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THE AUTHORING OF SELF: LOOKING AT PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES AS REFLECTED IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

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by

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This dissertation is dedicated to

Saleem, my incredible husband

whose love and faith

carried me through

this wonderful journey.

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The purpose of this study was to explore the identity construction of six preservice teachers who participated in a reading specialization program for three consecutive semesters. This study employed a qualitative methodology and sought to document the nature of online responses posted to an online bulletin board and discover individual teacher identity construction in the context of a reading specialization program. Data sources included archived electronic messages and course responses, participant interviews, reflective journals, and electronic portfolios. Constant-comparative analysis as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and discourse analysis, informed by Gee (1999), were used to uncover the ways in which preservice teachers developed their teaching selves.

Study findings suggest that preservice teachers negotiated multiple identities, utilized varied knowledge sources, and relied on practical experiences to author their developing selves as teachers. Implications of this investigation

suggest that computer mediated communication, a community structure, carefully planned coursework, extended field experiences, and a personalized model of teaching provided opportunities for preservice teachers to reflect on their developing identities as reading teachers. Online responses allowed for collaborative reflection, attention to dialogic relations between peers and university faculty, and an expanded group identity. Further examination of online discourse is needed along with understanding the knowledge construction and multiple discourses preservice teachers negotiate as they move from a teacher preparation program into their own classrooms.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Knowing what good teachers do, how they think, or what they know, is not the same as knowing how teachers learn to think and act in particular ways and what contributes to their learning. Researchers, policy makers, and teacher educators are beginning to recognize that understanding more about teachers as learners, what they need to know and how they learn their craft, can help in clarifying the role for formal teacher education in learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser and Remillard, 1996, p. 63).

Several decades of research have advanced our understanding of reading teacher preparation. Several recent research reviews (Anders, Hoffman & Duffy, 2000; Hoffman and Pearson, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; Pearson, 2001; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) on preparing future teachers to teach reading describe common conclusions and recommendations for teacher education research. First, teachers do learn what they are taught in their preparation programs, although it is not always clear how long these changes are sustained (Anders et al., 2000). Second, course work, should have an extensive coverage of early literacy learning, comprehension processes, and assessment and should

build on a knowledge base that prepares teachers to respond strategically to students' needs in reading (Hoffman and Pearson, 2000). Third, supervised, relevant, field-based or clinical experience in which preservice teachers receive ongoing support, guidance, and feedback is crucial (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Finally, all reviewers concurred that learning how to teach is a long-term developmental process (Maloch, Flint, Eldridge, Harmon, Loven, Fine, Bryant-Shanklin & Martinez, in press).

However, more research is needed that address the developmental processes prospective teachers go through as they learn to teach reading. Anders, Hoffman, and Duffy (2000) conclude,

> While there has been an increase in teacher education research in the most recent decade we still struggle with conceptions of teacher knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and habits- how they are formed, how they are affected by programs and how they impact development over time (p. 725).

They add "more studies of the complex, personal, and interpersonal understandings that characterize the process of becoming a reading teacher" are needed. (Anders et al., 2000, p. 732).

This call for research, related to the personal and social aspects of learning to teach reading, extends beyond traditional training models and instead is

interested in how we "prepare teachers for reflective, adaptive, and responsive aspects of teaching" (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000, p.37). As Hoffman and Pearson (2000) note,

> Training may get teachers through some of the basic routines and procedures they need for classroom survival, but it will not help teachers develop the personal and professional commitment to lifelong learning required by those teachers who want to confront the complexities and contradictions of teaching (p. 36).

This distinction between the technical aspects of teacher training and the complex, personal practices of learning to teach was central to this investigation.

Learning to teach exceeds a technical knowledge often associated with teacher training models. As Maxine Greene (1981) explains, "Learning to teach is a process of identity development… it is about choosing yourself, making deeply personal choices about who you will become as a teacher " (p. 12). Bakhtin's (1981) theories of dialogism explain one way of viewing identity development. For Bakhtin, as individuals negotiate the words and thoughts of others they reform language to create personal meaning. In other words, individuals author themselves as they orchestrate the words of others and construct personal meaning. Through social interactions, individuals are in a constant state of "authoring of self."

Authoring of self or developing an identity is a process that does not take place in isolation, but is dependent on social interaction with others. Likewise, it occurs in a time and a place where individuals learn and develop together (Britzman, 1991). Learning to become a teacher requires the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills along with reflective practices associated with self-development (Zehm, 1999). Moreover, it requires careful consideration of identity.

By studying the contextual aspects of learning to teach and viewing the prospective teacher as a unique individual whose professional identity shifts as she encounters new challenges, new social contexts, and new ideas (Britzman, 1994), the purpose of this study was to illustrate the process of becoming a teacher in the context of a reading specialization program and to understand how social interaction with peers and university faculty influenced teacher identity construction.

Background

Several recent studies have taken a close, in-depth look at the processes individuals go through as they learn to become teachers (Britzman, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Clark & Flores, 2001; Danielewicz, 2001; Gimbert, 2001; Hagood, 1999; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Three noteworthy studies (Britzman, 1991; Gimbert, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000) addressing the identity

development of preservice teachers have significantly contributed to the conceptualization of this research. These studies demonstrate that learning to teach is not just mastering the skills and procedural knowledge associated with simplistic views of learning. Rather, learning to teach involves developing an identity as a teacher, a process of negotiating multiple meanings, personal life histories, past beliefs, and situational experiences associated with the multifaceted nature of teaching children. In the following section, I describe these longitudinal studies that looked at prospective teachers' identity development in the context of teacher preparation programs and describe how this study enhances the current research on becoming a reading teacher.

Britzman's (1991) investigation on becoming a teacher looked at six preservice teachers' internship practices through a poststructuralist perspective of language and identity. Relying heavily on Bakhtin's theories of discourse, Britzman concluded that developing a teacher identity is a "struggle between negotiating authoritative and internally persuasive discourse with the discourse of education, grades, and teachers (Britzman, 1994, p. 64). She explained that one's visions of becoming a teacher and one's changing commitments and beliefs about teaching are constantly renegotiated and influenced by discourses bound by social relationships, institutional contexts, lived experiences, and historical and cultural notions of self and teaching. Britzman suggests that teacher educators become more aware of how language and identity influence the imagining and

constructing of teacher thinking and the practices of pedagogy. In other words, learning to teach must be viewed as a discursive practice, where prospective teachers are given opportunities to share their experiences and negotiate their conceptual constructions with others. Much like Britzman's research, this study relies on a Bakhtinian perspective of "authoring of self" to explain the process of co-constructing identities (Bakhtin, 1981).

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) investigated their own teacher preparation program focusing on the knowledge growth and identity development of twenty-five prospective English teachers. Adhering to the belief that learning to teach is a discursive practice shaped by various and often contradictory discourses (Britzman, 1991), Ritchie and Wilson (2000) spent three years studying their students' narrative writings and oral stories about becoming English teachers. Specifically, they looked at how preservice teachers narrated their experiences and beliefs in reflective journals, autobiographies, and case studies and how these narratives shaped their identities as teachers. Ritchie and Wilson noted that as prospective teachers constructed narratives about their educational experiences, past beliefs, and future commitments, they revised their selves as teachers. They became cognizant of the competing discourses and made connections to multiple identities that shaped their learning as teachers. At the same time, "telling allowed student teachers to uncover unspoken assumptions" about their development as teachers (Ritchie & Wilson, 2002, p. 175). Ritchie and Wilson suggest that

teacher preparation programs give future teachers the opportunities to rename and negotiate their dynamic identities as teachers through narrative practices with others. They emphasize collaborative reflection that enables preservice teachers to share narratives with others and to critically deconstruct their assumptions about teaching, learning, and students.

Gimbert's (2001) study explored the identity construction of six preservice teachers in a professional development school context to understand how collaborative reflection within a learning community of teachers, university faculty, and preservice teachers influenced the process of becoming a teacher. Based on discourse theories, evidenced by online responses and electronic portfolios, Gimbert found that preservice teachers appropriated the knowledge, values, beliefs, and experiences upheld by the professional development school context and came to understand their own identities as new teachers in a professional community of practice. Through field-based practica and identification as a teacher within the professional development school, Gimbert discovered that community relationships among teachers, peers, and university faculty fostered the development of teacher identity. Further, she concluded that preservice teachers prepared in the context of a professional development school partnership developed an understanding of the classroom, how to teach, and what it means to be a teacher. Gimbert suggests that future studies examine community

structures and multiple discourses that influence the identity development of prospective teachers.

