	4.04	-0.96	-3.8784	3.86	-1.17	-4.5162
Cnfmtopeer	4.39	-0.51	-2.2389	4.47	-0.63	-2.8161
Stubborn	3.07	-1.26	-3.8682	3.14	-1.43	-4.4902
Lonely	4.44	-1	-4.44	4.5	-0.89	-4.005
Wtchs TV	4.4	-0.68	-2.992	4.14	-0.66	-2.7324
Cncrn w/lks	4.56	-0.4	-1.824	4.49	0.06	0.2694
Material	3.9	-1	-3.9	3.64	-1.32	-4.8048
Rebell.	3.74	-1.31	-4.8994	3.6	-1.71	-6.156
Faddish	4.01	-0.63	-2.5263	3.94	-0.67	-2.6398
Impulsive	4.57	-0.79	-3.6103	4.34	-1	-4.34
Emotional	4.2	-0.54	-2.268	4.1	-0.78	-3.198
Restless	3.74	-0.97	-3.6278	3.6	-1.05	-3.78
Spnds time w/friends	4.35	-0.44	-1.914	4.45	-0.31	-1.3795
Active	3.8	0.2	0.76	3.99	-0.14	-0.5586
Adventuresome	3.86	-0.16	-0.6176	3.94	-0.58	-2.2852
Hard-working	3.1	1.04	3.224	2.91	1.09	3.1719
Honest	3.03	1.29	3.9087	2.99	1.4	4.186
Energetic	3.97	0.35	1.3895	3.94	-0.22	-0.8668
Friendly	3.59	1.12	4.0208	3.49	0.74	2.5826
Ambitious	3.44	0.38	1.3072	3.22	0.61	1.9642
Caring	3.2	0.99	3.168	3.28	0.88	2.8864
Interested in School	2.8	0.54	1.512	2.74	0.62	1.6988
Inquisitive	3.36	0.06	0.2016	3.39	0.15	0.5085
Intelligent	3.87	0.76	2.9412	3.78	0.56	2.1168
Gets alongw/ people	3.49	0.82	2.8618	3.43	0.33	1.1319
Talkative	4.1	-0.18	-0.738	3.61	-0.56	-2.0216
Displays heal. Behav	3.04	1.07	3.2528	2.97	0.75	2.2275
Exer. Regularly	2.65	0.46	1.219	2.5	-0.2	-0.5
Eats nutritious food	2.57	0.72	1.8504	2.39	0.43	1.0277
Gets adequate sleep	2.78	0.81	2.2518	2.54	0.31	0.7874
Takes risks	3.61	-0.75	-2.7075	3.66	-0.77	-2.8182
			-33.7681			-53.828
Total/36			-0.94			-1.5

negative end of the scale and five representing the positive end, and their desirability was

rated from -2 as very undesirable to 2 as very desirable. The resulting

positivity/negativity rating can be considered to be an indication of how many positive or

negative behaviors are displayed to what degree by most young adolescents. So a rating

of -0.94 and -1.50 respectively would indicate that the two groups not only view young

adolescents similarly, but that they also see most of them as displaying undesirable

behaviors to a greater degree than desirable behaviors. As the qualitative data is

disseminated, it will be interesting to see if this view of young adolescents is evidenced

or if the interview data reflects the impression of a generally more balanced view of

young adolescents as indicated solely by the statistical descriptions of the variables.

Because it can be considered problematic to remove variables from the total

analysis, a second positivity/negative computation was calculated, this time using the

factor analysis as the basis for determining the grouping of the variables as is reported in

Table 2. In this instance, we are able to see where the greatest discrepancy between the

evaluations of the two groups lies. The means on the negative traits factor and the

extreme negative behaviors were found to be similar between the two groups (Group 1-

southeastern university group: -3.45 on negative behaviors and -4.24 on extreme

behaviors; Group 2-southwestern university group: -3.77 on negative behaviors and -4.11

on extreme behaviors). The greatest difference was in the degree to which the two

groups regarded the frequency and desirability of the positive traits (Group 1, 1.95;

Group 2, 1.05). While these analyses provide for some interesting comparisons, it must

be stressed that they did not produce any significantly different findings.

Table 6.2

Positivity/Negativity of Factors

Negatives	Group 1 descriptive means	desirability means		Group 2 descriptive means	desirability means	
Awkward	3.86	-0.98	-3.7828	4.09	-1.25	-5.1125
Confused	4.14	-0.87	-3.6018	4.03	-1.09	-4.3927
Depressed	2.87	-1.48	-4.2476	2.82	-1.65	-4.653
Distractible	4.07	-1.29	-5.2503	3.94	-1.25	-4.925
Selfish	3.2	-1.47	-4.704	3.27	-1.65	-5.3955
Anxious	4.04	-0.96	-3.8784	3.86	-1.17	-4.5162
Cnfmtopeer	4.39	-0.51	-2.2389	4.47	-0.63	-2.8161
Social	4.2	-0.15	-0.63	4.11	-0.34	-1.3974
Sp.tm/fr	4.35	-0.44	-1.914	4.45	-0.31	-1.3795
Stubborn	3.83	-1.03	-3.9449	3.86	-0.88	-3.3968
Tsts lmts	4.03	-0.75	-3.0225	4.1	-0.85	-3.485
Lonely	3.07	-1.26	-3.8682	3.14	-1.43	-4.4902
Ets jk fd	4.44	-1	-4.44	4.5	-0.89	-4.005
Wtchs TV	4.26	-0.85	-3.621	4.26	-0.91	-3.8766
Cncrn w/lks	4.62	-0.54	-2.4948	4.52	-0.58	-2.6216
Insecure	4.13	-1.29	-5.3277	4.13	-1.48	-6.1124
Into clothes	4.4	-0.68	-2.992	4.14	-0.66	-2.7324
lsns msc	4.56	-0.4	-1.824	4.49	0.06	0.2694
Material	4.33	-1	-4.33	4.07	-1.12	-4.5584
Rebell.	3.9	-1	-3.9	3.64	-1.32	-4.8048
Reckless	3.74	-1.31	-4.8994	3.6	-1.71	-6.156
Faddish	3.99	-0.7	-2.793	4.21	-0.83	-3.4943
Impulsive	4.01	-0.63	-2.5263	3.94	-0.67	-2.6398
Esy infl. Fr.	4.57	-0.79	-3.6103	4.34	-1	-4.34
Emotional	4.2	-0.54	-2.268	4.1	-0.78	-3.198
Restless	3.74	-0.97	-3.6278	3.6	-1.05	-3.78
			-89.7377			-98.0098
Total/26			-3.45			-3.77

Table 6.2 Continued

Positives						
Active	3.8	0.2	0.76	3.99	-0.14	-0.5586
Adventuresome	3.86	-0.16	-0.6176	3.94	-0.58	-2.2852
Fun-loving	3.8	0.99	3.762	3.76	0.29	1.0904
Generous	3.13	0.96	3.0048	2.88	0.97	2.7936
Hard-working	3.1	1.04	3.224	2.91	1.09	3.1719
Helpful	3.33	1.12	3.7296	3.11	0.71	2.2081
Honest	3.03	1.29	3.9087	2.99	1.4	4.186
Energetic	3.97	0.35	1.3895	3.94	-0.22	-0.8668
Friendly	3.59	1.12	4.0208	3.49	0.74	2.5826
Ambitious	3.44	0.38	1.3072	3.22	0.61	1.9642
Caring	3.2	0.99	3.168	3.28	0.88	2.8864
Considerate	3.12	0.84	2.6208	2.96	0.6	1.776
Interested in School	2.8	0.54	1.512	2.74	0.62	1.6988
Inquisitive	3.36	0.06	0.2016	3.39	0.15	0.5085
Intelligent	3.87	0.76	2.9412	3.78	0.56	2.1168
Gets alongw/ people	3.49	0.82	2.8618	3.43	0.33	1.1319
Talkative	4.1	-0.18	-0.738	3.61	-0.56	-2.0216
Displays heal. Behav	3.04	1.07	3.2528	2.97	0.75	2.2275
Exer. Regularly	2.65	0.46	1.219	2.5	-0.2	-0.5
Eats nutritious food	2.57	0.72	1.8504	2.39	0.43	1.0277
Gets adequate sleep	2.78	0.81	2.2518	2.54	0.31	0.7874
Takes risks	3.61	-0.75	-2.7075	3.66	-0.77	-2.8182
			42.9229			23.1074
total/22			1.95			1.05

Extreme Behaviors						
Rude	3.2	-1.62	-5.184	2.94	-1.65	-4.851
Sexually active	2.96	-1.51	-4.4696	2.84	-1.47	-4.1748
Uses alcohol	2.61	-1.57	-4.0977	2.65	-1.7	-4.505
Uses drugs	2.3	-1.69	-3.887	2.23	-1.77	-3.9471
Smokes cigarettes	2.79	-1.72	-4.7988	2.59	-1.67	-4.3253
Parties	3.06	-0.99	-3.0294	2.81	-1.02	-2.8662
			-25.4665			-24.6694
Total/6			-4.24			-4.11

Qualitative Analysis

Overall View of Young Adolescents

Sixteen out of the 20 preservice teachers interviewed claimed to have a favorable

or generally favorable view of young adolescents while only four admitted to regarding

them rather unfavorably or unfavorably. However, the subsequent interview data

provided and a comparison to the individuals' survey responses seemed to indicate

otherwise. Three of the southeastern university group reported themselves as having a

favorable view of young adolescents, but their corresponding survey data indicated a

much more negative view. For example, one respondent claiming to have a favorable

view of young adolescents, actually rated honesty and caring as being descriptive of only

a few young adolescents. An equal number of mismatched reporting came from the

southwestern university group. Additionally, four of the total interviewees said they had

favorable views of young adolescents and then did not say one positive thing about them

throughout the rest of the interview. So it would appear that this interview question

served as an unreliable source for determining the true dispositions of the respondents

toward young adolescents. Apparently the desire to please the researcher or to provide

what the respondents anticipated as the "correct" response took a greater precedence than

an honest evaluation of their beliefs. One is again reminded of Pajares' observation that

beliefs are not subject to logical review (Pajares, 1992). It is entirely probable that the

respondents want to believe that they think favorably of all children, especially since they

have chosen a profession that revolves around children and their welfare. Indeed, one

respondent stated that she had a favorable view of young adolescents because she has

always liked children. She then goes on to add, "But I'm not a huge fan of like 10-14, because they tend to get attitudes and stuff like that." Another respondent who did reply that she had an unfavorable view of young adolescents quickly added, "That's horrible, isn't it!" This event led the researcher to begin the interview by assuring the interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers, that the object was simply to gain information. Still this seemed to meet with limited success and a deeper analysis of response data provides a better picture of the respondents' true feelings.

In reviewing all the comments regarding the preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents, it became apparent that they found it much easier to describe them in negative terms, from actual negative descriptors to a litany of what they were not or how they compared unfavorably to older or younger children. One respondent actually named the phenomenon when she said, "I don't want to be too negative. You just pick out more of the negatives." A more careful analysis of the negative comments revealed that about half of the negative comments referred more to the developmental stage of life in which the adolescent finds herself, rather than the actual nature of young adolescents. Finally, some of the negative observations involved what the respondents felt were changes in group adolescent behavior over time.

The negative developmental comments focused on transition and identity issues, physical changes of puberty, and the accompanying emotional upheaval these events were seen to cause. It was also reported as generally accepted fact that young adolescents' interest in school and ability to focus on anything academic seemingly drops automatically due to the age or stage. The transition and identity issues were commonly

characterized by the following comments and ones similar to these: "They're struggling between the role of a child and adulthood or teenage years." "They're struggling to change their identity." "They're still wanting to be a child, but struggling to be an adult." One respondent summed it up quite simply, "There's a lot of struggle going on!" Issues of challenging boundaries and testing limits were identified as endemic to this stage of life as part of identify formation, gaining independence, and separation from parents. Next on the list of developmental woes were those raging hormones: " That's when some of them are going through puberty and hormones are raging and testosterone, and ah! I don't know!" It appears that it isn't just the young adolescent who is confused by all the changes. "I think it'd be really hard to be a teacher toward that age group, because I think that most of them are trying to discover themselves while going though their bodily changes."

"Girls are becoming women, and the young boys are becoming men, and I know that there are physical things going on with them, and you know, sometimes they are awkward about that." There was a great deal of concern expressed about the young adolescents' emotional discomfort at having to deal with the changes of puberty. Rather than describing the adolescents as awkward and confused, the respondents most often referred to adolescence as an awkward and confusing time, frustrating, aggravating, and a time of experimentation, a "roller coaster of emotion" time. In fact, this led to another raging observation, "They're going through so many emotional upheavals inside with the hormones that I think it is hard for them to express themselves. Being that adolescent is a lot like being that two year old with so many feelings raging through them that they can't

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put names to them, and they can't really express what they're feeling because they are feeling so many things at one time."

The difficulty in communicating adequately seemed to be a recurrent theme, although it took many forms. Some, as the respondent above, felt that young adolescents experience real difficulty in putting their feelings and thoughts into words, while others felt it hard to talk to them. One other respondent felt like they had too much to say, "They're outspoken. I don't know if I could handle it if they said something really mean or rude to someone." One respondent observed that smaller children listen better, while another claimed older teens can discuss and express themselves themselves better. "I really like to talk one on one and sometimes I feel that's a little easier to do with high school students."

Another negative characteristic of young adolescents which seems to be attributed more to the developmental stage than the actual nature of the persons is the observation that, "As you get older, you dislike school more." Along this same line were statements about students at the middle level as being disinterested in school, and it would seem that they are so distracted by their bodily changes and emotional upheaval that there is "so much going on, it is so hard for them to focus, to draw their attention in." Once again, the younger and older children fared much better in the comparison, "Smaller children are so much more interested in school and are more open to learning." "High school students would just be more interested in school." Apparently, in some respondents' eyes there wasn't much going on upstairs with young adolescents. "High school students' reasoning

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capacities are a little higher than, say, junior high school students," and "I've heard like junior high is kind of like babysitting."

The negative personal characteristics described by the preservice teachers fell into two general categories, negative attitudes and excessive impressionability. "Attitudes. They tend to get attitudes." The implication is that the respondents mean negative attitudes characterized by being disrespectful, rebellious, stubborn, selfish, and somewhat irresponsible. By far, though, the greatest number of personal characteristic comments clustered around the idea of adolescents and how easily influenced they are. Over half of the respondents made comments about how easily influenced young adolescents were by their peers, the media, and celebrities. They saw them as too willing to act the same way, watch the same TV shows, dress the same, listen to the same music. One respondent declared that she did not want to teach young adolescents because they "just tend to absorb whatever you say as the truth, and I don't want to be responsible for their entire opinion." Adjectives like moldable, impressionable, gullible, naïve, inexperienced, and vulnerable reflect what some respondents seem to feel was a fragile and needy nature easily open to negative influence. That some teachers also saw this as an opportunity to influence them positively was encouraging. The need for acceptance and belonging was observed, although the manifestation of that in conforming to peers, trying to fit in, and being social seemed to be regarded as a bad thing.

No review of a younger generation by another seems to be complete without at least a few requisite observation that "Kids get away with more now, more than they used to," and "It just seems like most of them lack the respect factor for adults that we, I, had

to have for my parents." One respondent, however, poignantly put this in perspective, "Some of them are having to deal with things before they really should have to deal with them and their primary responsibility isn't just to have fun, be a kid, and go to school Things are not the same today as they were 30 to 50 years ago."

Not all was gloom and doom and dire predictions for young adolescents. There were many positive remarks made about this age group also.   Nine respondents noted with approval that they found them to be busy, active, and energetic, although some noted that they felt this trait had been adversely impacted by the proliferation of video games and television availability. Half of the respondents did not share the assumption that young people become virtually brain-dead at puberty. They described young adolescents as goal oriented toward learning, thoughtful, questioning, curious, inquisitive, intelligent, looking for answers, wanting to know the reasons behind things, open to learning, and active in a curious way. They felt that young adolescents had something important to say if folks would just listen: They have a lot of good suggestions, good input, need to be respected for their opinions; they're "productive citizens of today." Three respondents spoke to the positive potential they see in young adolescents. As one man put it, "A lot of these kids are doing well; kids are full of potential, all they need is a good trigger to unloose that potential for the good." He, like the other four preservice teachers who spoke most positively of working at the middle level, sees himself as that trigger and finds them worth the investment of his time and effort.

Six of the respondents said that their experiences with young adolescents have shown them that they can be lovable, extremely touching and responsible, friendly,

caring, really wonderful kids. They acknowledge that the young adolescent may not always be willing to share that side of him with everyone. "They have an eagerness to please, but want to appear tough, but deep down inside, they're still kids." "They really care about what the teacher thinks; they just don't want their friends to know." A couple other respondents noted that this is a time when young people are looking for guidance or direction from people other than their parents and are open and excited about life. One woman did not find them nearly as rebellious or independent as high school students and found them easy to get along with. Two observed that to them, young adolescents were easier to get along with than younger children. Lastly, another respondent summed it up, "I see a lot of good in them; some can be the nicest kids, so you can't just generalize anything."

Formation of beliefs

The respondents' answers to the question of how they came to develop their favorable or unfavorable view of adolescents proved to be the most surprising. Anticipating remarks about what they had learned about young adolescents through the media or their associates, this researcher was surprised to hear that with the exception of two of them the respondents based their views on their own experiences with young adolescents. It became clear, however, that this was not always the case as some later admitted that they had not had very much experience with this age group. In most cases, this was true of people who held negative beliefs about young adolescents. It could be surmised that perhaps a few negative encounters were enough to put them off young adolescents as a group or served to confirm an assumption they had already made. One of

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the respondents, who had heard negative things about teaching junior high and was advised against doing so, said her positive experiences with young adolescents had caused her to rethink this bit of advice. Another said that from what she had heard about the tough job teachers had teaching young adolescents, she had anticipated the kids to be very difficult and have bad attitudes. Once she started observing in the middle school, however, she completely revised her assumption, feeling that it was the teachers who needed an attitude adjustment; that she "had not seen where the kids are really that bad." She felt that many of the seasoned teachers had lost their enthusiasm and were not in touch with the students. She noted that only with the new teachers did she see the kind of enthusiasm and freshness she had hoped to see, but feared that if they don't learn to cope with the few kids who pose most of the behavior problems, that they're going to wind up the same way. She felt that it was crucial to be grounded in life and to have a good support system to be able to handle those teaching challenges. She credited her religious faith and a supportive family for her sense of firm foundation.

This brings up an interesting connection made while reviewing the data. A common thread for preservice teachers who held the most positive views of young adolescents was that they had all had experience with young adolescents through their church activities. While it would certainly be erroneous to say that church experience with young adolescents causes all persons to have a positive view of young adolescents, it does appear that in at least this small sampling, the church experiences were a contributing factor. One could speculate that the young adolescents who would be regularly involved in church activities represent a more wholesome population, but that

may only be part of the picture. Another possibility is that those preservice teachers who voluntarily spend time with young adolescents at church activities are already predisposed to view them favorably. Additionally by displaying the expectation for positive behaviors and interactions, these teachers have laid the foundation for a more positive relationship with these young adolescents.

Another possible contributor to the preservice teachers' beliefs formation is their own experience as an adolescent. The interview data did not provide a rich enough pool of information to truly examine this connection in anything but a superficial manner. However, based on the information provided in response to the question, "What can you recall of your own young adolescence, the time period in your life from about ten to 14," the researcher determined a low, moderate, or high correlation to the beliefs expressed about young adolescents. In some cases, the interviewees themselves made powerful connections between their own experience as young adolescents and their beliefs about young adolescents now. In other instances, repeated words and phrases, affective statements, and interpretations of events were sought to make the connection.

Based on this process, 15 of the respondents demonstrated a high correlation between their own experiences as young adolescents and their current beliefs about young adolescents; one respondent showed a moderate correlation and four respondents showed only a low correlation. What was especially interesting was that some of these sets of experiences and beliefs correlated positively and some negatively.

Beginning with the highly correlated negatively correlated sets, the respondents generally spoke of a rebellious adolescence, non-interest in school, a focus on the social,

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feeling awkward and confused due to physical changes, testing boundaries, and as being

naïve and gullible. Their corresponding views of young adolescents, while often

containing some additional positive beliefs about this age group, echoed the same themes

from their own adolescence. One woman laughed and said she was the "typical"

adolescent and went on to describe how she viewed adolescents today. She then reiterated

that's just what she was like, too, and that's why she doesn't want to teach them. In most

cases the respondents who came right out with information about their school experiences

during their adolescence held a highly correlated positive view with favorable beliefs

about young adolescents' inquisitive nature, intelligence, and desire to learn new things.

Three of these specifically mentioned certain teachers and even credited them with

inspiring the respondents to choose education for a career field. Another spoke of feeling

awkward and confused at times but fairly happy overall and said she had a good

childhood. Her description of young adolescents was equally balanced, citing puberty as

being unsettling for young people, but noting several good things about young

adolescents such as seeing them as caring and responsible. Another high positively

correlated set involved the respondent's personal description as being a good student,

curious, and wanting to please the teacher. Her accompanying description of young

adolescents today included "eager to please" and "searching for answers." In the group

that was moderately correlated, one respondent described herself as primarily interested

in the social aspect of life at that age, a description she provides of current adolescents.

However, she goes on to make a point of how different adolescents, her included, were

then from the way they are now as she perceives them--disrespectful and constantly

pushing their teachers to the limits. One low correlation set has the respondent providing a description of her adolescence as being a carefree, uncomplicated time, almost idyllic. Her descriptions of young adolescents today have them confused, rebellious, and trying to discover themselves.   A view of her own adolescence as being very different from most other youngsters' experience during that time period is what creates the low correlation situation in another set. Another low correlation results from a personal description as being interested in school, someone who made good grades, but her beliefs about adolescents emphasized how little interest they show in school today. In the last instance of low correlation, the respondent's negative experiences as a young adolescence had very consciously affected his view of young adolescents and beliefs of how they should be treated. In one of those intimate conversations often only possible between strangers, he told of his parents' divorce and the pain that it had caused him, his subsequent uprooting from his familiar school and friends to a new community where he felt rejected and out of place. This student then told of his belief that no child should have to go through that and his vow to provide a different adolescent experience for his five sons.

Attributions

By posing the open-ended question, "Why do you think young adolescents are the way they are," some very interesting responses were obtained that speak to the attributions that the preservice teachers make regarding traits and characteristics of young adolescents. Most revealing was that without exception, the respondents who had an answer to this question addressed negative or unhealthy behaviors of young adolescents,

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thus uncovering a bias that perhaps they did not even realize they had. The attributions given were pretty evenly divided between internal and external locus.

Noting that adolescents were very impressionable, easily influenced and manipulated, the respondents who felt that the negative behaviors of young adolescents were externally caused blamed society, media influence, peer groups, and bad parenting. Society at large was responsible in the eyes of many. One respondent felt that the government had not done enough to protect young adolescents from adult issues that they shouldn't have to deal with. While she did not elaborate, the implication was poverty, child abuse, and domestic violence. Another felt that "there is a lot more pressure on them for the big things that are being thrown in front of them than what used to be." Several felt the blatant marketing to young adolescents of materials containing sexual content in movies, video games, and music and the proliferation of junk food and sedentary life styles combine to represent a serious threat to our young adolescents' healthy living. One respondent observed faulted society's mixed messages: "We tell the kids to be responsible and at the same time encourage them to be irresponsible. We push these games down their throats…" At least five of the respondents pointed the finger directly at television. One respondent shared her frustration, "There's so much in their face about how they should look. I mean, you look at the stars, the big stars on TV, most of them are so skinny, sickly thin, and it's just that you search for good role models for the girls, but there just aren't that many out there." Again it was noted that television creates confusion for young adolescents because of the mixed messages it presents, "I guess if you're trying to be cool, or whatever like in middle school, you want to do the

stuff like on TV, that makes people laugh, but it's really not funny, if you do it in real life." Another of the preservice teachers who is also a father feels the adults need to take responsibility for the influence that the media has on our young adolescents. He states, "We live in a media society. We're all plugged in 24-7 between the computer and internet, telephone, radio, TV. I mean it surrounds us and kind of inundates us. You have to be careful as educators as well as parents to be very careful about the media that is surrounding our children. I think that's probably the greatest responsibility of both teachers and parents."

Some other respondents noted that the failure of parents to adequately parent their children is part of the problem and accounts for what they perceive to be at least a portion of misbehavior by young adolescents. One respondent speculates that if young adolescents are misbehaving, it could be because they are vulnerable and believe what adults are going to say. She thinks if they grew up in a bad family; that could impact how they act. Another respondent made a much more direct link. After acknowledging that most parents are doing the best they can, she states, "There are parents who have kids, then don't do the best that they can. There are families who have failed their children." Three other respondents expressed similar sentiments.

The influence of the young adolescents' peer group was also credited with some negative behavior in that the growing importance of being accepted and peer group approval affects the way young adolescents make decisions. However, since the peer group consists of the young adolescents themselves, blaming bad behavior on the peer

pressure really constitutes more of an internal locus than an external one when young

adolescents are considered as a group.

The internal locus attributions were the ever-present development issues of

hormones and identity formation. One respondent's autobiographical illustration tells the

story of her experience with puberty and how that caused her to behave differently:

> I remember puberty as totally cracking my world, because not only body
> changes, hormonal changes, it kind of flips your life upside down. Well, when it
> causes that disturbance, you start to look at things differently, too. And you
> realize that the things you thought were so important before kind of aren't that
> much. And then your attention seems at that time to be a bit more focused. I
> remember before puberty I liked sports. They were fun, but afterward that just
> became what I really, really enjoyed. And it was about twelve, thirteen when I
> started really getting into sports. I think because it's, puberty's, kind of a
> traumatizing event, adolescents need something else to focus on other than their
> bodies going out of control.

Most of the comments referenced in the section on beliefs about young adolescents came

as an internal locus explanation of adolescent behavior.

Finally, one respondent took a very existentialist approach to the problem. Young

adolescents simply are the way they are. "It is just partially human nature. We all go

through the different development levels, you know your cognitive and your social and

all the levels that we go through. They're just reaching one level at a time."

The Choice of Teaching Level

Recognizing that the interview participants were just beginning their teacher

preparation programs, the participants were asked if they had a preference for teaching at

a particular level at this point in their education. Eighteen of them articulated a clear

preference, some even specified the preferred grade level, and two of them indicated that

they were pursuing secondary certification, but were as yet undecided as to whether they

preferred high school or middle level. The choices within the groups are as follows: In the southeastern university group which has a state requirement for middle level licensure to teach at that level, four had made the choice for elementary, three for middle level, and three for high school. In the southwestern university group, the group divided into six choosing elementary and four secondary. Of the four secondary preservice teachers, two had already identified high school as their preferred teaching level, and the other two had not made a clear choice between middle level and high school at this time.

Several factors were named in the preservice teachers' decision-making process. Some of them, predominantly the high school group, cited a preference for teaching a certain subject. In some cases, teaching activities that the teachers enjoyed and perceived would be successful with the students played a part in their decision. The next major factor named was a preference for teaching children at certain developmental levels. The final deciding factor seemed to be the teacher's perceived ability to be successful at the chosen level or self-efficacy factor. The teachers generally arrived at this assessment via a personal inventory of their skills, affinities, and experience. The following sections provide a more in-depth look at these factors and the teachers' thought processes.

The Choice for Elementary

"I just love to watch them discover something for the first time. They're so innocent to the world. They don't understand how things work and when they see it working for the first time, it's just awe-inspiring!"

"First grade, you start to learn your addition and subtraction and that can be hard for some students, so I think it would be rewarding job for me to help them with that. To help them to know, you know, that they can make it and they can succeed."

" Even though the camp this summer was sort of negative, it had its positive sides, and I really got to know the second and third age group, and I was like 'You know? I can work with them."

Three different quotes, three among ten different reasons for wanting to teach at the elementary level for that is how many of the preservice teachers chose to focus their teacher preparation on the early childhood to childhood stage of development. While it is possible to find similar motivations between these ten, it is impossible to find the exact same combination of experience, perceived abilities, affinities, curricula and age preferences. The choices that we make and the reasons we make them, even if having a similar outcome, are particular to each of us. A look at the commonalities does add some insight into their choices.

All of the preservice teachers who are choosing to work at the elementary level have in common a professed fondness for young children and a preference to work this age child. Most articulate a belief in young children's interest in school, sweet nature, openness, innocence, respect for the teacher, and feel that they communicate or connect better with this age group. One respondent wanted to teach second graders because at that age, "They've already learned some, so they're able to be a little bit independent, yet they're still...more open to the teacher, and I think your classes can be more like a kind of family in a way."

Four talk about the curriculum in the elementary classroom. They liked the activities such as singing songs or playing games, going on field trips, hands-on learning experiences that they believed would be successful with young children. They did not see these kinds of things going over well in the middle level classroom. A female student who had considered teaching at the middle level said she had decided on the elementary level because she enjoyed being able to teach a variety of subjects instead of the same thing all day long.

Another reason some of the teachers gave for deciding on elementary was the amount of experience or quality of experience that they had had with young children. Two of the respondents work in day cares with young children. Two were inspired by early childhood teachers, one her mother and the other, her kindergarten teacher, and had worked in their classrooms over the years. Two had done some substituting in elementary classrooms and liked it. Three had worked with elementary age children in extra curricular activities such as Girl Scouts, "dream team", and summer camp. One other's experience with young children had come primarily from field experiences at the elementary level and having several younger siblings. In all cases, the experience helped them decide that teaching elementary was what they wanted to do. For some, as in the case of the young woman who has wanted to be a kindergarten teacher since she herself was in kindergarten, the experience simply confirmed a decision already made. For others, though, the experience led them to begin thinking of teaching elementary children as with the respondent who talked about her experience as a summer camp counselor, "I can work with them…I kind of know what they're like now!" or another who had planned

on teaching middle school social studies until her field experience in the elementary classroom.

As important as the experience with young children was shown to be, it did not appear to be the deciding factor. As noted above, it was often a confirmatory exercise. The real motivator seemed to be the belief that at the elementary level, they would be able to influence their young students. All ten used some words or phrases such as "they would listen to me," "they're more influential," "they're more open to the teacher," "impressionable, and "they don't already have their minds made up." Some of the preservice teachers were specific about how they wanted to influence them. They really focused on the idea of being a role model, teaching them how to set goals, and get a good start in school, both socially and academically. While some of the elementary majors actually came out and said that they felt they would be capable or successful in their efforts to influence these young children, all of them implied that they had an expectation to do so. Often this was named in contrast to being able to influence middle level students, as in "You can do more at that age than you can when they're older (middle level and high school) not as far as education, but as far as instilling values in them and stuff like that…I think that's something I can do." In some instances, ability to help young children get a firm foundation in math, reading, and language arts was verbalized. In other cases, as mentioned above, it was more generalized to "a good start in school."