These studies reveal that becoming a teacher is an identity forming process where individuals engage in dialogical language practices with others to author themselves as teachers (Danielewicz, 2001). They describe the importance of drawing on one's past experiences, beliefs, and prior knowledge in a school-based community and how narrative serves to inform one's identity development as a teacher. These studies used identity as a framework to explain how the discourse of one's past and that of teacher education programs greatly influences the teaching selves of individuals learning to become teachers. In order to document the language used by participants and the culture of schools and teacher education programs, all three studies utilized traditional written assignments and individual reflections as primary data sources. Missing from this body of research is an extended longitudinal examination of discourse shared between preservice teachers, their peers, and university faculty. Computer mediated communication (CMC) provides one such way to examine the discourse and identities of preservice teachers. In this study I attempt to add to the current research on teacher education and professional identity development by specifically exploring asynchronous online responses written by preservice teachers over a three-semester period. Studying individual and group online responses over an extended period of time within a teacher education program can provide new insights for

conceptualizing the construction of teacher identities and the social aspects of learning to teach reading.

Research related to online learning suggests that CMC offers opportunities for extended conversations to take place outside of the traditional classroom (Bourne, 1997) where individuals can share their thoughts with others, tap into varied perspectives, and negotiate meaning through shared social experiences (Shank, 1997). Interacting online through CMC offers more opportunities to "talk," more opportunities to "voice" one's thoughts, and more occasions to hear the thoughts of others (Herring, 1996). At the same time, the asynchronous and text-based nature of CMC offers more opportunities for convenient and thoughtful reflection. It provides individuals with control over their online writing and a space for "collective thinking" (Harasim, 1990). This process of writing and reflecting online, according to Garrison (1997), can encourage higher levels of learning and promote clearer and more precise thinking.

On the other hand, being text-based can make CMC systems more time consuming and require extra work. If students are required to use CMC for their courses they may be more willing to procrastinate in reading or writing responses (Romiszowski & Jost, 1989) especially when they have limited access or low technical skills such as typing or software knowledge (Ross, 1996). At the same time, online communication is less responsive than face-to-face. Because of this, some participants may be less willing to commit their ideas, experiences, or

feelings to print (McDonald, 2002). While these may be real deterrents for using CMC, many researchers have concluded that when using CMC in addition to their face-to-face classroom meetings, students respond frequently, responses are longer and more complex, and interactions increase overtime when compared to traditional classroom discussions (McDonald, 2002; Romiszowski & Jost, 1989; Schrum,1993). Further, online messages can be a valuable source of information for researchers and educators studying the interactions of a community of interest (Klinger, 2000). They can offer threaded conversations and archived transcripts of individual and group writings that may have taken place months or even years ago. In sum, online written responses posted to CMC systems over an extended period of time provide a unique means for investigating the language and social interactions related to constructing a professional teacher identity within a teacher education program.

Acknowledging the potential impacts of CMC on learning to teach and the ability to document one's discourse among others in a learning community, I analyze the archived, online responses and messages written by preservice teachers in a reading specialization program over a three-semester period. By examining the online responses and the electronic discourse between members of the program embedded with particular ways of viewing literacy instruction, the purpose of this study was to discover the multiple ways preservice teachers

authored themselves as teachers and negotiated their teaching identities with others in an online environment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1) What is the nature of preservice teachers' written reflections and messages posted to an online community over a three-semester period?

2) What do preservice teachers' written reflections and messages reveal about their identity construction as reading teachers?

Significance of this Study

The intent of this study was to inform teacher educators of the nature of preservice teachers' identity development as revealed through their online responses. It was meant to be a contribution to the current knowledge base that explores the complexities of becoming a teacher and the multiple factors influencing this process in the context of a reading specialization program. My hope is that this study will ultimately help teacher educators design preservice programs that honor the individual ways of knowing that beginning teachers bring to, and develop within the preservice years.

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in six chapters. Chapter One describes the problem and questions that guide the study. In Chapter Two, I present a review of relevant literature that informs the study. Chapter Three includes research methods, data generation and data analysis. Chapter Four contains a collective case study describing the major themes all six participants' data sets. Two individual case studies are presented in Chapter Five followed by a cross case analysis. Each case study provides background information about the participants as well as describes their identity development as evidenced by the data. Chapter Six provides a summary of the study's findings, implications, and limitations.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms and definitions used in this study. The terms are ordered alphabetically and are included to assist in clarification of specific vocabulary found in this study.

1. **Identity**. The term **identity** is defined as having three characteristics: 1) identity is a socially constructed process always in the making (Bruner, 1990); 2) multiple and dynamic, something that can only be understood by the various contexts influencing individuals (Weedon, 1987; Sarup, 1998); 3) and carries a particular, yet dynamic, set of interests, goals, values,

beliefs, and knowledge making practices that help shape how humans make sense of their world and their experiences (Ivanic, 1998; Lave, 1991).

2. **Online communication**: The term **online communication** is used to describe the asynchronous, written communications such as email, bulletin boards, listservs and electronic forums that are sent and received electronically via computers.

3. **Online response**: The term **online response** is used to describe written comments or reflections about course readings or field based experiences posted to an electric bulletin board. The organization of these responses include summarize key points, make connections to personal experiences, note puzzlements and questions and document golden quotes from the readings that are meaningful to learning. Students are also encouraged to adopt their own style of responding as appropriate.

4. **Preservice Teachers**: The term **preservice teachers** is used interchangeably with **prospective teachers, beginning teachers, student teachers, novice teachers, teacher candidates, future teachers, university students**, and refers to the individuals enrolled in the three-semester reading specialization program.

5. **Student-teaching block**: This refers to the two-semester sequence in which preservice teachers serve as elementary classroom interns or observers, and as student teachers. Each sequence, observation and student teaching, lasts approximately 12-15 weeks. Students must be enrolled in the cohort and have completed prerequisite courses in order to advance to the student teaching block. Preservice teachers in this study had been enrolled in the three-semester program and did complete both semesters of student teaching.

6. **Cohort**: The group of students who belonged to the reading specialization program and completed their course work together over three-semesters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review four areas that have shaped my understanding of identity and have contributed to the approach of this study. I begin by explaining the different notions of identity, followed by a discussion of the role of language in identity. Narratives, as they relate to self and identity, are explored in the following section. I end with a look at research on computer-mediated communication used in teacher preparation programs.

Identity

Much of the literature on identity is divided between conceptualizations of identity as a category or identity as a process (Yon, 2000). Identity, within a psychological framework, is considered an essential and fixed aspect of a person and implies that individuals have an innate inner core, which unfolds as an individual moves through life (Erikson, 1974). In this sense, identity is viewed as rational, singular, simple and self-chosen. In contrast, social constructivists and postmodernists view identity as a continuous and socially negotiated process. This study builds on and adds to the latter perspectives. Specifically, identity is defined as: 1) a socially constructed process always in the making (Bruner, 1990); 2) multiple and dynamic, something that can only be understood by the various

contexts influencing individuals (Weedon, 1987; Sarup, 1998); 3) and carries a particular yet dynamic set of interests, goals, values, beliefs and knowledge - making practices that help shape how humans make sense of their world and their experiences (Ivanic, 1998; Lave, 1991). In the following section, I discuss these three defining characteristics in the context of relevant literature on teacher education.

Socially Constructed Process

Mead theorized that identity is formed through the internalization and organization of social experiences (Mead, 1934). Mead's perspective implies that a person's identity is socially constructed with significant others in social situations or contexts. Based on theories of cultural psychology, Bruner uses the notion "conceptual Self" (1990, p.99) to explain the social construction of identity. Bruner claims that the conceptual Self is a concept that is constructed through constant social negotiation with others "in reference to one's cultural and historical existence" (p. 129). Identity can only be explained by how one is situated with respect to others and toward the world and changes as one's situation changes from old to young, from one setting to another. Dialogue about oneself is socially constructed through interpersonal and institutionally discourses. For Bruner, one's conceptual Self develops initially in the family by the images and stories one tells about her experiences. Bruner (1990) notes,

> In time the young entrant into the culture comes to define his own intentions and even his own history in terms of the characteristic cultural dramas in which he plays a part – at first family dramas – later ones that shape the expanding circle of activities outside the family (p.67).