Closely aligned to influence is control. This seemed to be the subtext of some of the elementary majors' comments about influence. One male student even went so far as to relate an unpleasant experience he had had while substituting at a middle school where

the control factor directly impacted his choice of teaching level, "One time I had an experience being in a class where I had a couple of boys who just, no matter what I said, wouldn't listen, and I just don't know. I felt out of control in the classroom, so I thought, 'I'm not doing that again!'" It is interesting to note that the issue of control came up in conversation no matter what the chosen teaching level, but it was always in reference to not teaching at a different level than the one chosen. It would seem that the preservice teachers felt they could control the age group they preferred, while seeing other age groups as intimidating, hard to teach, requiring too much patience, or "too grown to listen to rules!"

The Choice for High School

While it wouldn't be fair to say, it's all about the curriculum for the education majors who've chosen to work at the high school level that is certainly one of the major reasons named for their choice. Of those five who indicated a clear choice for high school, two were English majors, one science, one math, and one social studies. In three cases, the respondents named the curriculum as the primary reason for their choice; in the other two, they spoke first about interacting with students at a more advanced level, then identified their teaching field.   All but one of the five indicated they would prefer AP classes and/or teaching juniors and seniors.

In terms of the students themselves, the high school education majors felt they could communicate and relate to high school students better than young children or middle level students. One male student found it hard to put into words, "I don't know if I could really put my finger on any one thing; it's just that I prefer the older kids."

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Another respondent was more specific, "An older high school student already has basic ideas of who they are and where they stand on things." That same characteristic is what also intrigues the science education major. She wants to have a classroom where students "understand the way things are, then question it."

These preservice teachers did not seem to be as motivated by the character building aspect as they were by the idea of infusing their students with a love of their subject matter or guiding them to think critically and abstractly. Theirs is a much greater focus on the intellectual aspect of the student than at the other two levels. One teacher indicated she specially preferred not to assume the "counselor" role teachers sometimes play, "I think that I get irritated easily with some of the problems that younger kids have. I can't think like specifics, but…they are sort of finding themselves in middle school, and I'd rather not have to deal with that."

None of the five high school education majors indicated that they had any concerns about possessing the skills and teaching abilities to be effective at this level. One English major said, "I want people to have the same love that I have (of English), but be one of those teacher that can reach everyone." Judging from the high interest in teaching upper level and advanced classes, it would appear that they feel confident in their abilities to handle and communicate the content in these classes. In addition, unlike some of the elementary majors, none of the preservice teachers choosing high school talked about control issues. The closest any of them came was a comment, "I think I could just handle older teenagers better." Taken out of context, it would seem like this

could be control statement, however, in conjunction with the other statements she made, it appears to be more a statement about her own personal tolerance level.

The Choice for Middle Level

Of the twenty preservice teachers interviewed, five of them expressed an interest in teaching at the middle level. Three students from the southeastern university that has a middle level teacher preparation program have selected this as their program of study. The three middle level education majors were the most able to articulate their beliefs about young adolescents and had the most positive view of them in terms of potential and current academic behavior. They acknowledged the developmental issues of early adolescence, but were not apprehensive about dealing with that. On the contrary, they viewed it as an exciting time full of potential. As one respondent put it, "They are so open to most anything! They are exciting; they are enthusiastic; they acquire all the knowledge they can get." They also saw themselves as having a tremendous opportunity to be a good influence on young adolescents as they begin to establish their independence from their parents. As one person said, "I think that's the perfect time to get in there and guide them in the right direction."

While they are required to have a specialization in two core areas for their certification, they did not talk much about their specialty areas. One female student talked about seeing college classmates who were terrified of math even though they were just as capable as she. She speculated that they had a bad teacher in middle school or high school and just didn't feel they were ever going "to get it right." She said their lack of confidence in their math abilities inspired her to become a math teacher. Giving credit to

her middle school teacher for removing her fear of math, she wants to do the same for her students.

She was not the only one who recalled having a teacher in middle school who made a profound impact on her life. One middle school science major recalled his sixth grade teacher with obvious affection.

> I remember one of my favorite teachers…an older gentleman by the name of Billy Owens. And I remember what he said and did for me, in fact more so than anything else. And he'd show tricks and little tidbits and shortcuts, and also he didn't have a nice lab for science work, but he did do enough with just everyday items that it made it really interesting and unique. That's probably when I got really turned on to science and I started saying that I wanted to be a scientist.

Two of the other students who remembered their educational experience as a young adolescent recalled having good teachers who taught them well. Another recalls a supportive and friendly teacher. Apparently teachers do have an impact on their students at the middle level. When it appears otherwise, it is likely to be as one middle level major declared, "Middle schoolers care about your opinion of them, but they don't want their friends to know that they care about the teacher's opinion."

While as mentioned above, the middle level majors did make several positive observations about young adolescents' eagerness to learn, good ideas, and need to be respected for their opinions, their focus was definitely on the social/emotional aspects of teaching at middle level. There seemed to a sense of "good fit" for them at the middle level. In their own way, they each described the connection they feel to young adolescents. "I just like that age period. I mean, I understand what they're going through." "It seems I'm wired to manage a middle school classroom better and to connect

with adolescents better at that age level, and it just works for me. They connect with me and I connect with them." "I can relate to them better than most other ages."

All three of these preservice teachers had adolescent children of their own which they believe has deepened their understanding of the young adolescent. None of them implied that their children were exceptional or not like other adolescents as has been observed in some other studies (Buchanan & Hughes, 2001). Another commonality commented on earlier is their church experiences with young adolescents. While these are interesting parallels and possible grounds for a future study, there should not be any assumption of an attempt to generalize from these three cases. What sets these three preservice teachers apart from the rest of the students interviewed is the consistency and positivity of their statements. From the high correlation of their own adolescent experience to their beliefs about adolescents today to their greater amount of experience with young adolescents to their optimism about middle level students, these preservice teachers are openly enthusiastic about their chosen teaching level. With evangelical zeal one of these future middle level educators pronounced, "I think you need to consider your calling to young adolescence as a mission as much as a job."

In the southwestern university group where the two licensure levels for middle school are simply elementary and secondary, two of the secondary education majors are waivering between teaching at the middle level or teaching high school. Both of these young women have had some experience with middle level students and have enjoyed it. One female student taught horseback riding through high school and college to junior high and high school students, but hasn't had much classroom experience. She works in a

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doctor's office, though, and says she has really enjoyed the young adolescents who come through there. She had initially thought that she would be a high school English teacher until as she puts it, "some of the kids that I've met that come to my work…sort of changed my view of where I want to be. I've met a lot of kids from the junior high age range and they've just been really…there's a tenderness about them. There's an eagerness to please." The other female student is a secondary science education major and has been doing her field experiences at a local junior high school. As with the other respondent, although she had thought originally that she would teach high school students because she had had more experience with them, she has discovered she "really enjoys being with the junior high kids."

With both students this revelation has opened up options for them to teach at the middle level that they previously hadn't considered. Both, however, have some concerns about being prepared to teach at this level. One says she isn't very familiar with the science curriculum at this level, and the other is concerned about her role as a disciplinarian, "The one thing I would dread is that if my role was just constantly nagging kids, then I would be pretty discouraged." She bases her concerns on what she heard about teaching at the middle level, "Everyone has said, oh, you don't want do that. Like junior high is kind of like babysitting. I've heard some negative things." She goes on to say that she doesn't want to judge it before she tries it herself. The other female student is also keeping an open mind. For her the idea of being able to influence young adolescents is appealing. She states, "Oh, wow! If I could have a good impact on them now, that could really prepare them for their high school years." Both students seemed to feel

confident in their content areas. Oddly enough, like the middle level education majors, both of these women mentioned their religious beliefs and church experiences in their discussion of the possibility of teaching young adolescents. One said, "I would look at it as being where God would put me," and the other one based her favorable opinion of young adolescents in part on her interactions with them in youth ministry at her church.

Why Not Teach at the Middle Level?

Since the basis for this research is the need for qualified teachers at the middle level, one of the interview questions dealt directly with the question of whether the teachers who had not elected to teach at the middle level would consider it, and if there was anything that would encourage them to teach at the middle level. In the southeastern university group the only real enthusiasts for teaching at the middle level were, as one might imagine, the three who have decided to seek middle level certification. One of the elementary majors indicated that she would be open to teaching at the middle grades if she had more experience with that age group. In the southwestern university group, the results were a bit more mixed, possibly due to the fact that teaching at the middle level is much more of an option since the state requirements permit teaching at the middle level with either an elementary or secondary school certification. Since the southeastern education majors had already had to consider the option of middle level teaching when they initially selected their program, their preferences were more fixed. The southwestern university group seemed to be much more representative of the ambivalence toward teaching at the middle level described in the literature review. Most preservice teachers preparing for elementary level have teaching lower to middle

elementary grades in mind, whereas most secondary education majors are planning on teaching high school.

Of the ten students interviewed in the southwestern group, three elementary education majors showed low enthusiasm for teaching at the middle level as did two of the secondary education majors. However, three of the elementary education majors indicated moderate interest in the possibility and as described above, two of the secondary majors were moderately to highly enthusiastic about the idea of working with young adolescents. All 20 said that if teaching at middle level were their only job opportunity, they would take it. Most said they just wanted to teach, having always wanted to be a teacher, and that they would try it. Several expressed a need for more experience to feel confident. Two others specifically mentioned that they would need more knowledge of content at the middle level. Two, however, made it very clear that teaching at the middle level would be a definite last resort preferable only to being unemployed.

As with their choice of teaching level, preferences for working with a certain age child, a particular curriculum, and their perceived abilities to influence students positively academically, socially, or emotionally were the primary reasons given for their feelings about teaching at the middle level. Of the total 20 interviewees, seven of the elementary majors strongly preferred working with young children and cited that as their major reason for not wanting to teach middle level students, while two of the high school group felt the same way about older adolescents. The middle level majors were very intentional in their choice of teaching young adolescents. Seven preservice teachers, two at the

elementary level and five at the secondary level, said they preferred the curriculum of their respective levels, while the remaining one elementary major's determining factor was that he felt he could be a greater influence on elementary children than young adolescents.

Just as the question, why are young adolescents the way they are, revealed some negative assumptions that the respondents may not have even known they had or did not for some reason wish to disclose, so does the question, what could be done to encourage you to teach at the middle level. To illustrate, one elementary major said she would probably take a middle level position if it were the only position available, because she likes working with kids-- it would be "no big deal" to teach young adolescents. That response didn't sound too negative, but when asked if she could think of anything that would encourage her to teach at middle level, her answer was, "Probably not. I never wanted to do it." Again the phenomenon of wanting to appear more accepting of young adolescents than they really feel may have been at work in these respondents' initial answers to the idea of teaching at middle level. For example, one male student who answered, "Oh, yes, I would probably teach. I have taught at that level and enjoyed it" went on to answer "Probably if it were the only job I could get" as to what would encourage him to teach at the middle level. Five of the 20, after replying that they would take a position at the middle level if that were the only job available, went on to say that really there was nothing short of unemployment that would encourage them to teach at the middle level. One teacher even suggested that more money, like hazardous duty pay, was the only incentive that would work for her.

Five of the other preservice teachers said they would consider teaching at the middle level and felt that having more experience in middle school and junior high classrooms would encourage them and help them to feel more competent teaching at this level. Three others talked about the need for more classes in a particular subject area and classroom management skills. One said she would be encouraged to teach in a middle school if the curriculum for English were to change and the end of instruction test eliminated. One science education major planning to teach high school said if she were asked to teach at middle level, or at any grade level for that matter, at a particular alternative school, she would do it because she so admires the dedication of the staff and the job they are doing. Last of all, two elementary majors said knowing they could have an influence on young adolescents would really make the difference for them.

Information regarding gender was not gathered in the survey portion of this research project, so no conclusions can be made here regarding the impact of gender on preservice teacher beliefs about young adolescents. Of the 20 interviewees, four were males, two in the southwestern university group and two in the southeastern university group. Traditionally, male teachers have gravitated to the high school level, however with this group, two were planning on teaching at the elementary level, one at the middle level, and one at the high school level. This seems to support the prediction made by Arth (1971) and colleagues 40 years ago that the profile of an elementary teacher as typically female and older than the secondary teacher would change as more males entered the elementary school, salaries improved, and culturally established gender roles dissipated.

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Summary

The quantitative data suggests a relative degree of uniformity in the beliefs that preservice teachers hold about young adolescents that appears to be consistent in two different locations. At first glance it appears that the preservice teachers hold a fairly negative view of young adolescents based upon the degree to which they believe the majority of young adolescents display certain undesirable behaviors. However, upon further analysis of the reporting instrument, the survey was found to have several correlated variables which may have resulted in the over-reporting of negative behaviors and subsequent under-reporting of positive behaviors. When a procedure is applied to mitigate this effect, the result is a more balanced view of negative and positive traits and behaviors exhibited by the majority of young adolescents. Subsequent interview data examines the nature of these beliefs held by twenty survey participants. Answers to questions regarding beliefs about young adolescents, the nature and derivation of these beliefs and how they impact the preservice teachers' choice of teaching level and, even more specifically, teaching at the middle level, show some similarities and differences in the preservice teachers' experiences with young adolescents, their own adolescent experience, and their self-efficacy beliefs for teaching at their chosen levels. Apparently there is no "one size fits all" method for recruiting and preparing future teachers for the middle level. These 20 preservice teachers' beliefs about adolescents were different, formed from different experiences and input, and their motivations for choosing to teach at their particular levels were different. Any program designed to encourage education majors to consider teaching at the middle level would need to address the many-faceted

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nature of this problem. Some conclusions about these findings, a brief description of such a program, and suggestions for future research in the area of teacher beliefs and young adolescents are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

Introduction

There are several possible aims and outcomes of research. One can seek to understand a phenomenon simply for the pure joy of knowing. Or the goal can be to refute a claim one feels is inaccurate or even injurious. Then if the truth becomes clear as a result of careful and reproducible research, there is a rewarding sense of the righted wrong. In our action-oriented society, the goal of research seems most popularly to be to inform our proposed actions. For this researcher, all three possibilities come together in this study. What do the people who are likely to teach future young adolescents think and feel about the subjects of their activities, and why do they feel that way? This is an area which has not been studied extensively, but which has been shown to be important in the success of students (Dekovic, 2002; Jussim & Eccles, 1992). There is the desire to right injustices. Young adolescents have too long been the scapegoats of a lackluster news night. Their negative actions are overemphasized; the good things they do are underreported (Amudson, Lichter, & Lichter, 2000). There is also the desire to inform future actions. To that end, what does this research say about ways to positively impact future teachers' beliefs about young adolescents and the desire to teach them? Is there anything here that sheds some light on the kind of program that would get education majors excited about teaching young adolescents? What does it look like? What are the components? Is there a one best way?

In this chapter I will consider each of these research goals in light of the information revealed in this study and offer some suggestions for ways to use the information to design a teacher preparation program that gives preservice teachers the opportunity to make an informed decision about teaching at the middle level. As is the nature of inquiring minds, answers to questions often raise new questions. Consequently, some observations and concerns regarding the limitations of this research are shared, and avenues for future research are suggested for consideration.

An Analysis of the Study's Findings

Just How Bad Are Young Adolescents?

The first research question sought to provide insight into two groups of preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents. As was noted in the literature review, there exists a fair amount of material about the beliefs preservice teachers hold about certain subject areas and teaching methods, but not nearly as much about their beliefs about the students themselves. Since there is literature that supports the connection between teacher expectations and student performance, it seems necessary to know what the teachers feel they can expect from young adolescent students. From attribution theory we can deduce that if teachers feel the traits and behaviors of their young students are internal, stable--at least for a two to three year period, and uncontrollable, as in the case of raging hormones that turn normal children into irrational victims of newly discovered urges and identity crises, then the best one can hope for as an educator is to be a sympathetic caretaker until these changes subside. As reported, the results of the survey indicated that the 140 preservice teachers surveyed believed young adolescents were first

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and foremost a confused and emotional, peer-conforming, materialistic group, not overly interested in school or demonstrating any outstanding qualities deemed desirable by society at large. According to U. S. News & World Reports Essential Guide for Parents: The Mysteries of the Teen Years (2005), there even exists a word for this negative view of adolescents: ephebiphobia, defined as the persistent and unwarranted fear of teenagers. While it would not be accurate to say that the results of the survey indicated fear, per se, of teenagers, it did appear to affirm the persistent and unwarranted negative stereotype of today's adolescents. In his article in the same publication "The Next Great Generation?," Whitman presents a decidedly optimistic view of today's adolescents. He cites statistics which show a drop in extreme behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse, teen birthrates, smoking and violent crimes committed by juveniles from ten or more years ago. The survey respondents also recognized that those kinds of behaviors were extreme and not displayed by the majority of young adolescents. They also acknowledged that many young adolescents display several desirable traits and characteristics. Although they do not rate these positive traits and behaviors as high as the stereotyped negative behaviors, they obviously do not view young adolescents as "bad to the bone." The interview data supports this mixed view of young adolescents. When the 20 interview responses are coupled with the participants' corresponding survey responses, five of the 20 interviewees held generally unfavorable beliefs about young adolescents, two more could be considered neutral, and the remaining 13 ranged from generally to very positive. In only three of the interviews were the responses overwhelmingly negative. All three of these came from preservice elementary teachers,

and all three indicated low self-efficacy in working with young adolescents. These estimations seemed to stem from feeling as if they would not be able to motivate young adolescents to learn nor control their behavior. The other two respondents with generally unfavorable views of young adolescents cited their lack of patience or tolerance for what they perceived to be inevitable developmental characteristics of young adolescence as the main reason for not wishing to teach at that level. In particular, one high school science major felt they were too impressionable at this stage and did not think critically. The other respondent, a high school math education major, stated that she did not have the patience to deal with young adolescents' identity and emotional issues. Interestingly, it did not appear that the issue of being able to control young adolescents factored into the negative views of the two high school education majors cited above as it did with the negative elementary majors. Perhaps one reason that these high school education majors are reluctant to teach young adolescents is that high school teachers with high levels of personal self-efficacy are more likely and willing to accept direct responsibility for student achievement (Hall, 1992). The high school teachers in Hall's study saw characteristics of the program and the teacher's pedagogical ability to have greater impact on student achievement than did personal characteristics of the students such as ability and home life. The two high school education majors in this study named characteristics of the program rather than characteristics of the students as what attracted them to teach science and mathematics. It stands to reason that they would find student characteristics that they perceive would interfere with their teaching and program to be significant detractors to teaching at the middle level. This view is supported by Hall's research which

showed middle school teachers' feeling that peer influence is significantly more important in explaining academic failure than any other factor.

Two major areas of conflict are regarding young adolescents' intellectual abilities and their impressionability. Both of these warrant closer analysis because of their tremendous impact on teacher efficacy. We know that if people do not feel their efforts will produce a desired outcome, they lack motivation to take on and persist at a task (Bandura, 1986). Thus if preservice teachers feel that despite their best efforts to teach them, young adolescents will not respond in a satisfactory way, then they will seek an environment, perhaps elementary or high school, in which they feel a greater possibility for achieving the desired outcome. Likewise if the preservice teachers feel they have the ability to influence students to be good citizens, to show compassion, and to display empathetic behavior, but do not feel that young adolescent would be receptive to their influence, then it stands to reason that they would seek out another teaching situation in which they felt they could make a difference. The importance, then, of presenting preservice teachers with an accurate and balanced picture of young adolescents' intellectual functioning and impressionability cannot be underestimated. The survey results indicated that on average the preservice teachers in this study felt a large number of young adolescents could be described as intelligent, a smaller number were considered to be inquisitive, and not even half of them were described as interested in school. The interviews supported these assumptions with the exception of the three middle school education majors who shared a much more positive view of young adolescents' intellectual abilities and interest in school. They, too, indicated a greater sense of self-

efficacy in being able to connect with and influence young adolescents. As mentioned in

the findings section, all three of these participants had young adolescent children of their

own as well as experience with young adolescents, so they have had the opportunity to

gain first hand knowledge upon which to base this judgment. Several of the other

interviewees did not substantiate their beliefs with direct experience, but appeared to rely

on what they simply assumed to be true. Eleven of the interviewees indicated that they

felt young adolescents would be less interested in school and more difficult to influence

than younger or older students. The remaining six interviewees had a fairly positive view

of adolescents' inquisitive nature, curiosity, and desire to learn about their world. Half of

the interviewees made reference to the hormonal changes taking place at this age and

how confusing and distracting this aspect of their development is for young people.

Lesko (2001) confirms this developmental framework for early adolescence and sees it as

a culturally constructed phenomena. "Typically, teenagers appear in our cultural talk as

synonymous with crazed hormones, as delinquents, deficiencies, or clowns, that is,

beings not to be taken seriously" (p.1). This negative view of early adolescents as

biologically driven entities beyond social intervention often discourages preservice

teachers from seeing the many exciting opportunities for developing critical thinking

skills, expanding cross-curricular connections, and creative thinking that abound in

teaching at the middle level. Current brain research has identified adolescence as a time

of incredible brain activity when new connections are being forged at a rapid rate, short-

term memory grows by about thirty percent, and unused synapses are pruned (Feinstein,

2004). The brain's frontal lobes become myelinated, increasing faster and more efficient

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information flow between the cells, allowing for development of the ability to understand sarcasm, irony, symbolism, and analogies; to hypothesize, create abstractions, and comprehend complex mathematical processes and theorems. The frontal cortex is also the source of language production. While ongoing far into late adolescence, all this activity revs into gear in early adolescence. The amount of stimulation and exposure to new experiences and problem-solving situations that a young adolescent receives has a direct impact on his brain development. It becomes a "use it or lose it" situation (Giedd as cited in Feinstein, 2004). Researchers have found, however, that preservice teachers' strong acceptance of the developmental framework prevented them from seeing middle school students as multidimensional and capable of intellectual curiosity (Finders, 1999; Lexmond, 2003). Even the three preservice teachers in this study who indicated a strong interest in teaching at the middle level appear to be motivated to do so more by the counseling aspect of the teaching role, rather than the opportunities for intellectual development of the students. Research has shown that teacher expectations have a significant affect on student achievement (Jussim & Eccles, 1992). Clearly if educators at the middle level are to maximize the potential for cognitive growth in their students, then they must be made aware of the tremendous opportunities that exist for intellectual development in the young adolescent. One of the characteristics of successful schools listed in *This We Believe* is high expectations for every member of the learning community. Without research-based instruction to reframe preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents' intellectual capabilities, it is difficult to see how they will be able to meet those criteria.

In the interviews, besides hormonal changes, identity development was cited as a challenging aspect of working with young adolescents. Eleven of the interviewees specifically mentioned things like "trying to find out who they are," "testing boundaries," and "finding out where they fit in." The ability to cope with and influence this process was viewed quite differently by the preservice teachers interviewed. Eight of the interview participants did not see many opportunities in that social-emotional area. They described young adolescents as impressionable and conforming, but did not see adults as among the influencing agents in the young adolescent's life. Seven of the participants, while not anticipating an inability to influence young adolescents, simply prefer not to work with this age group for a variety of reasons: one doesn't want to be responsible for what a student believes; two respondents feel they connect with older or younger students better; one is concerned about his ability to maintain classroom control; and three others prefer either elementary or high school curriculum. Only one-fourth of the preservice teachers interviewed felt that they could influence young adolescents and were energized by the prospect: One feels he can "harness their energy and direct them into thinking for themselves." Another is excited about being able to "guide young adolescents in the right direction." One of the secondary English majors says she feels she can "help kids develop a sense of who they are and how they relate to the world." She goes on to say, "I want to help them discover why any of this matters to them and why they should pay attention in school and how important it will be in the future." This same idea was echoed by a math education major and a science education major who both felt they

could prepare middle level students for their high school to be successful in math and science respectively.

These findings indicate that helping their students in teacher preparation programs identify their beliefs about their abilities to influence their students may be a useful and important task for teacher educators. While it is true that at this stage, young adolescents are going about the task of becoming more independent and self-sufficient, they still have a strong need to interact with positive adult role models (Adamson et al. as cited in Feinstein, 2004). Teachers are often the only other adults with whom young adolescents interact in a meaningful way. Although young adolescents may be reluctant to admit it, they frequently access their teachers as very important sources of information and experience. It is not unusual to wonder if a young adolescent heard a word you said, only to hear your conversation authoritatively repeated almost verbatim in the hallway.

With regard to negative assumptions about both intellectual functioning and impressionability, the preservice teachers may simply be unaware of the techniques and approaches that make successful intervention in these areas likely. Because the young adolescent's frontal cortex has not yet developed to optimal logical operations, her decisions and responses more often originate in the amygdala, the emotion center of the brain. Although young adolescents are fully capable of considerable intellectual growth, negative emotional input can block cognitive activity. Knowing how to engage the young adolescent emotionally opens the door to intellectual achievement and cements recall of material learned (Feinstein, 2004). In the same vein, young adolescents are more receptive to adult influence in all areas when they feel emotionally secure with that

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person. As the saying goes, "Adolescents don't care how much you know until they

know how much you care." Preservice teachers need to feel confident in their abilities to

make these kinds of connections with young adolescents before they will have the self-

efficacy to consider teaching at this level.

The Effect of a Middle Level Licensure Requirement

The finding that there was no significant difference in the beliefs held about

young adolescents between the southwestern university group and the southeastern

university group was somewhat surprising. I had anticipated that the existence of a

middle level licensure requirement in the southeastern state might cause incoming

education majors to view young adolescents more favorably, seeing that the state felt they

were deserving of a distinct teacher preparation program. However, at least in this

research study, this does not seem to be the case. As was reported in the finding section,

only one variable out of the 54 surveyed was found to have a significant difference in the

means between the two groups, and when the variables were considered in total, the

means were almost identical, resulting in no significance difference in the two groups'

overall beliefs about young adolescents. Perhaps the reason for this is that, as has been

shown in other research, our society in general has such a stereotypical view of young

adolescents that it transcends other considerations such as experience. The stereotype is

communicated in the media, in folklore, and any negative experience with young

adolescents confirms the stereotype whereas positive experiences are viewed as

exceptional. What is worth noting is that while perhaps the education majors' beliefs were

the same coming into the program, it is highly likely they will be different for the

education majors who have targeted middle school upon exiting the program. Even with the limited nature of this study, it is possible to see that the preservice teachers enrolled in the middle level preparation program in the southeastern university already exhibited greater self-confidence and excitement about working with young adolescents that was shown by any of the other interviewees in either group. The quality of teaching of these students, their level of self-efficacy for teaching at the middle level, and their understanding of the needs of the young adolescent will prepare them to be more effective with this age group.

Concerns Regarding the Research Tools

That the survey results appeared to be generally negative was a concern and led me to examine the survey instrument more closely. On the basis of the survey respondents' own judgments of the desirability or undesirability of the traits and behaviors used to describe young adolescents in the first half of the survey, I counted the number of positive versus negative descriptors. I discovered there were 14 more negative than positive descriptors on the survey. A review of the method used to develop the original survey saw that the list of descriptors was developed from interviews with college students about young adolescents. This in itself could be part of the problem. Since the survey was based upon the views of the college students, then the list may have been developed with a negative bias. If the college students named traits and behaviors consistent with a negative view of young adolescents which is likely given most college students' limited experience with children 10-14, there will naturally be more negative descriptors available for the respondents to rate. The result is a description which

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emerges that is very heavy on the negative side. When heavily correlated variables and extreme behaviors are removed from the list, the view appears more balanced between positive and negative descriptors. This still does not change the outcome that none of the positive descriptors were rated as being as descriptive as the negative behaviors, however.

Another concern with the survey instrument is that it does not provide a standard by which young adolescents can be compared to other age groups. It could be that the survey respondents take an equally dim view of all age groups, or that they see young children more favorably, but rate high school students even more negatively than young adolescents. This would not necessarily impact the beliefs about young adolescents, but it would make a difference if the findings are to be used to explain the lack of interest in teaching at the middle level.

Turning to the interview data, there are some conflicting and confusing data here also. While three respondents actually reported having an unfavorable view of young adolescents, the rest of the respondents saw themselves as regarding young adolescents favorably. Nevertheless, 12 of these preservice teachers also indicated a preference to teach younger children, while another three preferred teaching older students. Is it that young adolescents are not that unlikable, just that older and younger children are that much more appealing? Indeed the information given regarding the participant's view of young adolescent was often contradictory both within the interview itself and at times with the answers they gave on the survey. Either the participants were unable or unwilling to answer the questions accurately or the semi-structured interview questions

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contributed to the confusion by triggering specific thoughts that might not have originally

been considered or identified by the respondent (Cavanaugh & Perlmitter, 1982).

It may be that these preservice teachers' memories of their own adolescent

experiences contribute to these mixed and contradictory reported feelings about teaching

at the middle level. Indeed, ten of the twenty respondents describe the period in their

lives from about 10 to 14 years of age as being awkward and worrisome, full of peer

relations concerns. The other half have mixed memories ranging from seeing this time in

their lives to pleasant and fun to traumatic due to family moves, but they don't relate their

experiences to any particular developmental issues. As with identifying self-efficacy

beliefs about influence, it may also be useful to preservice teachers to examine their own

memories of young adolescence to understand the similarities and difference between

their particular experience and that of the "typical" adolescents. It may also help to share

these memories with their classmates as it would provide a good illustration of the reality

of diverse childhood experience that may exist within their future classrooms.

Reasonable Deductions Regarding the Data Analysis

For whatever reason, the preservice teachers at these two universities hold almost

identical beliefs about young adolescents, from the portion of young adolescents who

display certain traits and behaviors to the desirability/undesirability of each of those traits

and behaviors. The fact the one group is enrolled in an education program in a state that

requires middle level licensure in order to teach young adolescents did not make a

difference in the overall beliefs of the preservice teachers as compared to the group from

the other state. Apparently the acknowledgment of young adolescence as a distinct

developmental age requiring specific teacher preparation did not result in the teachers

holding significantly different views of young adolescents as anticipated. It did make a

difference in the number of interviewees who specifically intended to teach at the middle

level, however. From the southeastern university group, there were three education

majors who had clear intentions of teaching at the middle level. In the southwestern

university group, only two respondents indicated that teaching at the middle level was a

possibility, but none of the respondents declared that to be their primary goal. The small

size of the sample, however, prohibits any generalization of this finding. A subsequent

study could investigate this finding to determine the actual percentage of preservice

teachers electing to teach at the middle level in a state which has a middle level licensure

requirement versus those in a state that does not.