Discourses constructed in the family shape one's identity. Further, our communications with others, or the stories we tell, not only convey messages but also make claims about who we are relative to one another and the nature of our relationships. Therefore, one's identity or conceptual Self shifts from the family to social institutions. As individuals interact in multiple situations with others they are socially constructed through the mediation of various discourses (Holland et al., 1998).

Samuel and Stephans', (2000) study revealed that teacher identities were socially constructed by multiple situations and conflicting discourses about teaching and learning. In their case study of two South African preservice teachers, Samuel and Stephans concluded that their past experiences of school, programmatic instruction learned in teacher education programs, and school-based contexts all influenced the ways in which preservice teachers constructed their teaching identities. This study illustrates that identity is a social construction of complex and competing forces and shapes how individuals make sense of their world and their experiences.

Travers (2000) made similar claims in her study of five student teachers in a secondary teacher education course. Travers' students were encouraged to examine how their teaching identities were being constructed and reconstructed in the context of a teacher preparation program. As the course instructor, Travers created opportunities for her students to reflect on their identities as teachers and to understand how their instructional decisions were connected to their teaching selves. She discovered that when preservice teachers were challenged to re-examine past knowledge, beliefs, and practices as interns their identities evolved and they were able to gain further insights into their teaching identities. These two studies and others (Britzman, 1991; Drake, 2001) support the socially constructed process of teaching identities.

Multiple and Dynamic

Postmodernists stress the dynamic and complex process of identity and propose that identity is multiple, fragmented, and continually reconstructed within different discourses (Yon, 2000). They claim that one's culture and social interactions explain the complex and dynamic process of self. Hall (1991) suggests "identity is actually something that is being produced, always in process, never fully completed…belonging as much to the past [yet] subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (p. 225). Instead of using the term identity, postmodernists prefer to use the term "subjectivities" suggesting that identity is "precarious, contradictory, and in process of constantly being

reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (Weedon, 1997, p. 32 in Broughton & Fairbanks, 2002). Further, identity is "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of self, and her ways of understanding her relationships to the world"(Weedon, 1997, p. 32). Subjectivity, much like identity, suggests that every person is composed of multiple, often-conflicting identities shaped by numerous interactions with others. For the purposes of this study, I will continue to use the term identity though I mean to include in my concept the idea of multiple and conflicting subjectivities as characteristic of identity.

Relying on postmodernist theories of subjectivity, Jackson (2001) deconstructed the multiple identities of one preservice teacher in a secondary English teacher education program. Jackson uncovered the multiple discourses used by Annie, the preservice teacher in her study, as she interned in two different high school classrooms, with two different teachers. In one class, Annie easily transitioned into her teacher identity and embraced the teaching philosophy of her cooperating teacher. In the other classroom, Annie felt constrained and controlled by the cooperating teacher's pedagogy and resisted taking up her practices. Jackson noted that Annie's subjectivities shifted in response to the power relationships in the two different classrooms.

> When Annie could freely choose the discourse of what it meant to be a teacher … she embraced it; when she could not, as when she was forced

> into the discourse of Sheila's classroom, she resisted. Annie's subjectivities were inscribed in her practices of resistance, refusal, and compliance…(Jackson, 2001, p. 394).

Annie was either given the freedom to choose what it meant to be a teacher or was made to feel intimidated and doubtful about her abilities. This study, much like Britzman's (1991) investigation, suggests that preservice teachers' identities are heavily influenced by multiple and conflicting discourses about teaching and learning and that teacher identities are always being invented in response to conflicting representations of teaching and learning.

Set of Interests, Goals, Values, Beliefs…

Socio-constructivists (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Resnick, 1991) claim that knowledge is situated in and grows out of the contexts of practice. Theories of cognitive apprenticeship suggest that as individuals engage in practices with others they acquire certain beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge and come to see themselves through these practices (Lemke, 1997). These knowledge building and meaning making practices are dialogical and socially constructed in situated contexts and give shape to individual identities.

Gimbert's (2001) year-long investigation of six preservice teachers' identity development in a professional development school demonstrated how

working with mentor teachers helped preservice teachers gain access to a dynamic set of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and children. As student teachers observed and reflected on their work with their cooperating teachers, they came to view teaching as a child-centered process. These views were directly related to the values and philosophies enacted by the professional development school faculty. As preservice teachers took on the values of their cooperating teachers they began to conceive of themselves as "teachers of children"(p. 11). Gimbert claims that as preservice teachers engaged in and discovered the practices necessary for learning to teach and reflected on those practices with their cooperating teachers, they came to recognize their teacher identities. Further, learning about teaching and how to teach were interdependent upon on dialogical relations with others in a community.

These studies and others (Britzman, 1991; Danielewicz, 2001; Drake et al., 2001; Marsh, 2002) have contributed to the framework of this study. This study defines identity as: 1) a social process always in the making (Bruner, 1990); 2) multiple and dynamic, something that can only be understood by the various contexts influencing individuals (Weedon, 1987; Hagood, 1999; Sarup, 1998); 3) carries a particular yet dynamic set of interests, goals, values, beliefs and knowledge -making practices that help shape how humans make sense of their world and their experiences (Ivanic, 1998). Building on this definition of identity and the work of social theorists (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986; Gee, 1999; Holland et al.,

1998), learning how to teach and becoming a teacher is a contextualized activity fostered by social interactions with others through the use of language.

Language and Identity

Language plays an essential role in the process of identity development. This section, beginning with theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and concluding with those of James Gee, describes how language relates to identity. For Bakhtin language is a social phenomenon and can be used to explain the dynamic process of identity. Language serves to organize our experiences and our thoughts and is always spoken or written within a social dialogue. Bakhtin (1981) posited that one's thinking is formed from a social discourse and that this discourse (both verbal and written) is drawn from many utterances encountered by a person. The words or utterances used to communicate with others never stand-alone:

> No living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its objects, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and its environment that is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276).

Utterances are socially situated and must be understood through their social meanings. At the same time, an utterance always responds to previous utterances and acts on succeeding ones. Bakhtin explains:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogical threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue (1981, p. 276).

From this perspective, Bakhtin believed that language is dialogic and its meanings are never fixed but continually shifting in every context, with every utterance. In other words, utterances are not free-floating bits of language – they are contextually situated.

An utterance is shaped by other national languages, social languages, or speech genres (Wertsch, 1991) and includes the values and beliefs of those involved. Speech genres describe typical utterances contextually situated and associated with familiar social settings.

> The category of speech genres should include short rejoinders of daily dialogue (and these are extremely varied depending on the subject matter, situation, and participants), everyday narration, writing (in all its various forms), the brief standard military command, the elaborate and detailed

> order, the fairly variegated repertoire of business documents and the divers world of commentary (in the broad sense of the word: social and political (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 60).

Bakhtin states that all language is dialogic. In our linguistic exchanges with other speaking or writing individuals, exchanges always occur in a specific setting where words and utterances continually take on new shapes and meanings. Thus language is continuously acting to create one's reality in a dialogic process. Dialogism is related to identity by describing how we become ourselves and how we see ourselves in relation to others. In Bakhtin's (1981) words:

> The word is born in dialogue as a living rejoiner within it: the word is shaped in a dialogic interaction with the alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way (p. 279).

The role of others in this process is important. Understanding is created between the speaker and the listener (or the writer and the reader); this is not a passive occurrence. Individuals using language are always in the state of being addressed and in the process of answering. Bakhtin explains that "understanding and response are dialogically merged and mutually condition each other, one is impossible without the other" (1981, p. 282). At the same time, we are continually recreating our language and our selves because we are always in a dialogical

process with others. Being in dialogue with others means we borrow the words of others and use them for our own purposes. Bakhtin refers to this as appropriation.