The preservice teachers in this study hold negative stereotypes of young

adolescents, similar to views found to be held by parents and teachers in other studies

(Jacobs, Chhnin, & Shaver, 200; Buchanan & Holmbeck, 1998; Buchanan et al., 1990).

In particular, they see young adolescence as a time of heightened social concerns,

conformance to peers, rebelliousness, and emotional confusion. Stereotypic beliefs and

stereotypes refer to beliefs that are specifically linked to easily identifiable social

categories (Jacob, Chhin, & Shaver, 2003). These kinds of beliefs are also referred to as

category-based beliefs because the members that fall into a particular category are all

considered to have similar characteristics. Arnett's (1999) research indicates that

although there is some truth to the "storm and stress" view of adolescence, the degree to

which individuals experience difficulties during this time depends to a large degree on

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individual and social differences as indicated above in the study's preservice teachers' own memories of young adolescence. As is true with stereotypes of race and gender, individualizing factors such as socioeconomic levels, parental education, community and personal resources, and societal influence, all factors which carry tremendous impact on personal outcome become lost in the stereotypical labeling of young adolescents. We must ask ourselves if, in a nation that targets young adolescents with intensive marketing strategies, descriptors such as "materialistic", "watches lots of TV", and "concerned with looks" truly reflective of the nature of young adolescents or are these characteristics socially constructed as a result of being the target of rampart commercialism in the schools and at home? Molnar and Morales (2000) go so far as to say, "Commercial activities now shape the structure of the school day, influence the content of the school curriculum, and determine whether children have access to a variety of technologies" (p. 43). Without Channel One, the pop machines, and the Coca-Cola scoreboard, today's schools would look very different. Knowing that the preservice teachers do subscribe to the stereotypic view of young adolescents is a help in designing an educational program that helps to deconstruct such blanket and limiting information.

The interview data confirmed studies of parental beliefs about young adolescents, which show beliefs related specifically to certain individuals and/or based on personal experience (also called target-based beliefs) are often different and override the category-based beliefs held (Jacobs, Chhin, & Shaver, 2005). In three instances, the interviewees related observations from their personal experience that were in direct opposition to their pre-conceived opinions.

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To a large degree, the interviewed preservice teachers' memories of their own adolescence matched their current view of young adolescents. Sixteen of the education majors interviewed used many of the same adjectives to describe today's young adolescents as they did to tell about themselves and their experience as children 10 to 14.

Five of the preservice teachers interviewed specifically mentioned a former teacher as a role model and mentor for the choice to teach, with two of the middle level majors referring to teachers they themselves had had at the middle level. It would appear that a teacher mentor can have considerable impact on an adolescent's estimation of teaching as a career. One of the interviewees also mentioned the high regard in which she holds teachers at the school where she has done her observations and how they could influence her to teach a particular level.

Educational Implications

All of these observations suggest that perhaps there is a place for an early experience course in teacher preparation programs that would address the need for mandatory field experiences with young adolescents, coupled with a reflection component aimed at assisting preservice teachers to examine their own childhood experiences and their preconceived notions about all age groups. To achieve optimal processing of the information gleaned from the two components listed above, factual information from studies about traits and behaviors from all age groups as well as information about the curriculum and activities that are most effective at each grade level needs to be provided. Finally, input from enthusiastic and experienced teachers at all teaching levels would be beneficial to the mix in order to equip preservice teachers with

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all the necessary ingredients to make an informed and realistic appraisal of their

preferences and abilities. The result can be a program which enables preservice teachers

to make a rational choice of teaching level, one which they can begin to prepare for with

a high sense of self-efficacy. In the case of this proposed early experience course, it is

hoped that the preservice teachers will also take the path of resolving the cognitive

dissonance that involves changing the inconsistent belief. Naturally it is this researcher's

hope that such a program would lead more preservice teachers to favorably consider

teaching at the middle level and deter those whose beliefs about young adolescents and

whose need for control and autonomy would make teaching at this level more difficult

and less satisfying (Witcher et al., 2002).

The difference in the degree of self-efficacy for teaching at the middle level

observed in the preservice teachers enrolled in the southeastern university's middle level

teacher preparation program as compared to the preservice teachers from the

southwestern university enrolled in either the elementary or secondary teacher

preparation programs suggests another educational implication. It appears that, in order

to better prepare those education majors who may end up teaching in middle schools,

more information needs to be included in teacher preparation programs in universities

where there is no middle level licensure requirement regarding the structure of middle

schools, teaming, integrated curriculum, and adolescent psychology. Even when

universities feel confident in their teacher preparation in terms of content and

methodology, the above listed information is not specifically targeted. The result is that

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beginning teachers at the middle level are often forced to learn all of this on the job in addition to the usual difficulties in serving as a first year teacher.

Additionally, the data revealed that the preservice teachers demonstrated a disturbing lack of information about the intellectual activity and capabilities of young adolescents. Recognizing the effect that low expectations for student achievement can have on students, it is recommended that teacher preparation programs for education majors who may end up teaching at the middle level include more information about adolescent brain research. Preservice teachers need to know of the tremendous potential for enhancing intellectual abilities in young adolescents. By learning about the importance of making connections, developing new interests, and reinforcing previously learned material, preservice teachers may approach teaching at the middle level with a new respect and sense of purpose.

Recommendations for Future Research

While there has been a bit more research done recently in the area of preservice teachers and classroom teachers' beliefs about young adolescents, more information across a broader spectrum would be helpful. The research needs to solicit data on preservice and classroom teachers' beliefs about other age groups as well. This will permit the comparison of teacher beliefs about all the age groups which may provide a different perspective than simply the focus on one particular age group. It would also be interesting to investigate the effect gender has on preservice beliefs about young adolescents. Gender information was not solicited from the survey participants in this

study. If the survey groups were expanded and more biographical information added, gender would be a definite factor to consider.

Before initiating a larger study, however, work needs to be done on the survey instrument. A place to start would be to go back to the process used originally by Buchanan and Holmbeck (1998) and conduct more interviews. They drew their descriptors from the interviews, and I would suggest reviewing those descriptors and editing them based on the new interviews. I would also advise equalizing the number of positive and negative descriptors to avoid an unnecessarily skewed perspective. More contradictory descriptors need to be included to measure consistency. For example, taking the descriptors "selfish" and "cares for others"…a consistent negative response might be a rating of 4 for "selfish" indicating very descriptive of most young adolescents and 2 for "cares for others" indicating not very descriptive of most young adolescents. Likewise the interview questions need to be reviewed and rephrased in such a way to minimize responses imagined to please the interviewer or possibly reflect negatively on the respondent. An example that comes to mind is the question: Would you say you have a favorable or unfavorable view of young adolescents? Seven respondents appeared reluctant to answer, "Unfavorable," even though that is what the responses on the survey and many of the other interview questions indicated of their true feelings.

In order to more accurately assess the impact of a middle level teacher preparation program, a study which compares middle level teacher preparation graduates to elementary and secondary graduates teaching at the middle level could reveal some interesting information. The study would survey a fairly large number of beginning

teachers from middle level teacher preparation programs across the nation to a corresponding number of beginning teachers prepared in elementary and secondary programs on such topics as beliefs about young adolescents, self-efficacy beliefs about teaching young adolescents, and knowledge of adolescent behavior and middle school structure. If the results indicate a significant difference in the quality of teacher preparation for those teaching at the middle level, it might provide valuable justification for instituting a required middle level teaching certification in states which do not currently have it and the subsequent addition of the necessary coursework at those states' colleges and universities.

Finally, if the early experience course is developed and implemented, extensive research as to the effectiveness of the program in impacting teacher beliefs and decision-making about teaching level would need to be gathered and analyzed. Several opportunities exist there to investigate the value of autobiographical experience, reflection, experience, the effect of mentors, and the effect of media on decision-making, as well as the effect such a program would have on preservice teachers' feelings of self-efficacy. A follow up longitudinal study measuring the early experience course participants' satisfaction with their choice of teaching level after they have been teaching for one, then five years and investigating the reasons for changing teaching levels if they occur would provide some interesting data and also help to gauge the success of the early experience program.

Summary

America's children need highly qualified teachers at every level. No where is this more urgently felt than at the middle level. Several organizations and commissions have called for teachers who are specifically prepared to teach at the middle level, yet there continues to be a shortage of teachers who fit these criteria. This study sought to determine if preservice teachers' beliefs about young adolescents contributed to this shortage by deterring them from teaching at the middle level. The information and recommendations in this study may prove useful to organizations concerned with middle level education in their efforts to promote specialized teacher preparation programs. The results of the study indicate that while negative beliefs about the nature and behavior of young adolescents do have an impact on preservice teachers' willingness to teach at the middle level, it is not the overriding determining factor. Preferences for teaching a particular developmental age due to perceived qualities of that age group and preferences for teaching a particular curriculum as well as the feelings of self-efficacy regarding teacher-pupil relationships, classroom control, and confidence with course content all contribute to the decision for teaching at a particular grade level. Consequently, a program of study designed to provide information, experience, and reflection about each developmental age is recommended in order to prepare preservice teachers to make an important decision that impacts their lives and the lives of their future students.

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Appendix A

Characteristics of Successful Schools for Young Adolescents: *This We Believe*

National Middle School Association believes…

Successful schools for young adolescents are characterized by a culture that includes

- Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so

- Courageous, collaborative leadership

- A shared vision that guides decisions

- An inviting, supportive, and safe environment

- High expectations for every member of the learning community

- Students and teachers engaged in active learning

- An adult advocate for every student

- School-initiated family and community partnerships.

Therefore, successful schools for young adolescents provide

- Curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory

- Multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to their diversity

- Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning

- Organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning

- School-wide efforts and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety

- Multifaceted guidance and support services.

Appendix B

Recommendations from *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*

1. Large middle grades schools should be divided into smaller communities for learning so each student will receive sustained individual attention.

2. Middle grades schools should transmit a core of common, substantial knowledge to all students in ways that foster curiosity, problem solving, and critical thinking.

3. Middle grades schools should be organized to ensure success for virtually all students by utilizing cooperative learning and other techniques suitable for this developmental phase.

4. Teachers and principals, not distant administrative or political organizations, should have major responsibility and authority to transform middle grades schools.

5. Teachers for the middle grades should be specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and be recognized distinctively for this accomplishment.

6. Schools should be environments for health promotion, with particular emphasis on the life sciences and their applications; the education and health of young adolescents must be inextricably linked.

7. Families should be allied with school staff in a sprit of mutual respect with ample opportunities for joint effort.

8. Schools should be partners with various kinds of community organizations in educating young adolescents, including involving them in the experience of carefully considered service learning

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Appendix C

Recommendations from *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*

1. Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.

2. Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.

3. Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.

4. Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose.

5. Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best.

6. Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.

7. Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development.

Appendix D

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NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

INITIAL LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION STANDARDS

Program Standards for Middle Level Teacher Preparation

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This document contains standards for middle level teacher candidates as they complete middle level teacher preparation programs at the initial level. Information regarding submission of middle level teacher preparation programs for review by National Middle School Association through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education program review process is provided on the NCATE and NMSA web sites. http://www.nmsa.org http://www.ncate.org The program review coordinator for NMSA, Dr. Ken McEwin, can be reached at 828 262-2200 or mcewinck@appstate.edu.

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NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
PROGRAMMATIC STANDARDS FOR INITIAL MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHER
PREPARATION

</div>

Standard 1. Middle Level Courses and Experiences

> **Institutions preparing middle level teachers have courses and field experiences that specifically and directly address middle level education.**

Indicators

1. The middle level conceptual framework establishes a shared vision for the programs efforts in preparing educators to work in middle level schools.
2. Courses address topics such as middle level philosophy and organization, young adolescent development, middle level curriculum, and middle level instruction.
3. Early and continuing middle level field experiences and student teaching are provided and required.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
The conceptual framework of the program fails to demonstrate a shared vision for the preparation of middle level teacher candidates. It lacks documentation that it provides the basis for coherence among curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessment, and evaluation.	The conceptual framework of the program reflects a shared vision for the preparation of middle level teacher candidates. It provides the basis for coherence among curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessment, and evaluation. It is consistent with the unit conceptual framework.	The conceptual framework of the program clearly reflects a shared vision for the preparation of middle level teacher candidates. It provides the basis for coherence among curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessment, and evaluation. It is well articulated, knowledge-based, and consistent with the unit conceptual framework.
The program fails to include courses that directly address middle level education (e.g., middle level philosophy and organization, young adolescent development, middle level instruction).	The program includes courses that directly address middle level education (e.g., middle level philosophy and organization, young adolescent development, middle level instruction).	The program includes well-planned and articulated courses that focus on young adolescents and middle level education (e.g., middle level philosophy and organization, young adolescent development, middle level instruction). The content of these courses comprehensively address the middle level knowledge base and NMSA standards.

The program is lacking in appropriate early and continuing field experiences and student teaching at the middle level.	The program includes early and continuing field experiences and student teaching at the middle level that support and address middle level knowledge and practice.	The program contains rich and varied early and continuing field experiences and student teaching at the middle level that extend teacher candidates knowledge level and practice.

Standard 2. Qualified Middle Level Faculty

Institutions preparing middle level teachers employ faculty members who have middle level experience and expertise.

Indicators

1. Faculty members hold advanced degrees in areas that provide appropriate backgrounds to teach in the program.
2. Faculty members have demonstrated their interest and expertise in middle level education.
3. Faculty members are active scholars in middle level education.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Faculty members who teach in the program lack advanced degrees that are appropriate for preparing middle level candidates (e.g., middle school education, curriculum and instruction). They possess limited knowledge of young adolescent development and the consequent implication of that knowledge for student development, teaching, and learning.	Faculty members who teach in the program hold advanced degrees that are appropriate for preparing middle level teacher candidates (e.g., middle school education, curriculum and instruction). They are knowledgeable about young adolescent development and the implication of that knowledge for student development, teaching, and learning.	Faculty members who teach in the program hold advanced degrees that focus directly on the preparation of middle level teacher candidates (middle school education, curriculum and instruction with a middle level emphasis). They are very knowledgeable about young adolescent development and the implication of that knowledge for student development, teaching, and learning.

Faculty members fail to show how appropriate knowledge about one or more disciplines and are not active scholars in middle level education. They have failed to demonstrate an interest in middle level education.	Faculty members are knowledgeable about one or more disciplines and have demonstrated their interest and expertise in middle level education. They are also active scholars in middle level education.	Faculty members are knowledgeable about two or more disciplines and are recognized scholars in middle level education.
Faculty members lack experience as middle level educators (e.g., middle level teaching, middle level administration).	Faculty members have experience as middle level educators (e.g., middle level teaching, middle level administration).	Faculty members have rich and varied backgrounds as middle level educators (e.g., middle level teaching, middle level administration).

NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION PERFORMANCE-BASED STANDARDS FOR INITIAL MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION

NOTE: The following definition is used for the term "all young adolescents" throughout this standards document:

> *The middle level standards interpret "all young adolescents" to be inclusive, comprising students of diverse ethnicity, race, language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, regional or geographic origin, and those with exceptional learning needs.*

Standard 1. Young Adolescent Development

Middle level teacher candidates understand the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to young adolescent development, and they provide opportunities that support student development and learning.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Understand the major concepts, principles, and theories of young adolescent development – intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral.
2. Understand the range of individual differences of all young adolescents and the implications of these differences for teaching and learning.
3. Know a variety of teaching/learning strategies that take into consideration and capitalize upon the developmental characteristics of all young adolescents.
4. Understand the implications of young adolescent development for school organization and components of successful middle level programs and schools.

5. Understand issues of young adolescent health and sexuality.
6. Understand the interrelationships among the characteristics and needs of all young adolescents.
7. Understand that the development of all young adolescents occurs in the context of classrooms, families, peer groups, communities and society.
8. Are knowledgeable about how the media portrays young adolescents and comprehend the implications of these portraits.

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Are positive and enthusiastic about all young adolescents.
2. Respect and appreciate the range of individual developmental differences of all young adolescents.
3. Hold high, realistic expectations for the learning and behavior of all young adolescents.
4. Believe that all young adolescents can learn and accept responsibility to help them do so.
5. Are enthusiastic about being positive role models, coaches, and mentors for all young adolescents.
6. Believe that diversity among all young adolescents is an asset.
7. Believe that their role includes helping all young adolescents develop to their full potential.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Establish close, mutually respectful relationships with all young adolescents that support their intellectual, ethical, and social growth.
2. Create learning opportunities that reflect an understanding of the development of all young adolescent learners.
3. Create positive, productive learning environments where developmental differences are respected and supported, and individual potential is encouraged.
4. Make decisions about curriculum and resources that reflect an understanding of young adolescent development.
5. Use developmentally responsive instructional strategies.
6. Use multiple assessments that are developmentally appropriate for young adolescent learners.
7. Engage young adolescents in activities related to their interpersonal, community, and societal responsibilities.
8. Create and maintain supportive learning environments that promote the healthy development of all young adolescents.
9. Deal effectively with societal changes, including the portrait of young adolescents in the media, which impact the healthy development of young adolescents.
10. Respond positively to the diversity found in young adolescents and use that diversity in planning and implementing curriculum and instruction.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates fail to show acceptable levels of knowledge of the concepts, principles, theories and research about young adolescent development. They fail to provide all young adolescents with learning opportunities that are developmentally responsive, socially equitable, and academically rigorous.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a knowledge of the concepts, principles, theories and research about young adolescent development. They use this knowledge to provide all young adolescents with learning opportunities that are developmentally responsive, socially equitable, and academically rigorous.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the concepts, principles, theories and research about young adolescent development. They use this knowledge to provide all young adolescents with learning opportunities that are developmentally responsive, socially equitable, and academically rigorous.
Middle level candidates fail to demonstrate positive orientations toward teaching young adolescents. They do not believe that all young adolescents can learn and do not accept the responsibility to help them do so.	Middle level candidates are positive about teaching young adolescents and develop positive relationship with them. They believe that all young adolescents can learn and accept the responsibility to help them do so.	Middle level candidates develop close, mutually respectful relationships with all young adolescents that support their intellectual, ethical, and social growth.
Middle level candidates fail to create and maintain supportive learning environments that promote the healthy development of all young adolescents. They lack enthusiasm and a desire to respond positively to the diversity found in young adolescents. They fail to use young adolescent diversity in planning and implementing curriculum and instruction.	Middle level candidates create and maintain supportive learning environments that promote the healthy development of all young adolescents. They respond positively to the diversity found in young adolescents and use that diversity in planning and implementing curriculum and instruction.	Middle level candidates create and maintain supportive learning environments that promote the healthy development of all young adolescents. They respond positively to the diversity found in young adolescents and use that diversity in planning and implementing curriculum and instruction.
Middle level candidates fail to create and involve young adolescents in a range of activities oriented toward the development of personal and societal responsibilities.	Middle level candidates produce positive and relevant activities and experiences that involve young adolescents in a range of personal, community, and societal responsibilities.	Middle level candidates engage young adolescents in activities related to their interpersonal, community, and societal responsibilities.

Standard 2. Middle Level Philosophy and School Organization

Middle level teacher candidates understand the major concepts, principles, theories, and research underlying the philosophical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools, and they work successfully within these organizational components.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Understand the philosophical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools.
2. Are knowledgeable about historical and contemporary models of schooling for young adolescents and the advantages and disadvantages of these models.
3. Understand the rationale and characteristic components of developmentally responsive middle level schools.
4. Know best practices for the education of young adolescents in a variety of school organizational settings (e.g., K-8, 5-8, 7-12 organizational plans).
5. Understand the team process as a structure for school improvement and student learning.
6. Understand that flexible scheduling provides the context for teachers to meet the needs of all young adolescents.

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Believe in the philosophical foundations that support developmentally responsive and socially equitable programs for all young adolescents.
2. Are committed to the application of middle level philosophical foundations in their practice.
3. Are supportive of organizational components that maximize student learning.
4. Are committed to developmentally responsive and socially equitable teaching, learning, and schooling in a variety of organizational settings.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Apply their knowledge of the philosophical foundations of middle level education when making decisions about curriculum and instruction.
2. Work successfully within developmentally responsive structures to maximize student learning.

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3. Articulate and apply their knowledge of the philosophical foundations of middle level education in their classrooms, schools, and communities.
4. Implement developmentally responsive practices and components that reflect the philosophical foundations of middle level education.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates fail to show acceptable levels of understanding of the concepts, principles, theories, and research underlying the philosophical and historical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools.	Middle level candidates demonstrate understanding of the concepts, principles, theories, and research underlying the philosophical and historical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools.	Middle level candidates demonstrate comprehensive understanding of the concepts, principles, theories, and research underlying the philosophical and historical foundations of developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools.
Middle level candidates do not possess the foundational knowledge to articulate and implement developmentally responsive practices, such as, teaming, advisory, extra-curricular, and service learning. They do not understand the reasons these practices foster adolescent development academically, socially, emotionally, and physically and fail to make instructional decisions based on these reasons.	Middle level candidates articulate and implement developmentally responsive practices, such as, teaming, advisory, extra-curricular, and service learning. They understand the reasons these practices work to foster adolescent development academically, socially, emotionally, and physically and make instructional decisions based on these reasons.	Middle level candidates effectively articulate and implement developmentally responsive practices, such as, teaming, advisory, extra-curricular, and service learning. They understand the reasons these practices work to foster adolescent development academically, socially, emotionally, and physically and make instructional decisions based on these reasons.

Middle level candidates evidence a lack of dedication to developmentally responsive organizational structures that foster socially equitable educational practices. They fail to promote organizational components that reflect the philosophical foundations of middle level education and that maximize student learning.	Middle level candidates are committed to developmentally responsive organizational structures that foster socially equitable educational practices. Candidates implement developmentally responsive practice and components that reflect the philosophical foundations of middle level education. As they work within teams and utilize flexible instructional time, candidates understand the significance of their actions on student learning.	Middle level candidates are committed to developmentally responsive organizational structures that foster socially equitable educational practices. They enthusiastically promote organizational components that maximize student learning. As they work successfully within teams and utilize flexible instructional time, candidates understand the significance of their actions on student learning.

Standard 3. Middle Level Curriculum and Assessment

Middle level teacher candidates understand the major concepts, principles, theories, standards, and research related to middle level curriculum and assessment, and they use this knowledge in their practice.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Understand that middle level curriculum should be relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.
2. Understand the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and how to make connections among subject areas when planning curriculum.
3. Possess a depth and breadth of content knowledge.
4. Are knowledgeable about local, state, and national middle level curriculum standards and of ways to assess the student knowledge reflected in those standards.
5. Are fluent in the integration of technology in curriculum planning.
6. Know how to incorporate all young adolescents' ideas, interests, and experiences into curriculum.
7. Understand multiple assessment strategies that effectively measure student mastery of the curriculum.
8. Understand the integrated role that technology plays in a variety of student assessment measures.
9. Understand their roles in the total school curriculum (e.g., advisory program, co-curricular activities and other programs).
10. Know how to assess and select curriculum materials that are academically challenging and personally motivating for young adolescents

11. Understand the key concepts within the critical knowledge base and know how to design assessments that targets them.
12. Understand how to develop, implement, and assess advisory and other student advocacy programs that attend to the social and emotional needs of young adolescents (e.g. mentoring, conflict resolution).

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Value the need for being knowledgeable and current in curriculum areas taught.
2. View all areas of knowledge and skills as important.
3. Value the importance of ongoing curriculum assessment and revision.
4. Realize the importance of connecting curriculum and assessment to the needs, interests, and experiences of all young adolescents.
5. Are committed to implementing an integrated curriculum that accommodates and supports the learning of all young adolescents.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Successfully implement the curriculum for which they are responsible in ways that help all young adolescents learn.
2. Use current knowledge and standards from multiple subject areas in planning, integrating, and implementing curriculum.
3. Incorporate the ideas, interests, and experiences of all young adolescents in curriculum.
4. Develop and teach an integrated curriculum.
5. Teach curriculum in ways that encourage all young adolescents to observe, question, and interpret knowledge and ideas from diverse perspectives.
6. Provide all young adolescents with multiple opportunities to learn in integrated ways.
7. Participate in varied professional roles within the total school curriculum (e.g., advisory program, co-curricular activities).
8. Use multiple assessment strategies that effectively measure student mastery of the curriculum.
9. Incorporates technology in planning, integrating, implementing and assessing curriculum and student learning.
10. Articulate curriculum to various stakeholder groups.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates do not demonstrate acceptable levels of knowledge of local, state, and national curriculum standards. They design curriculum and use materials that are narrowly focused, shallow, and uninteresting to young adolescents.	Middle level candidates possess and employ their knowledge of local, state, and national curriculum standards. They design curriculum and select materials that are integrative, challenging, and grounded in the ideas, interests, and experiences of all young adolescents.	Middle level candidates analyze local, state, and national curriculum standards based on their knowledge of content and early adolescent development. They consistently design curriculum and select materials that are integrative, challenging, and grounded in the ideas, interests, and experiences of all young adolescents.
Middle level candidates fail to employ appropriate student achievement strategies that recognize the key concepts found within the critical knowledge base.	Middle level candidates assess student achievement using strategies that focus on the key concepts found within the critical knowledge base.	Middle level candidates assess student achievement using multiple strategies that focus on the key concepts found within the critical knowledge base, and they are able to articulate their criteria for strategy selection.
Middle level candidates focus on their content area to the exclusion of other aspects of the total school curriculum. They do not articulate an appropriate curriculum and assessment design to various stakeholders.	Middle level candidates demonstrate an understanding of the total school curriculum; for example: the importance of advisory, co-curricular activities, exploratory courses, and other programs. They articulate this curriculum and assessment design to various stakeholders.	Middle level candidates understand and advocate for the total school curriculum. They consistently articulate this curriculum and assessment design to various stakeholders

Standard 4. Middle Level Teaching Fields

Middle level teacher candidates understand and use the central concepts, tools of inquiry, standards, and structures of content in their chosen teaching fields, and they create meaningful learning experiences that develop all young adolescents' competence in subject matter and skills.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Possess a depth and breadth of knowledge in two content areas which are broad, multidisciplinary, and encompass the major areas within those fields (e.g., science, not just biology; social science, not just history).
2. Know how to use content knowledge to make interdisciplinary connections.
3. Are knowledgeable about teaching and assessment strategies that are especially effective in their teaching fields.
4. Understand how to integrate state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills into their teaching fields.

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Value the importance of staying current in their teaching fields.
2. Are committed to the importance of integrating content.
3. Are committed to using content specific teaching and assessment strategies.
4. Value the integration of state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills in all teaching fields.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Use their depth and breadth of content knowledge in ways that maximize student learning.
2. Use effective content specific teaching and assessment strategies.
3. Engage all young adolescents in content that incorporates their ideas, interests, and experiences.
4. Teach in ways that help all young adolescents understand the integrated nature of knowledge.
5. Integrate state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills into teaching content to all young adolescents.
6. Engage in activities designed to extend knowledge in their teaching fields.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates have not achieved a depth and breadth of knowledge in two content areas that are broad and multidisciplinary and do not demonstrate the ability to make interdisciplinary connections.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a depth and breadth of knowledge in two content areas that are broad and multidisciplinary and demonstrate the ability to make interdisciplinary connections.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive depth and breadth of knowledge in two content areas that are broad and multidisciplinary and regularly demonstrate the ability to make interdisciplinary connections.
Middle level candidates do not possess or exhibit the ability to use specific content teaching and assessment strategies and do not integrate state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills in their teaching fields.	Middle level candidates demonstrate the ability to use specific content teaching and assessment strategies and integrate state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills in their teaching fields.	Middle level candidates frequently demonstrate the ability to use specific content teaching and assessment strategies and integrate state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills in their teaching fields.
Middle level candidates fail to provide instruction that is engaging and increases student learning and supports academic excellence.	Middle level candidates teach in engaging ways that maximize student learning.	Middle level candidates frequently teach in engaging ways that maximize student learning.
Middle level candidates do not integrate their content knowledge with the ideas, interests, and experiences of students, and as a consequence, do not help them helping them understand the integrated nature of knowledge.	Middle level candidates incorporate their content knowledge with the ideas, interests, and experiences of students, helping them to understand the integrated nature of knowledge.	Middle level candidates frequently incorporate their content knowledge with the ideas, interests, and experiences of students, helping them to understand the integrated nature of knowledge.
Middle level candidates fail to see the importance of and do not engage in activities designed to extend knowledge in their teaching field(s), integrating content, using content specific teaching and assessment strategies and integrating state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills.	Candidates value the importance of and engage in activities designed to extend knowledge in their teaching fields, integrating content, using content specific teaching and assessment strategies, and integrating state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills.	Candidates take leadership roles in promoting and participating in activities designed to extend knowledge in their teaching fields, integrating content, using content specific teaching and assessment strategies, and integrating state-of-the-art technologies and literacy skills.

Standard 5. Middle Level Instruction and Assessment
Middle level teacher candidates understand and use the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to effective instruction and assessment, and they employ a

variety of strategies for a developmentally appropriate climate to meet the varying abilities and learning styles of all young adolescents.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Understand the principles of instruction and the research base that supports them.
2. Know a wide variety of teaching, learning, and assessment strategies, and when to implement them.
3. Know that teaching higher order thinking skills is an integral part of instruction and assessment.
4. Know how to select and develop formal, informal, and performance assessments based on their relative advantages and limitations.
5. Understand ways to teach the basic concepts and skills of inquiry and communication.
6. Know how to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies.
7. Understand how to motivate all young adolescents and facilitate their learning through the use of a wide variety of developmentally responsive materials and resources (e.g., technological resources, manipulative materials).
8. Know effective, developmentally responsive classroom management techniques.
9. Understand the multiple roles of assessment in the instructional process (e.g. monitoring learning, evaluating student progress, and modifying teaching strategies).

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Value the need for a repertoire of teaching/learning strategies that are appropriate for teaching all young adolescents.
2. Value the need for providing and maintaining environments that maximize student learning.
3. Believe that instructional planning is important and must be developmentally responsive.
4. Value opportunities to plan instruction collaboratively with teammates and other colleagues.
5. Value the importance of on-going and varied assessment strategies.
6. Realize the importance of basing instruction on assessment results.
7. Appreciate the importance of teaching strategies that are current and supported by research and successful practice.
8. Are committed to using assessment to identify student strengths and enhance student growth rather than deny student access to learning.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Use a variety of teaching/learning strategies and resources that motivate young adolescents to learn.