Appropriation or the bringing in of others' words into our own utterances, is an integral part of each and every expression of one's self. According to Bakhtin (1986):

> The unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation of others words…(p. 284)

He suggests that the words of others are assimilated as one's own through social interaction. Bakhtin (1981) describes two ways that one assimilates social discourse: 1) "reciting by heart" and 2) "retelling in one's own words" (p. 341). *Reciting by heart* is an inflexible kind of assimilation infused with authority that is transmitted not transformed, what Bakhtin calls "authorative discourse" (p. 342). Bakhtin further describes this as "single-voiced" discourse (p. 65) as direct, unmediated, and imitative. On the other hand, *retelling in one's own words* is more flexible and responsive. Bakhtin calls this "double-voiced" discourse (p. 65) filled with words of others, but used for one's own purposes (Morson &Emerson, 1990). Intellectual growth in the form of "internally persuasive discourse" results from the struggle between these two forms of assimilation (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342

in McCarthey, 2000). As individuals socially interact through discourse, they negotiate these two forms of assimilation. Bakhtin (1986) explains:

> Language lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intension…. Prior to this appropriation the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal form of language (it is not after all out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!) but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (p. 293-294).

Words are given specific shape in living interaction with others and become "one's own" only when used by that speaker. The struggle to borrow and negotiate the words of others constitutes what Bakhtin calls "the ideological becoming" of a person (Britzman, 1994). We each struggle to know "the self" through "the other."

One's identity develops as individuals search for their own voice and thought amidst the voices and thoughts of others. Bakhtin refers to this negotiation as the "authoring of self" to explain how one constantly draws on the words of others to make meaning in a way that addresses one's specific needs and experiences. "Authoring of self" is about orchestrating the voices (or words,

intentions, beliefs, values) of others and organizing, forming and reforming the social and personal meanings of language (Holland et al., 1998).

Authoring of self, connected to Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, is a collective experience because there are no neutral words and forms of words that belong to one individual (Holland et. al., 1998). All words are filled with the intention of others and an individual must sort out these voices for her own purposes. This process is complicated. Bakhtin elaborates:

> This process and the importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. This process is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness (1981 p. 348).

Like Bakhtin's authoring of self, the process of constructing an identity, is not a simplistic notion of faxing or a duplicating process but a way of crafting a response to others' voices. The task of authoring oneself is significant to understanding identity development because it reminds us that we are always in dialogue with others and our environment and our identity is always in the process of becoming.

Bakhtin's sociocultural perspectives of language have informed many of Gee's theories of discourse and speech genres. Gee (1996) defines identity in terms of the specific language practices, or the "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted by instantiations of particular roles or types of people by specific groups of people…"(p. viii). When interacting with others in a certain situation, one not only learns the linguistic symbols of language from others, she internalizes a group's communicative intention and the specific values and beliefs they have taken on (Tomasello, 1999). Language is more than a set of rules for communicating; it is an "identity kit" that signals membership in particular groups.

These unique ways of using language connect individuals to specific, socially situated identities in conjunction with others (Gee, 1999a). As individuals are shaped by the languages practices they use with others, they are constructing and revising their identities. Bereiter (1994) gives a perfect example to explain these theories. He states:

> Individuals do not develop a sense of being a scientist simply by engaging in scientific terms or problems, but through engagement in the discourse of the scientific community and in the context of the values of that community (p.112).

Bereiter's description of becoming a scientist can be related to other disciplines that require specific ways of talking such as elementary reading education. Specific ways of talking within a certain group can be defined as social languages or speech genres (Bakhtin, 1981).

Social languages can be described as different styles, registers, patterns of vocabulary, and syntax that connect individuals to a specific socially situated identity or place in conjunction with others. There are many social languages such as medicine, literature, street gangs, education or even informal dinner talk. To know a social language is to understand how its specialized terms and grammatical design are used in a particular socially situated activity. Specifically,

> to know a particular social language is either to be able to "do" a particular identity (a lawyer, doctor, street gangster) using that social language, or to be able to recognize such an identity when one does not want to actively participate (Gee, 2000 p.720).

Social languages are directly related to identity because one's identity depends on his understanding and association with a group's social language. Social languages are not acquired by direct instruction but through the process of socialization and action. Additionally, they are always bound by certain perspectives and beliefs that influence one's identities (Gee, 1999).

In order to explain his notions of social language and the process of enculturation into specialized groups of individuals involved in socially situated

activity, Gee (1991) coined the term Discourse (with a capital D). Discourse describes a group of individuals who use specific terms, language, semantic practices as well as beliefs, values, attitudes, gestures, glances, and even body positions that set them apart from others. He notes:

> To appreciate language in its social context, we need to focus not on language alone, but rather on what I will call 'Discourses' (with a capital D). Discourses include much more than language. Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers or a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort, business people of a certain sort, churches of a certain sort, and so on through a very long list. They are always and everywhere social. Language, as well as literacy, is always and everywhere integrated with and relative to social practices constituting particular Discourses (p.xix).

Since Discourses include ways of behaving, interacting, valuing and thinking, Gee (1999) asserts that members of a Discourse acquire cultural models about the world, informed by social practices, certain social settings and institutions. Cultural models, according to Gee (1999), are "images or storylines or descriptions of simplified worlds" that help individuals make sense of their

experiences (p. 59). Initially, cultural models are formed from one's family life – Gee calls this the "primary Discourse."

Primary Discourse is the initial socialization of an individual. An individual's home and family are considered a primary Discourse where private and informal experiences are established. Secondary Discourse is another form of socialization that an individual might encounter outside of his/her family. Secondary Discourses are traditions enacted by certain institutions or groups that guide the ways in which its members "belong" to the Discourse and how they behave in the past and the present. Discourses cannot be overtly taught but are acquired through enculturation in the home or "apprenticed" into social practices related to that Discourse.

Since primary and secondary Discourses are associated with specific groups of individuals who share common terms, values and ways of being in the world (and one belongs to many Discourses, e.g. Assaf family, teacher, mother, teacher researcher, graduate student, soccer player), being a member of a Discourse involves being apprenticed to take up certain roles. Therefore, as individuals are shaped by Discourses and as they theorize about themselves with others, they are establishing their identity in multiple circles. This goes back to idea of "subjectivities" or multiple identities. We are always part of multiple Discourses even when we are participating in a particular discourse with a particular Discourse. Therefore, Discourses enable individuals to know who they

are by who they associate with and whether they are recognized within that context.

This study builds on Bakhtin's and Gee's theories of language in relation to concepts of identity mentioned earlier. Conceptualizing preservice teachers' identity development as a process that is socially constructed through language with others enables me to look at how social interactions through written language influence the construction of identity. Research on narrative and identity suggest that individuals come to know themselves through the stories they tell. More importantly, narrative allows individuals (in this case, preservice teachers) to understand their own beliefs and assumptions that influence their identities as teachers and inaugurate them into the Discourse of teaching.

Narrative in Teacher Education

The stories prospective teachers tell about their own experiences as students within educational institutions can become what feminist theorist Teresa de Lauretis (1984) calls a "critical instrument" by which teaching selves are constructed. Specifically, personal narratives can serve as a critical instrument for naming and telling one's story as a teacher (Meyers, 1998). Teacher educators have used narratives such as written autobiographies, reading responses, personal journals, and dialogue journals as a reflective tool to understand the ways in which individuals develop their identity as teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995;

Danielewicz, 2001; Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994; McLean, 1999; Richie & Wilson, 2000; Schubert & Ayers, 1992; Sluys, 2003). They claim that narratives about teaching and learning influence the way one constructs, creates, and grows between who she is and who she is becoming as a teacher (Danielewicz, 2001). Further, narratives encourage teachers to make sense of their lived worlds and to make connections into their teaching lives. The act of telling one's story can make personal knowledge known in order to understand one's professional knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995).

Bruner (1990) explains the importance of narrative and it's relation to one's identity. According to Bruner (1995), stories are social constructions rooted in the languages, histories, and experiences unique to the author. He states, "stories do not just happen in the real world, rather, are constructed in people's heads"(p. 28). The distinctive ways of constructing experience both shape and are shaped by the stories individuals remember. As Bruner (1992) puts it, "The central concern is not how narrative text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality" (p. 233). From this perspective, stories are how individuals "come to experience the real" (p.22). They uncover the teller's "recipes for experience" as they narrate and create their own definitions of the "examined life" (Bruner, 1995, p. 36). Stories are creative expressions, which reflect the way knowledge is gained, serve to express one's intensions, and discover the possibilities of varied other worlds (Bruner, 1990).