2. Create learning experiences that encourage exploration and problem solving so all young adolescents can be actively engaged in learning.
3. Plan effective instruction individually and with colleagues.
4. Provide all young adolescents with opportunities to engage in independent and collaborative inquiry.
5. Participate in professional development activities that increase their knowledge of effective teaching/learning strategies.
6. Establish equitable, caring, and productive learning environments for all young adolescents.
7. Employ fair, effective, developmentally responsive classroom management techniques.
8. Implement a variety of developmentally responsive assessment measures (e.g. portfolios, authentic assessments, student self-evaluation).
9. Maintain useful records and create an effective plan for evaluation of student work and achievement.
10. Communicate assessment information knowledgeably and responsibly to students, families, educators, community members, and other appropriate audiences.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates lack the ability to provide effective instruction. They fail to select instructional strategies that meet the needs of their students.	Middle level candidates demonstrate their knowledge of effective instruction. They actively engage students in learning the curriculum by selecting instructional strategies that are challenging, culturally sensitive, and developmentally responsive.	Middle level candidates actively engage students in independent and collaborative inquiry. They consistently select instructional strategies that are challenging, culturally sensitive, and developmentally responsive
Middle level candidates demonstrate weak and ineffective classroom management techniques that result in an environment characterized by unfairness and disrespect. Assessment is disconnected from instruction, and therefore unable to inform future instruction.	Middle level candidates employ classroom management techniques designed to create positive learning environments. They link formal and informal assessments to instruction, and they use this information to adjust future lesson plans.	Middle level candidates create equitable, caring, and productive learning environments. They link an array of formal and informal assessments to instruction, and they consistently use this information to adjust future lesson plans.
Middle level candidates are uninterested in and do not participate in collaboration with colleagues.	Middle level candidates collaborate with others to plan instruction and assessment.	Candidates initiate and value collaboration with others to improve instruction and assessment.

Standard 6. Family and Community Involvement

Middle level teacher candidates understand the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to working collaboratively with family and community members, and they use that knowledge to maximize the learning of all young adolescents.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Understand the variety of family structures.
2. Understand how prior learning, differing experiences, and family and cultural backgrounds influence young adolescent learning.
3. Understand the challenges that families may encounter in contemporary society and are knowledgeable about support services and other resources that are available to assist them.
4. Know how to communicate effectively with family and community members.
5. Understand that middle level schools are organizations within a larger community context.
6. Understand the relationships between schools and community organizations.
7. Know about the resources available within communities that can support students, teachers, and schools.
8. Understand the importance of following school district policies and protocol regarding interagency partnerships and collaboratives.
9. Understand the roles of family and community members in improving the education of all young adolescents.

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Respect all young adolescents and their families.
2. Realize the importance of privacy and confidentiality of information when working with family members.
3. Value the variety of resources available in communities.
4. Are committed to helping family members become aware of how and where to receive assistance when needed.
5. Value and appreciate all young adolescents regardless of family circumstances, community environment, health, and/or economic conditions.
6. Value the enrichment of learning that comes from the diverse backgrounds, values, skills, talents and interests of all young adolescents and their families.
7. Realize and value the importance of communicating effectively with family and community members.
8. Accept the responsibility of working with family and community members to increase student welfare and learning.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Establish respectful and productive relationships with family and community members that maximize student learning and well being.
2. Act as advocates for all young adolescents in the school and in the larger community.
3. Connect instruction to the diverse community experiences of all young adolescents.
4. Identify and use community resources to foster student learning.
5. Participate in activities designed to enhance educational experiences that transcend the school campus.
6. Encourage all young adolescents to participate in community activities and services that contribute to their welfare and learning (e.g., service-learning, health services, after-school programs).
7. Demonstrate the ability to participate in parent conferences.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates lack an understanding of the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to working collaboratively with family and community members. They fail to maximize the learning of all young adolescents.	Middle level candidates demonstrate an understanding of the major concepts , principles, theories, and research related to working collaboratively with family and community members. They use this knowledge to ensure the maximum learning of all young adolescents.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to working collaboratively with family and community members. They effectively use this knowledge to maximize the learning of all young adolescents.
Middle level candidates are ignorant of how diverse family structures and family and cultural backgrounds influence and enrich learning. They are unable to work successfully with parents and community members to improve the education of all young adolescents.	Middle level candidates understand and value how both diverse family structures and family and cultural backgrounds influence and enrich learning. They work successfully with parents and community members to improve the education of all young adolescents.	Middle level candidates understand the relationships between schools and community organizations and communicate effectively with all stakeholders. They comprehend the challenges that families may encounter in contemporary society and subsequently use available support services and other resources.

Middle level candidate knowledge about support services and other resources in schools and communities that support students and teachers is unacceptable. They neither demonstrate respect for all young adolescents and their families and neither value nor employ the variety of resources available in communities.	Middle level candidates are knowledgeable about support services and other resources in schools and communities that support students and teachers. They respect all young adolescents and their families and value the variety of resources available in communities.	Middle level candidates value and appreciate all young adolescents regardless of family circumstances, community environment, health, and/or economic conditions.
Middle level candidates are not advocates for young adolescents; neither do they share that knowledge with others. They do not successfully participate in parent conferences and other school and community activities.	Middle level candidates serve as advocates for all young adolescents in the school learning. They plan and execute successful parent conferences that involve young adolescents as key participants and thoughtfully engage in other school and community activities in the larger community and share that knowledge with others. They successfully participate in parent conferences and other school and community activities.	Candidates serve as advocates for all young adolescents in the school and in the larger community. They engage in activities that help parents and community members understand the nature of young adolescents and the implications for parenting, teaching, and learning. They plan and execute successful parent conferences that involve young adolescents as key participants and thoughtfully engage in other school and community activities.

Standard 7. Middle Level Professional Roles

Middle level teacher candidates understand the complexity of teaching young adolescents, and they engage in practices and behaviors that develop their competence as professionals.

Knowledge

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Understand their evolving role as middle level education professionals.
2. Understand the importance of their influence on all young adolescents.
3. Are knowledgeable about their responsibility for upholding high professional standards.

4. Understand the interrelationships and interdependencies among various professionals that serve young adolescents (e.g., school counselors, social service workers, home-school coordinators).
5. Know advisory/advocate theories, skills, and curriculum.
6. Understand teaming/collaborative theories and processes.
7. Understand their service responsibilities to school reform and the greater community.
8. Understand the need for continual reflection on young adolescent development, the instructional process, and professional relationships.
9. Know the skills of research/data-based decision-making.
10. Are fluent in the integration of a range of technologies (e.g., film, computers) in their professional roles with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Dispositions

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Value learning as a life-long process.
2. Perceive themselves as members of the larger learning community.
3. Believe that their professional responsibilities extend beyond the classroom and school (e.g., advisory committees, parent-teacher organizations).
4. Believe in maintaining high standards of ethical behavior and professional competence.
5. Are committed to helping all young adolescents become thoughtful, ethical, democratic citizens.
6. Are committed to refining classroom and school practices that address the needs of all young adolescents based on research, successful practice, and experience.
7. Value collegiality as an integral part of their professional practice.

Performances

Middle level teacher candidates:

1. Model positive attitudes and appropriate behaviors for all young adolescents.
2. Serve as advisors, advocates, and mentors for all young adolescents.
3. Work successfully as members of interdisciplinary teams and as part of the total school environment.
4. Engage in and support ongoing professional practices for self and colleagues (e.g., attend professional development activities and conferences, participate in professional organizations).
5. Read professional literature, consult with colleagues, maintain currency with a range of technologies, and seek resources to enhance their professional competence.

UNACCEPTABLE	ACCEPTABLE	TARGET
Middle level candidates do not demonstrate understanding of their evolving role as middle level education professionals, the importance of their influence on all young adolescents, or their responsibility for upholding high professional standards and modeling appropriate behaviors.	Middle level candidates display broad understanding of their evolving role as middle level education professionals, the importance of their influence on all young adolescents, and their responsibility for upholding high professional standards and modeling appropriate behaviors.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their evolving role as middle level education professionals, the importance of their influence on all young adolescents, and their responsibility for upholding high professional standards and modeling appropriate behaviors.
Middle level candidates do not demonstrate understanding of teaming/collaborative theories and processes or the interrelationships and interdependencies among various professionals that serve young adolescents (e.g., school counselors, social service workers, home-school coordinators), and they do not work successfully as members of interdisciplinary teams.	Middle level candidates exhibit good understanding of teaming/collaborative theories and processes and the interrelationships and interdependencies among various professionals that serve young adolescents (e.g., school counselors, social service workers, home-school coordinators), and they frequently work as successful members of interdisciplinary teams.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of teaming/collaborative theories and processes and the interrelationships and interdependencies among various professionals that serve young adolescents (e.g., school counselors, social service workers, home-school coordinators), and they frequently work as successful members of interdisciplinary teams.
Middle level candidates do not demonstrate knowledge of advisory/advocate theories, skills, and curriculum or serve as advisors, advocates and mentors of young adolescents.	Middle level candidates possess knowledge of advisory/advocate theories, skills, and curriculum and employ this knowledge successfully as advisors, advocates and mentors of young adolescents.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of advisory/advocate theories, skills, and curriculum and regularly serve as advisors, advocates and mentors of young adolescents in various settings.

Middle level candidates do not demonstrate understanding of the skills of research/data-based decision making or their service responsibilities to school reform and the greater community.	Middle level candidates maintain an up-to-date understanding of the skills of research data-based decision making and their service responsibilities to school reform and the greater community.	Middle level candidates demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the skills of research/data based decision making and their service responsibilities to school reform and the greater community.
Middle level candidates do not perceive themselves as members of the larger learning community, do not believe that their professional responsibilities extend beyond the classroom and school (e.g., advisory committees, parent-teacher organizations), nor are they committed to helping all young adolescents become thoughtful, ethical, democratic citizens.	Middle level candidates view themselves as members of the larger learning community, believe that their professional responsibilities extend beyond the classroom and school (e.g., advisory committees, parent-teacher organizations), and are committed to helping all young adolescents become thoughtful, ethical, democratic citizens.	Middle level candidates take a leadership role in the larger learning community, accept professional responsibilities that extend beyond the classroom and school (e.g., advisory committees, parent-teacher organizations), and advocate for helping all young adolescents become thoughtful, ethical, democratic citizens.
Middle level candidates do not believe in maintaining high standards of ethical behavior and professional competence and do not value collegiality as part of their professional practice.	Middle level candidates maintain high standards of ethical behavior and professional competence and value collegiality as part of their professional practice.	Middle level candidates model high standards of ethical behavior and professional competence and collegiality as part of their professional practice.
Middle level candidates do not value life-long learning and are not committed to refining classroom and school practices that address the needs of all young adolescents based on research, successful practice, and experience.	Middle level candidates hold expectations for their own life-long learning and are committed to refining classroom and school practices that address the needs of all young adolescents based on research, successful practice, and experience.	Middle level candidates model life-long learning and take a leadership role in refining classroom and school practices that address the needs of all young adolescents based on research, successful practice, and experience.

Appendix E:

National Forum Policy Statement
TEACHER PREPARATION, LICENSURE, AND RECRUITMENT

INTRODUCTION

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform is committed to making high-performing middle-grades schools the norm rather than the exception. We believe that specialized preparation of middle-grades educators will produce competent and caring teachers who are well-qualified to teach young adolescents. Therefore, we strongly support the specialized preparation of middle-level teachers at both the pre-service and graduate levels. To that end, we make the following recommendations:

- States should establish mandatory requirements for middle-level teacher licensure as an incentive for both institutions and individuals to pursue a middle-level specialization.
- Colleges and universities should establish teacher preparation programs that prepare practicing and future teachers to work specifically with young adolescents, and assign faculty and staff with expertise in middle-level education to these programs.
- Districts and schools should hire middle-grades teachers to teach the subjects they are prepared to teach. Furthermore, they should focus on creating the conditions in which both teachers and students can succeed.
- States should make middle-level teacher licensure specific to the middle grades (e.g., grades 5 through 8, or 6 through 9) and not overlap significantly with licensure for the elementary or high school levels.
- Middle-grades licensure for content-area teachers (such as language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies) should be middle-grades subject-specific and middle-grades standards-based, including concentrated study in two or more academic areas. For other middle-grades teachers (e.g., special education, bilingual education), specialized training in middle-level education and early adolescence should be required.
- Colleges and universities should work in partnership with districts and schools to provide ongoing professional development and sustained support for both new and veteran middle-level teachers. This will not only help retain good teachers, but also ensure their continual learning.

In recent years, many organizations and individuals have called for teacher education reform. The Forum is specifically concerned with creating excellent middle-grades teachers who are prepared to teach challenging content to young adolescents. In order to ensure that middle-grades teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach their students well, teacher preparation programs must focus on three critical areas:

1. **Academic excellence.** Middle-grades teachers must have a deep understanding of both the subjects they teach and how to help young adolescents learn the concepts and skills of demanding curricula.
2. **Developmental responsiveness.** Middle-grades teachers must have a solid understanding of early adolescence, as well as the skills and dispositions to work with young adolescents' unique developmental challenges. These teachers should know how to motivate young adolescents by engaging them actively in their own learning.

3. **Equity and cultural diversity.** Middle-grades teachers must have a wide repertoire of skills, mixed with a sustained sense of hope, support, and expectations for achievement, to enhance learning and development for the most racially and ethnically diverse school population in our nation's history.

Ultimately, the focus of all teacher preparation programs must be on results. Teacher preparation programs must provide prospective teachers with field-based experiences where they have the opportunity to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life settings. Graduates should be able to demonstrate that they contribute to middle-grades students' healthy development and their ability to perform at high levels on multiple indicators of academic success. Moreover, they should leave no young adolescent behind.

THE MANDATE FOR MIDDLE-LEVEL TEACHER LICENSURE

The last decade has demonstrated that specialized middle-level teacher preparation programs are more prevalent in states where middle-level teacher licensure is both available and mandatory. Yet, the majority of states that offer middle-level licensure do not require middle-level teachers to hold that credential to teach young adolescents. As a result, most young adolescents are taught by teachers who have specialized in or taught other age groups, or were unable to obtain training to prepare them adequately for a middle-level position. A student's ability to succeed in the classroom is compromised without teachers who are expert in middle-level education (Cooney, 1999; Jackson and Davis, 2000; McEwin and Dickinson, 1997).

Despite the need for well-prepared teachers, nationally, only 20 percent of teachers are formally prepared to teach at the middle level (and that figure is much lower in some states). The lack of subject expertise is equally glaring. For instance, approximately 30 percent of grades 7 and 8 teachers assigned to teach math or science lack the subject knowledge to do so. Teacher quality especially suffers in poor urban and rural schools, where even larger percentages of teachers teach outside their fields and areas of certification. As Kati Haycock reports, "Poor students, minority students, and lower achieving students of all races are far more likely than other students to be taught by undereducated teachers" (Haycock and Ames, 2000).

Some signs of improvement are beginning to appear. A national study of teacher licensure regulations conducted by Gaskill (2002) found that increasing numbers of states are adopting specialized middle-level licensure regulations for teachers. The study found that 43 states and the District of Columbia now have some form of specialized licensure requirement for middle-level teaching.[1] This number has increased substantially over the last several decades.[2]

While these results are encouraging, credentials still are not necessarily *required* for middle-level teachers. Gaskill found that only 21 of the 43 states that offered some form of middle-level teaching credential (a license, certification, or endorsement) required middle-level teachers to have this credential. In the majority of states, almost any kind of teaching credential allows a teacher to take a middle-level position. Such leeway is rarely permitted for those teaching elementary or high school students, a reflection of middle-grades schools' low priority among state departments of education, policymakers, teacher preparation institutions, and other stakeholders.