Bruner explains that by writing or telling narratives, we become conscious of our knowledge and conscious about the values that have led us to our perspectives. In this sense, narrative is the capturing of "life in action" (p. 46) in which individuals deconstruct their personal and social boundaries searching for authenticity and understanding. Further, as individuals tell stories, they to are able to construct and organize views of themselves, others, and the world in which they live. He explains,

> The ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with stories become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself, for laying down routes into memory, for not only guiding the life narrative up to the present, but for directing it into the future (p. 36).

He adds, "life is not how it was but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold"(p. 36).

Bruner's concepts of narrative are central to understanding how preservice teachers make sense of their experiences to become teachers. A preservice teacher's sense of self or identity understood through stories in the content and context of a teacher preparation program can help them comprehend who they are becoming as teachers and the instructional decisions they choose to make (Drake et al., 2001). An individual's beliefs about learning to teach are interconnected to the stories told. Soon-to-be teachers have preconceptions of what it means to be a

successful teacher, how individuals should be treated, and how school institutions are run and organized (Weinstein, 1989).

When preservice teachers tell stories of becoming a teacher, these personal narratives are often based on traditional assumptions and images about the roles of teachers, the nature of language and learning, and the purposes of education that they learned early in their schooling experiences (Britzman, 1991). Not surprisingly, the socialization of teachers begins early in childhood in the thousands of days that children and young adults spend in classrooms (Britzman, 1991; Grossman, 1987, 1988, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Lortie (1975) estimates that by the time a student enters teacher education, she has spent 13,000 hours observing teachers. As we explore preservice teachers' emerging identities as teachers and understand the forces that shape and influence their development as teachers, we must acknowledge the past stories and assumptions about teaching and learning that future teachers bring with them (Ritchie & Wilson 2000).

Narratives have provided "one of the most compelling and persuasive forms to present ideas about becoming a teacher because stories, like teaching, are rich with context and peopled by individuals" (Neumann & Peterson, 1997 p. 20). Because of this, many reading teacher educators have used written narratives as a tool to enhance preservice teachers' learning about literacy instruction. Bean (1994) used autobiographical narratives to understand preservice teachers' attitudes towards reading and how these autobiographies informed instructional

practices. Bean inspected 45 preservice teachers' literacy autobiographies. He looked for positive and/or negative statements that related to learning to read. Following this analysis, he searched for books or materials that played a key role in these attitudes. He discovered that individuals' memories about reading were unique and changed over time. Positive reading experiences occurred in settings where children were read to and books were provided in the home. School and teachers also played a powerful role in developing positive attitudes about reading. Negative attitudes and experiences associated with reading corresponded with memories where children were not read to in the home and classroom experiences where one was identified as a low reader. These negative attitudes appeared to be connected to lifelong resentments towards the process, materials, and teachers associated with learning to read.

Additionally, Bean determined that preservice teachers' individual experiences of reading were often at odds with their student-teaching placements. As preservice teachers worked with their cooperating teachers, they were faced with instructional practices that differed from their experiences as readers and writers. This difference helped preservice teachers become more aware of the divergent attitudes and learning experiences of their students. Overall, Bean concluded that autobiographical narratives helped preservice teachers understand their educational backgrounds and come to grips with their positive or negative attitudes about reading. This self-understanding was enhanced over time as many

of the preservice teachers' wrote more about themselves as readers and writers. Furthermore, Bean suggested that narratives have the potential to help literacy educators make more connections between prospective teachers' experiences, literacy coursework, and teaching practices.

Building on the understanding that narratives increase one's self-understanding as a learner and teacher and can impact the decisions one makes as a teacher, Brown (1999) studied 11 preservice teachers in her reading methods course and examined their written stories, to analyze the kind of information and insights these stories revealed about becoming reading teachers. Brown found that most of the preservice teachers reflected on their own abilities to read and their reading habits over time. They expressed pleasant memories of reading but were less detailed about their writing instruction. Additionally, all of the participants in Brown's study wrote about at least one elementary teacher who influenced them as readers. These narratives helped preservice reading teachers make connections between theoretical and pedagogical issues of literacy instruction and illustrated how their experiences supported or didn't support their course readings. As in other studies, preservice teachers in this study wrote narratives in isolation. They did not share their experiences with others in course conversations or peer reviews. Brown believes that producing one's literacy experiences in isolation limits one's self-understanding and development as a teacher. She recommends that preservice teachers collaboratively engage in storytelling about their past

literacy experiences and analyze their collective stories. Sharing and understanding one's self through story takes time. Brown believes that by examining stories in small groups over extended periods of time, preservice teachers will be able to "rethink past experiences in context of new ones" (McKinney, 1998, p. 86).

Time was also an important aspect of Ritchie and Wilson's (2000) study of preservice teachers' identity development and use of narrative. Ritchie and Wilson's (2000) three-year study looked at the use of narratives in a preservice teacher preparation program. Their study illustrated how one's stories and other social interactions get internalized and become the source of self-understanding. Ritchie and Wilson argue that multiple (e.g. institutional, family) discourses, examined through narrative writing and social practices, provided the constructs by which preservice teachers came to recognize themselves. As prospective teachers in Ritchie and Wilson's study constructed narratives about their educational experiences, past beliefs, and future commitments, they revised their identities as teachers. At the same time, telling stories of self, enabled these prospective teachers to become cognizant of the competing discourses and make connections to multiple identities that shape their learning as teachers. Ritchie and Wilson (2000) explained that "telling allowed student teachers to uncover unspoken assumptions" about their development (p. 175). Not only were these future teachers able to bridge the gap between practical and personal knowledge,

they claimed authority over their knowledge development and often "renamed it for their own purposes" (p. 172). In sum, Ritchie and Wilson suggest that teacher preparation programs give students opportunities to rename and negotiate their dynamic identity as teachers through narrative practices with others. They emphasize collaborative reflection that allows soon-to-be teachers opportunities to share their narratives with others and to critically deconstruct their own assumptions about teaching, learning and students. However, Ritchie and Wilson warn that the act of naming and telling one's story is not enough to help prospective teachers navigate the complex nature of teaching and extend their understanding of teaching beyond their previous experiences. Teacher preparation programs must also find ways to confront issues of gender, class and race that impede one's developing and changing self as a teacher.

Florio-Ruane's four year study (2002) from her book titled, *The Future Teachers' Autobiography Club: Preparing Educators to Support Literacy Learning in Culturally Diverse Classrooms* looked at how six preservice teachers shared their narrative writing and personal stories in a autobiography-focused literacy club. In this supportive literacy club made up of new teachers and university faculty, individuals shared their responses to autobiographical books about teachers and their ethnic and social backgrounds. They wrote autobiographies and kept journals as a way to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes and personal experiences concerning literacy, culture, and political aspects of

teaching. By exploring text-based conversations and autobiographical writings, Florio-Ruane noticed that many of her participants used the book club conversations to expand on their own experiences and connections to oppression, privilege, and racial discrimination. Social dialogue structured within the book club and accompanied by writing personal narratives, was an extremely powerful method for helping student teachers become aware of their cultural and social selves. Florio-Ruane asserted: "The stories we choose to tell about our experiences and the meaning of culture have tremendous personal and societal implications as well as influence the ways we teach and organize schooling" (Florio-Ruane, 1997, p. 67).

Writing personal narratives in collaboration with others, much like Florio-Ruane's study, allow prospective teachers to recognize their particular worldviews and "situated voice" from which they operate (Brunner, 1994). Narratives used in collaboration can enable individuals to call forth images from student teachers' experiences and lead others to do the same. As preservice teachers look at the past and meaningfully connect experiences to the future, they can use personal stories to guide and inform their actions. Therefore narratives can have the potential to help future teachers 'reframe' experiences, discover new perspectives, and create new solutions (Bruner, 1994; Brunner, 1994).

Social critic Bhabha (1994) argues that as we think about narratives and the ways they help us reconstruct our selves, more emphasis needs to be on those

"in-between spaces" where selves are elaborated (p. 1) and shared with others. In order to look at those "in-between spaces" where individuals socially reflect on and redefine their developing identities, we must consider language and how language is used with others. Computer- mediated communication (CMC) allows individuals to write and share their experiences with others electronically. More importantly, it can help prospective teachers to gain new perspectives about teaching and learning and extend their reflections.

In the last section of this literature review, I describe several studies that have used computer-mediated communication as a forum for preservice teachers to reflect on their knowledge development and evolving selves as teachers. These studies focus on the social nature of online writing and how preservice teachers are supported in their development as teachers.

Computer-Mediated Communication

The web, email, electronic bulletin boards, and computer conferencing are just a few examples of asynchronous computer-medicated communication environments where individuals interact socially with a range of audiences and viewpoints available to them. Asynchronous means that electronic communication is delayed. Asynchronous CMC has several advantages. It provides preservice teachers with opportunities for thoughtful reflection over the course of several weeks (Schlagal, Trathen, & Blanton, 1996; Selfe, 1991;

Thomas & Clift, 1996). It can support a discussion maintained by facilitators and allow individuals to read others' responses before making a comment. Asynchronous CMC can allow individuals to change their responses based on what others have shared and build on the words of others. Further, preservice teachers using asynchronous CMC can read different viewpoints and edit their responses accordingly (Harrington, 1993). CMC can link aspiring teachers with their peers and university faculty, creating an electronic space for individuals to negotiate complex experiences of teaching and learning. Furthermore, examining written messages facilitated by CMC can help teacher educators better understand the learning and development of future teachers.

In the last decade, teacher educators have studied the ways in which preservice teachers reflect on their learning by using electronic written messages to develop their understanding of literacy instruction. Helen Harrington (1991b; 1992; 1994) has led the way in studying how CMC can foster the development of critical thinking and knowledge development in prospective teachers. In the early 1990's Harrington examined the use of computer conferencing with preservice teachers who were enrolled in literacy education courses at the University of Michigan. By analyzing online written discussions, field experiences, and written assignments, Harrington (1991b; 1992; Harrington & Hathaway, 1994) discovered that preservice teachers made meaningful connections between reading instruction and literacy learning. At the same time, prospective teachers

noted that they valued multiple perspectives shared by peers and contributed this dialogical aspect to their learning. Harrington's research reveals that online communications can provide a space and serve as a tool for preservice teachers' knowledge construction and professional reflection.

In a similar attempt to understand how the use of CMC could increase learning and support student teachers during their field-based practica, Thomas and Clift (1996) studied the electronic text of 11 preservice teachers and two professors. In a combined reading and language arts methods course, while student teachers were interning in an elementary classroom twice a week, participants in this study electronically responded to course readings and classroom observations. They sent emails to the entire class and were required to raise one question a week relating to their intern experiences. Through careful analysis of email messages, Thomas and Clift found that when writing to peers, student teachers mainly shared summaries of their readings. However, when responding to university faculty, these same student teachers sent twice as many reflective entries and personal questions about reading and writing to their professors. Initially, students did not turn to their peers for advice or information about specific literacy instruction as much as they sought out the expertise of their instructors. However, Thomas and Clift suggest that trust established among peers and university faculty, developed over time, played an important role in helping preservice teachers feel supported online and use email to develop their learning

of literacy instruction. Furthermore, as they became more supported by peers and faculty, participants reported feeling "more willing to take risks" (p. 5) and willing to seek out help from their peers.

Schlagal, Trathen, and Blanton (1996) examined twenty-five student teachers and a cadre of professors' electronic messages posted to an online bulletin board. The preservice teachers in this study used electronic messages to discuss literacy instruction with a group of professors while interning as student teachers in an elementary classroom. Schalgal, Trathen, and Blanton analyzed the archived messages posted by their participants over one semester. They discovered that most student teachers summarized their field-based experiences concerning literacy instruction and sought out personal support from peers. However, by the end of the program many email messages showed evidence of thoughtful reflection and sustained dialogue. In fact, participants showed evidence of knowledge growth and extended levels of professional reflection. Extended time online was essential to the level of reflection and sharing that occurred. Additionally, preservice teachers, with the help of their professors and peers, considered multiple ways of teaching reading, examined various perspectives about literacy instruction, and appeared to learn from each other's comments. Schalgal, Trathen, and Blanton suggest using online messages for longer periods of time (more than one semester) and examining the scaffolding practices of university faculty who facilitate online learning.

In another study, Bean and Stevens (2002) examined the reflective online writing of twenty-five preservice teachers enrolled in a summer literacy methods course. Bean and Stevens, mostly interested in the reflective online writing posted by preservice teachers, conducted critical discourse analysis focusing on the specific discourse participants used in their writings. Among many things, Bean and Stevens discovered that most of the discourse used by preservice teachers related to their personal beliefs and schooling experiences. Indeed, participants' online discourse lacked "institutional references" about learning and literacy instruction and instead relied on "local and societal references" (p.2). In other words, the preservice teachers did not appear to appropriate the discourse presented in the literacy methods class. Bean and Stevens suggest that more research is needed to look at the social negotiation of online discourse, ways to scaffold students' online reflections, and how collaborative, online reflection can enhance the process of learning to teach.

Edens and Hult (2000) were also interested in understanding how asynchronous electronic messages shared on an electronic messaging board, improved preservice teachers' learning. They were specifically interested in how preservice teachers linked theory and practice. Edens and Hult examined the online discourse of 24 students enrolled in a practicum taken concurrently with an introductory educational psychology course. Through a method of discourse analysis, Edens and Hult discovered that students used two levels of knowledge in

their postings: epistemic knowledge and theoretical knowledge. Epistemic knowledge refers to the general conceptions applicable to a wide variety of situations. Theoretical knowledge is similar to Vygotsky's scientific conceptual knowledge (Edens & Hult, 2000). Overall, students were able to link theory and practice by using "an interplay of both scientific concepts and everyday concepts in their knowledge constructions online" (p. 11). Edens and Hult recommend that more efforts be made to extend preservice teachers' knowledge construction by engaging preservice teachers in online collaboration and stressing the different levels of knowledge needed to connect theory and practice.

Overall, these investigations demonstrate how CMC fosters personal support, creates spaces for preservice teachers to reflect on their coursework, and provides an effective tool for connecting theory and practice. They also illustrate how teacher educators are taking advantage of computer technology to bridge the gap between student teaching and university course work, to extend reflective activities and to affect thinking process of individuals and groups (Blanton, Moorman & Trathen, 1998). By using online communication during field-based practica, preservice teachers are given opportunities to reconnect with others and extend their theoretical and practical learning.

While these studies are important and pave the way for teacher educators to understand how preservice teachers construct knowledge and reflect about their practice, further research is needed. In this dissertation, I explored preservice

teachers' online responses shared with peers and university faculty and describe how these dialogical interactions influence the authoring of self as a teacher. This research is important to the field of teacher education because it provides a thorough analysis of the online language used by preservice teachers and illustrates how socially negotiated-language practices influence the construction of identity. This study extends the current research that merely looks at online reflection or narrative practices in teacher preparation.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine the identity development of prospective teachers within the context of a reading specialization program. In particular, I examined the archived asynchronous responses and public messages posted to an online bulletin board by six prospective teachers over three semesters at a major Southwestern University. This study sought to discover the multiple ways in which preservice teachers made sense of their worlds and their experiences as they were learning to become reading teachers.

In this chapter I describe the context (the reading specialization program, the preservice teachers in the program, the six case study participants) and the procedures (data collection, data analysis) for the present study. I conclude with a history of the reading specialization program and a brief discussion of the online group dynamics.

Reading Specialization Program

Undergraduates seeking elementary teaching certification through the university must complete a degree major in the area of Applied Learning and Development (ALD) with an academic specialization in an approved subject area (e.g. biology, history, English). Students have the option of completing a second

academic specialization in the area of reading. This specialization in reading is noted on the teaching certificate awarded by the state. The foundational course requirements for all ALD majors are the same as the core foundation requirements for all liberal arts majors. The reading specialization program requires additional courses and extended fieldwork beyond the requirements of the general program. Reading specialization students follow a three-semester cohort plan that is school-based and involves tutorials with adults learning to read and write as well as supervised tutorials with children in an elementary school. These reading specialization students complete an additional six semester hours of reading courses for two semesters beyond the regular education students (twelve semester hours total).

The reading specialization program is organized around the idea that literacy development is both a social and personal process. Arranged as a cohort (20-25 students) and taught by a faculty member and doctoral students in language and literacy, participants in this study were members of the reading specialization program. They moved together through the three semester series taking all of their courses as a group. The courses included: Community Literacy, Reading Development and Assessment, Reading/Language Arts Methods, Classroom Organization and Management, Introduction to Teaching: Applied Learning and Development, Reading Language Arts Methods. All course sessions were taught at a local elementary school. The central focus for the first

semester was on reading and literacy embedded in the context of community life. During this first semester, students took Community Literacy and Reading Development and Assessment. Students also participated in a supervised tutorial program and volunteered in a family literacy program five hours per week.