In too many states, licenses cover overlapping grade levels (e.g., grades K–8, 5–8, 7–12). This discourages prospective teachers from enrolling in specialized middle-grades preparation programs, because they can acquire a license that covers six (7–12) or nine (K–8) grade levels in the same length of study that is required to qualify for a middle-grades license that covers only four grade levels (5–8). As noted in *Turning Points 2000*:

> This dilemma can be avoided by greatly reducing or eliminating the grade level overlaps between elementary, middle, and high school licensure regulations.

Prospective teachers should have the opportunity to decide upon a career which focuses on a single developmental age group and a rigorous preparation in the subjects they will teach. This specialized professional preparation should be rewarded by a distinctive license that accurately informs all concerned that the teacher receiving it has demonstrated his or her abilities to teach young adolescents effectively (Jackson and Davis, p. 103).

In an attempt to respond to these credentialling issues, some states have launched "endorsement" options, rather than authentic teaching licenses. But, however well-intentioned, such add-on endorsements have done little to ensure the special preparation of middle-level teachers. Typically, in endorsement plans, prospective teachers must first earn a degree and a license in elementary education, a secondary subject area, or some other teaching field. Then, by extending their study, prospective teachers can also be licensed to teach at the middle level. Endorsement requirements often amount to little more than two or three courses that may or may not focus directly on middle-level teaching. However, since most states allow elementary- and secondary-level teachers to teach young adolescents, few teachers choose even this limited route to middle-level specialization (McEwin and Dickinson, 1996).

In summary, progress has been made in the number of states adopting specialized middle-level teacher licensure; 86 percent of all states now offer a specific middle-level credential as an option. However, only 42 percent actually require a middle-level license for teaching in middle-level classrooms. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform joins others in advocating that every state require middle-level teachers to have middle-level credentials. This will encourage more colleges and universities to offer rigorous programs that focus directly on middle-level teaching, and districts and schools to hire teachers with the appropriate preparation.

[1] The seven states that reported no specialized licensure regulations were California, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, and New Jersey.

[2] For example, only 2 states had middle-level teacher-licensure regulations in 1968 (Pumerantz, 1969), 25 in 1982 (McEwin and Allen, 1983), and 33 in 1992 (Valentine and Mogar, 1992).

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF MIDDLE-LEVEL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS
A high-quality middle-grades teacher-preparation program includes many of the components that other top-notch teacher-preparation programs offer (e.g., integrating technology, forming collaborative partnerships, promoting teacher leadership). It also has the following key elements that are especially appropriate to this grade span:

- *A focus on academic excellence.* Middle-grades teachers must learn how to provide their students with rigorous curriculum and instruction that are both developmentally appropriate and responsive to the needs of diverse learners. They must have a deep understanding of both their subject and how to teach it so that every student learns and demonstrates significant progress in his or her performance. In addition, middle-grades teachers must learn how to assess what students know and are able to do in order to continually improve both their teaching and their students' learning.

  - *Middle-level curriculum.* High-quality preparation programs focus on the study of middle-level curriculum, with an emphasis on discipline-specific, integrative, and interdisciplinary approaches. Teachers must have the knowledge, dispositions, and skills to set high expectations for all students, provide them with a rigorous and challenging curriculum, engage the students in learning, and make sure that students have the support they need to participate and succeed.

- *Concentrated study in two or more broad teaching fields.* Effective middle-grades teacher preparation programs prepare *content-area* teacher candidates in two or more academic disciplines (e.g., mathematics and science). This helps prospective teachers build a thorough academic underpinning of content, pedagogy, and the connections and interrelationships among the academic disciplines and other areas of knowledge.

- **A concern for developmental responsiveness.** An effective teacher preparation program must provide teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work effectively with young adolescents. Thus, the program must encompass three specific areas:

  - *Early adolescence and the needs of young adolescents* (ages 10 to 14). All middle-level teachers should be experts on the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of young adolescents. This knowledge can be attained through formal study of early adolescence and direct work with young adolescents.

  - *The philosophy and organization of middle-level education.* The principles of middle-school philosophy and school organization (e.g., teams, advisories, and exploratory classes) can be mastered through formal study and experience in middle-level schools. Teachers need to learn the importance of personalizing middle-level education so that each child has one committed advocate in the school. Teachers must also learn how to involve parents/families as partners in the educational process.

  - *Middle-grades planning, teaching, and assessment.* Middle-level teacher-preparation programs offer numerous opportunities to translate developmental and content knowledge into successful practice. They emphasize a wide range of developmentally appropriate instructional techniques that promote student learning, such as cooperative learning, independent inquiry, use of multi-media, and real-world problem solving. They teach prospective teachers how to employ a wide variety of assessment techniques (e.g., traditional testing, portfolios, and exhibitions) to monitor student learning and improve instruction. They help teachers disaggregate data and look closely at student work so that no young adolescent or group of students is left behind.

- **An emphasis on equity and diversity.** Middle-grades teacher-preparation programs help teachers understand individual differences and how to differentiate instruction so that every student—regardless of socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, gender, first language, or ability—has access to a rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum.

  - *Inclusive practices.* High quality teacher preparation programs provide teachers with a wide range of instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of students with different learning styles, intelligences, and abilities. These strategies may include, for example, the use of manipulatives and hands-on activities, cooperative learning, the arts, technology, service-learning, and other strategies that help students gather information, make meaning, and apply what they learn in real-world settings.

  - *Cultural diversity.* Effective middle-grades teacher preparation programs recognize that early adolescence is a time when students are exploring their own identities while also developing a growing interest in the world around them. Middle-grades teacher preparation programs must help teachers learn how to

understand and respect their students' norms and values, as well as those of the students' families, and the larger community in which they live.

- ***Early and continuing field experiences.*** Field experiences provide prospective middle-grades teachers with invaluable learning about young adolescents, middle-level curriculum, and middle-level instruction. A promising approach is an apprentice-based model of teacher preparation, with teachers-in-training placed in high-performing middle-grades schools and participating in seminars built around field experiences. Experiences in the community are another way in which prospective teachers can deepen their understanding of students and their families. Finally, the National Forum encourages teacher preparation programs, in partnership with middle-grades schools, to design induction programs that provide new teachers with initial orientation, mentoring, ongoing professional development, and opportunities to take on leadership roles as they embark on their teaching careers.

CONCLUSION
Young adolescents need and deserve caring, knowledgeable, and skilled teachers who want to teach them and have the professional preparation to do so successfully. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform believes that middle-level teacher preparation programs must be different from programs designed to prepare teachers of young children in elementary schools or older adolescents in high schools. Again, we urge colleges and universities to design teacher preparation programs that specifically prepare future and current teachers to work with this age group and to ensure that students meet academic standards. Further, we strongly recommend that states establish mandatory requirements for middle-level licensure that do not overlap significantly with licensure for elementary or high school teaching. This will serve as an incentive for both institutions and individuals to pursue middle-level specialization and for districts and schools to hire teachers who are well prepared to teach this age level.

Appendix F

Online Survey

Preservice Teachers' Perceptions about Young Adolescents

1. Sign In

       In order to access the survey, please sign in using the ID code provided to you in
the email you received inviting you to participate.

*1. ID Code

2. Informed Consent

Hello! I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. John Chiodo in the Departmnet
of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum at the University of Oklahoma.
This is a survey designed to provide information about perceptions you may have about
young adolescents. The information gathered will be kept strictly confidential and will
not be reported in such a way that it makes it possible to identify the research participant.
It will be used in a dissertation which seeks to examine preservice teachers' perceptions
about young adolescents and how these perceptions may influence their choice of
teaching level.
The code that you have received links your survey response to your personal data and as
the sole researcher on this project, I have the only key which will be kept locked in my
files. Your survey response is accessible only through my use of a password protected
account. The information stored on Survey Monkey's server is protected by multiple,
physical, network, and hardware security precautions taken by the service site.
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will
not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. By clicking
on the "NEXT" link you may enter the survey and this action will constitute your consent
to participate. If you do not wish to participate, simply close this window now.
You may exit the survey at any time and reenter using the code provided. You may pass
on any item you do no wish to answer by clicking on the box, No Answer.
If you are willing to be contacted via telephone for a follow up interview to expand on
your response, please indicate by answering yes to this question on the survey. I will
email you to obtain your phone number and set up a convenient time.
Thank you for participating in this survey. If you have any questions about this research
project, please feel free to call me at (405)325-1498 or email me at slrowan @ou.edu.

3. Directions Part A

You will be shown some words and phrases that might describe young adolescents (boys
and girls, ages 10-14). Please decide how much you think the word or phrase describes
young adolescents as a whole and choose a response in the range of 1 to 5 whith 1=does
not describe young adolescents very much at all to 5=is very descriptive of almost all

young adolescents. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may mark the choice for no answer, then proceed to the next questions.

2. active	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. adventuresome	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. anxious	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. awkward	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. caring	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. conforms to peers	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. confused	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. considerate	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11. depressed	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12. distractible	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13. easily influenced by friends	1	2	3	4	5	NA
14. emotional	1	2	3	4	5	NA
15. energetic	1	2	3	4	5	NA
16. faddish	1	2	3	4	5	NA
17. friendly	1	2	3	4	5	NA
18. fun-loving	1	2	3	4	5	NA
19. generous	1	2	3	4	5	NA
20. hard-working	1	2	3	4	5	NA
21. helpful	1	2	3	4	5	NA
22. honest	1	2	3	4	5	NA
23. impulsive	1	2	3	4	5	NA
24. insecure	1	2	3	4	5	NA
25. interested in school	1	2	3	4	5	NA
26. inquisitive	1	2	3	4	5	NA
27. intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	NA
28. into clothes	1	2	3	4	5	NA
29. listens to music	1	2	3	4	5	NA
30. materialistic	1	2	3	4	5	NA
31. rebellious	1	2	3	4	5	NA
32. reckless	1	2	3	4	5	NA
33. restless	1	2	3	4	5	NA
34. rude	1	2	3	4	5	NA
35. selfish	1	2	3	4	5	NA
36. sexually active	1	2	3	4	5	NA
37. smokes cigarettes	1	2	3	4	5	NA
38. social	1	2	3	4	5	NA
39. spends time with friends	1	2	3	4	5	NA
40. stubborn	1	2	3	4	5	NA
41. takes risks	1	2	3	4	5	NA
42. tests limits	1	2	3	4	5	NA
43. uses alcohol	1	2	3	4	5	NA
44. uses drugs	1	2	3	4	5	NA

45. gets along with people	1	2	3	4	5	NA
46. lonely	1	2	3	4	5	NA
47. parties	1	2	3	4	5	NA
48. talkative	1	2	3	4	5	NA
49. displays healthy behavior	1	2	3	4	5	NA
50. eats junk food	1	2	3	4	5	NA
51. exercises regularly	1	2	3	4	5	NA
52. watches lots of TV	1	2	3	4	5	NA
53. eats nutritious food	1	2	3	4	5	NA
54. concerned with looks	1	2	3	4	5	NA
55. gets adequate sleep	1	2	3	4	5	NA

4. Directions Part B

Please rate these same descriptors as to the degree to which you feel the descriptor is a desirable or positive trait or activity or an undesirable or negative trait or activity. 1=least desirable and most negative; 5=most desirable, most positive. If you do not wish to respond to an item, please click "no answer".

56. active	1	2	3	4	5	NA
57. adventuresome	1	2	3	4	5	NA
58. ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	NA
59. anxious	1	2	3	4	5	NA
60. awkward	1	2	3	4	5	NA
61. caring	1	2	3	4	5	NA
62. conforms to peers	1	2	3	4	5	NA
63. confused	1	2	3	4	5	NA
64. considerate	1	2	3	4	5	NA
65. depressed	1	2	3	4	5	NA
66. distractible	1	2	3	4	5	NA
67. easily influenced by friends	1	2	3	4	5	NA
68. emotional	1	2	3	4	5	NA
69. energetic	1	2	3	4	5	NA
70. faddish	1	2	3	4	5	NA
71. friendly	1	2	3	4	5	NA
72. fun-loving	1	2	3	4	5	NA
73. generous	1	2	3	4	5	NA
74. hard-working	1	2	3	4	5	NA
75. helpful	1	2	3	4	5	NA
76. honest	1	2	3	4	5	NA
77. impulsive	1	2	3	4	5	NA
78. insecure	1	2	3	4	5	NA
79. interested in school	1	2	3	4	5	NA
80. inquisitive	1	2	3	4	5	NA
81. intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	NA
82. into clothes	1	2	3	4	5	NA

83. listens to music	1	2	3	4	5	NA
84. materialistic	1	2	3	4	5	NA
85. rebellious	1	2	3	4	5	NA
86. reckless	1	2	3	4	5	NA
87. restless	1	2	3	4	5	NA
88. rude	1	2	3	4	5	NA
89. selfish	1	2	3	4	5	NA
90. sexually active	1	2	3	4	5	NA
91. smokes cigarettes	1	2	3	4	5	NA
92. social	1	2	3	4	5	NA
93. spends time with friends	1	2	3	4	5	NA
94. stubborn	1	2	3	4	5	NA
95. takes risks	1	2	3	4	5	NA
96. tests limits	1	2	3	4	5	NA
97. uses alcohol	1	2	3	4	5	NA
98. uses drugs	1	2	3	4	5	NA
99. gets along with people	1	2	3	4	5	NA
100. lonely	1	2	3	4	5	NA
101. parties	1	2	3	4	5	NA
102. talkative	1	2	3	4	5	NA
103. displays healthy behavior	1	2	3	4	5	NA
104. eats junk food	1	2	3	4	5	NA
105. exercises regularly	1	2	3	4	5	NA
106. watches lots of TV	1	2	3	4	5	NA
107. eats nutritious food	1	2	3	4	5	NA
108. concerned with looks	1	2	3	4	5	NA
109. gets adequate sleep	1	2	3	4	5	NA

5. Consent for Interview

In order to better understand how you came to form these perceptions, I would like to interview you by telephone. The interview would take approximately thirty minutes of your time. If you would consider allowing me to interview you, please click on "yes" below and I will contact you via email to obtain your telephone number, provide your with detailed consent information, and arrange a convenient time to call. Thank you for your assistance.

*110. May I contact you to arrange a time to interview you by telephone in order to gain a better understanding of your perceptions about young adolescents?

                    Yes   No

Appendix G

Interview Questions

Students will also have the option of choosing to participate in a follow-up interview in order to provide more in-depth information about how their attitudes affect their choice of teaching level. This semi-structured interview contains ten questions and will permit follow up questions as needed to clarify or elaborate on responses. The interview questions are as follows:

1. Would you say that you have a generally favorable or unfavorable view of young adolescents, children ages 10-14 years old?

2. How do you think you came to develop this view?

3. What experience have you had with young adolescents?

4. Do you have a preference for teaching at a certain grade level? Talk to me about why you want to do that.

5. If you are choosing not to teach at the middle level, what factors do you feel influenced your decision? Or (depending on response) What factors influenced your decision to teach at the middle level?

6. Suppose the only employment opportunity you have is teaching at the middle level, what would you do and why?

7. What would encourage you to teach in the middle grades (6th through 8th)?

8. What can you recall of your own early adolescence, again the time period from approximately ten years of age to fourteen or fifteen?

9. Looking back over the list of descriptors that you saw on the on-line survey, are there three or four that you feel best describe a young adolescent?

10. How much do these descriptors influence your attitude about adolescents or your willingness to teach them?