During the second semester, students were assigned to an elementary classroom where they completed their observation internship. Each student spent the first two weeks of school observing his or her cooperating teacher's classrooms. They wrote in a "First Week of School" Journal documenting their observations, questions and reflections concerning things such as classroom management strategies, student behaviors, and school/community background. Following these first 10 consecutive days in their assigned classrooms, students spent two and a half days per week observing their teachers throughout the rest of the semester. Doctoral students supervised practica experiences. In this same fall semester, students completed Reading Methods, Classroom Organization and Management and Introduction to Teaching: Applied Learning and Development. Additionally, they continued to tutor a student twice a week at the local elementary school. Besides the three courses listed above, students were enrolled in Science Methods, and Mathematic Methods.

In the third semester, students took Reading/Language Arts Methods and Social Studies Methods. Both courses were taught on an intensive four-week schedule, meeting four to fives times a week for four weeks. After this intensive

four-week session, students moved into a full-time student-teacher internship (12 weeks) with supervision from faculty and doctoral students. In addition to this, students attended bimonthly instructional seminars facilitated by graduate students.

Technology played a critical role in the reading specialization program. All students and faculty communicated through a communication network system called TeachNet. TeachNet is a computer-mediated communication software, also known as FirstClass® Intranet Server, supported by the university and utilized by most education cohorts at the university. It is an easy-to-use computer-mediated communication program that allows individual users to send and receive e-mail, share files, use electronic conferencing to exchange ideas, and link to the Internet.

In the reading cohort, students were expected to use TeachNet to send and receive e-mails, post responses directly related to course assignments and read each other's comments. All electronic messages were asynchronous. For the first two semesters of the program, students wrote one response per course and responded to their classmates' electronic comments at least one time during the semester. For example, throughout each semester, rotating weekly, two or three students took on the role of responder and replied to their classmates' electronic messages. In these first two semesters, students posted two to three responses per week. In the third semester, students posted one lesson plan related to writing instruction and continued to send and respond to public messages sent to the

general bulletin board. The purpose of writing online responses was to help students develop their thinking, to learn from each other and the university staff, and to chronicle their developing understanding of reading instruction (J. Hoffman, personal communication, November 17, 2001). In the first semester of the program, students were encouraged to 1) summarize key points; 2) make connections to personal experiences; 3) note puzzlements and questions; 4) and document meaningful quotes taken from the readings. However, after the first month of the semester, students adopted their own style of responding that often differed from the original format.

Course responses were virtually organized in individual course folders. For example, the Reading Methods course had its own folder where students posted assignments and responses. Non-course postings were placed in the general cohort folder where students, professors and doctoral students posted personal and professional announcements, ideas and or questions. During the third semester of the program, after students took their intensive Language Arts Methods course, they started their twelve-week student teaching internship and were no longer required to communicate electronically, but were encouraged to "check in" for program announcements.

The Preservice Teachers

In the spring semester of 2001, nineteen undergraduate students joined the reading specialization program and completed Community Literacy and Reading Assessment and Development as a group. In the following summer semester, ten more students joined the program and completed Community Literacy and Reading Assessment and Development. They also tutored elementary aged students at a local elementary school during this time. Upon completion of the summer courses, the new group of ten undergraduates joined the original group, creating a total of 29 preservice teachers in the reading specialization program. In the fall and spring semesters 2001/2002 all twenty-nine students completed Reading Methods, Classroom Organization and Management, Introduction to Teaching: Applied Learning and Development, Language Arts Methods, and their student teaching internships as a cohort. Each participant in this study was a member of the original group of students who had joined the program in the spring of 2001.

Participants

The participants for this study were six elementary education preservice teachers who participated in the reading specialization program from January 2001 to May 2002. These six participants were chosen because of their diverse backgrounds, their varying experiences as students, and their student teaching

placements. Six participants were chosen in order to develop indepth case studies of their individual identity construction. Furthermore, I had a friendly relationship with each participant, which enabled us to talk more freely. Three of the participants were in their senior year working towards an Applied Learning and Development (ALD) degree with an elementary teaching certification. Three other participants held degrees in other fields and had returned to the university to obtain an elementary teacher certification. All six participants were white and middle class, ranging in age from 21 years to 42 years. One participant is a man. All participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

Abraham.

Abraham (his own chosen pseudonym) is a 23-year-old man. During Abraham's sophomore year he changed his major from business to education with a minor in English. During this same semester, Abraham had an opportunity to volunteer as an assistant counselor at the Peach School; a home for abused and neglected boys ages seven to seventeen. He enrolled in the reading specialization program because of his interest in English and his desire to work with young people. Abraham was familiar with the program's philosophies and expectations because of his close friendship with the professor's daughter. He shared, "Since I decided to change my major and go into education, I might as well do it with Dr. H. I know he is the best and the reading program is outstanding."

As a requirement for the Community Literacy course, Abraham volunteered as an assistant teacher with the Travolta County Sheriff's Department at the Del Van Prison. He worked with male and female inmates in a basic adult literacy program. In addition, he tutored a fourth grade boy in the Spring 2001 and a fifth grade girl in the Fall 2001 at a local community elementary school. Abraham was an intern in a first grade classroom at Blanton Heights Elementary School with a cooperating teacher who has worked with the program for many years. The ethnic composition of students at Blanton Heights Elementary is 5% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 79% White. Abraham was asked to participate in this study because he was the only man in the group and because he worked with a cooperating teacher with whom I have been acquainted with for several years.

Belinda.

Belinda is a white, 21 year old woman who joined the program as a traditional senior level student. She, like the others, volunteered to participate in this study. Belinda was an intern in second grade at Cowey Elementary School. The ethnic composition of students at Cowey Elementary School is approximately 6% Black, 35% Hispanic, and 60% white. Belinda was a student teacher with Linda, a cooperating teacher who has worked with the reading specialization program for the last ten years. I am very familiar with Belinda's cooperating teacher's style of mentoring, teaching, and her long-standing relationship and commitment to the reading cohort.

Ellie.

Ellie was asked to participate in this study because of her non-traditional standing as a student in the reading program. Ellie has a degree in Art History and decided to go back to school to earn her elementary teaching certification. She is in her late-40's and has been married for 25 years. Ellie does not have children. Ellie and her husband were semi-retired and lived in Paris, France for 10 years. They came back to Austin, Texas so that Ellie could pursue a professional career of teaching. Ellie was an intern in 3rd/4th grade classroom at Brownwood Elementary School. The ethnic composition of students at Brownwood Elementary School is 5% Black, 34% Hispanic, and 50% white with 35% of children on free and reduced lunch (often an indicator of socio-economic status). Unique to her situation, Ellie worked under two partner teachers who share their mixed-aged classroom. Both cooperating teachers have worked with the reading program for 10 years. For the past four years, I have worked with these cooperating teachers both professionally and personally.

Adrianna.

Adrianna is a 25-year-old woman, who had immigrated from Eastern Europe when she was ten years old. As a non-traditional student, Adrianna joined the reading program with a degree in English Literature. She joined the reading program to raise her grade point average in order to apply to graduate school. She interned in a second grade classroom, at Maryville Elementary School. The ethnic

composition of students at Maryville Elementary School was 3% Black, 93% Hispanic, and 4% white. I never had the opportunity to meet Adrianna's cooperating teacher, but she had a reputation for being an outstanding mentor and effective reading teacher. Since our first meeting in the spring of 2001, Adrianna showed much interest in using computer-mediated technology and writing to learn. She shared with me that she was an advocate of writing online because it helped her development as a teacher. Adrianna was asked to participate in this study because of her diverse background.

Lynn.

Lynn is a 24-year-old white female who joined the reading specialization program as a fifth year senior. She originally planned to specialize in Deaf Education, but the university ended the degree program, so Lynn chose to focus on elementary reading.

After visiting and observing several reading classes, as well as sitting in on many tutoring sessions, I became acquainted with Lynn, and we communicated often online. Lynn was an intern at Myron Elementary School in a second grade classroom. The ethnic composition of students at Myron Elementary School is 13% Black, 37% Hispanic, and 50% White. Lynn's best friend was an intern in a second grade bilingual classroom at the same school. Lynn's cooperating teacher and her best friend's teacher planned all of their lessons together weekly. I did not know Lynn's cooperating teacher but am friends with

her partner teacher, Mona. Mona is the second grade bilingual teacher at Myron Elementary and was a student in the reading specialization program in 1999 when I served as the teaching assistant. Mona and I have also been involved with a large, reading research project for the last three years. During the three semesters that Lynn was in the program, she often emailed me about her tutoring, book suggestions, instructional ideas, or social events. When I described my research interests, Lynn volunteered to participate in my study. We have continued to stay close personal friends throughout this research process.

Rista.

Rista is a 28 year old white female who re-entered college to complete her degree after dropping out in 1993. Rista was a student teacher in a 4th grade classroom at Sonny Elementary School. The ethnic composition of students at Sonny Elementary School is 2% Black, 94% Hispanic, and 4% White. Rista was asked to be a participant in this study because of her expertise as a reading tutor, her critical online responses, and a recommendation from her student teaching supervisor. During the spring and fall semesters (2001) of the program, I observed several (at least 3) of Rista's tutoring sessions and was impressed by her knowledge and her confidence as a tutor. I also read most of Rista's online responses during her participation in the program and was taken by her critical nature and understanding of literacy instruction. In addition to this, Rista was recommended to participate in my study by her student-teaching supervisor.

During her student-teaching internship, Rista expressed frustration and disappointment with her own teaching practices. She told her supervisor that she questioned her decision to become a teacher and wondered how one could teach nontraditionally in a traditional school environment. I was interested to learn about Rista's unique experiences as a student teacher and to understand her development.

Research Framework

This study used qualitative methodology to pursue the description and analysis of individual identity development in the context of a reading specialization program (Merriam, 2001). By intensely describing single experiences within a larger program, I hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of the process one goes through while learning to teach. By providing a thick description including sights, sounds, relationships, and feelings (Patton, 1990) that give a detailed description of the data in context (Wolcott, 1994) I hope readers of this study will be able to transfer this inquiry to their own experiences and situations. The study was guided by the following research questions:

> What is the nature of preservice teachers' written reflections and messages posted to an online community over a three-semester period?
>
> What do preservice teachers' written reflections and messages reveal about the development of teacher identity?

Qualitative research allowed me to examine individual data and then identify reoccurring patterns related to the meaning making process of participants in the reading specialization program. By closely examining the words and intentions of my participants, I attempted to build holistic descriptions of each individual's identity construction and add to theory related to language use within a community of learners in which identities are shaped.

In addition, from the six participants, I selected two individuals out of the six who had different learning experiences and perspectives about becoming a teacher. Case studies of these two individuals illustrate divergent experiences of identity construction within the same reading specialization program.

Sampling Procedures

In this study, sampling was purposeful. According to Patton (1990), "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling" (p. 169). Selecting six cases with varying degrees of experience enabled me to represent in-depth descriptive stories about the nature of the students' individual processes of becoming reading teachers.

In order to identify participants for this project, I looked for preservice teachers who varied in experience, gender, and classroom internships. To begin with, I identified eight potential students from the reading specialization program

who seemed to have varied experiences, were at varied school settings, and were individuals with whom I had a friendly relationship. Six of the eight individuals responded to my requests and agreed to participate in this study.

From the six, three participants were traditional undergraduate students with no previous careers and three participants were post-baccalaureate graduates with prior careers. By selecting this unique sample based on divergent experiences and attitudes about teaching, I hoped to represent the distinctive perspectives represented by the cohort. At the same time, I hoped to tap into the different reasons individuals decided to become a teacher and how past experiences influenced learning. Variation in my sampling was also essential to developing in-depth descriptions and insights concerning the use of language in the process of becoming a teacher.

I contacted each person by email and explained the purpose of the study. Following the emails, I attended a student teaching seminar where all program members joined for an informal discussion about their job search. During the seminar, I gave a brief introduction to my study and requested that all students and student-teaching supervisors in the program consent to being in the study on a volunteer basis. Getting each student's consent (Appendix A) allowed me to read and print out online reflections posted to the entire community of students and faculty. All students, supervisors, and participants referred to in this study are

identified by pseudonyms. Next I describe the data collection process and the stages of data analysis.

Data Collection

Archived Electronic Responses

The Internet has opened up a whole new field for qualitative data generation including chat rooms, email, and websites (Silverman, 2001). Archived online course responses and general messages submitted by the six participants between January 2001 and June 2002 were used as the primary data source for this inquiry. I also examined corresponding messages from peers, the university professor, and graduate students when they were directly related to a participant's electronic message. These messages were easy to access because each course electronic bulletin board, filled with electronic asynchronous postings, is archived on the university's main database and saved for several years after students leave the program. This organization allows for preservice teachers, the program professor, and graduate students to reread reflections, check the history of messages (to see who has read the postings), and copy, print, or search messages for additional research. Michael, a university employee, facilitates this system for the college of education and assists students and faculty with technical difficulties. Michael helped me download the archived electronic messages and organize them for this study.

When students started their first two literacy courses in the reading specialization program, they were required to post one response per class per week to corresponding course bulletin boards. These responses were saved and organized on course bulletin boards and archived by the university's backup systems. Students continued to respond electronically for the duration of the program in six courses and on the general message board.

For this study, all archived electronic data (Appendix B and C) was initially printed as a hard copy, dated and stored in folders. Since there are many ethical issues related to the ability to read, save, copy, and archive huge volumes of electronic text written by others (Merriam 2001), I did my best to protect the privacy of my participants to ensure anonymity as well as to respect each individual's ownership of his/her writing (Schrum and Harris, 1996, p. 19).

Electronic Professional Portfolios

As part of a Reading/Language Arts Methods course taken during the third semester of the professional development sequence, preservice teachers are required to create an electronic portfolio that represents their practicum experiences, teaching philosophies, and vision for becoming a teacher of reading. Used as a secondary data source to capture the participants' development as a reading teacher, the electronic portfolios served as a contrasting form of data as well as a discussion starter for our interviews. This additional data also allowed for triangulation (Erlandson et. al., 1993).

Interviews

Once individuals were selected as participants, they were interviewed two times. Most of these interviews took place one month before the participants completed their student teaching internships and graduated from the program. Follow-up interviews took place online or on the telephone during the summer after graduation. The structure of the interviews was open-ended (Appendix D for sample of questions). Open-ended questions allowed the participants to formulate their responses according to their ideas, thoughts, opinions, and values (Patton, 1990).

During our interviews, participants were initially asked to describe their development as a reading teacher in the reading specialization program and then to elaborate on their perceptions and growth as a reading teacher. Next I asked them to discuss their online responses, their electronic portfolio, and their journals in relation to their professional development. Other related topics, as brought up by the participants, were addressed as they surfaced. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

Other Written Documents

In addition to the listed data sources, participants were asked to share their dialogue journals and the "First Weeks of School" journals. Dialogue journals were used to capture dialogic conversations between student teachers, cooperating teachers and student-teaching supervisors. These dialogue journals were used for

two semesters during the preservice teachers' field-based experiences. "The First Weeks of School" journal was an organized handbook that students wrote in during their first two weeks of school. They recorded information about their schools, teachers, students, even the physical organization of their classrooms. In addition to recording information, preservice teachers reflected twice a day, for ten days, about their experiences as new student teachers. At the end of the 10 days, cooperating teachers were encouraged to write any words of wisdom that could benefit their student teachers. I made copies of each journal and used them as secondary data sources to check findings from the electronic responses, interviews and electronic portfolios.

Reflexive Journal

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a reflexive journal is a diary in which the investigator of a study records information about him or herself that provides information about the researcher's insights, methodological decisions, and questions related to the study's focus. I used my reflexive journal to make decisions about the focus of my study and the methods of data collection. In addition, the reflexive journal became a place where I organized questions and reactions to interviews, clarified my understanding of the research process, recorded initial themes, and reflected upon insights throughout the term of this study. I used the reflexive journal in my analysis of how well my findings

matched the perceptions of my participants. Once data were gathered and generated, the arduous and lengthy process of analyzing the data began.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study was ongoing and extensive. I organized the data by cases for specific, descriptive, and in-depth analysis and analyzed the data in several stages. In the first phase, I printed out all of the online responses and electronic portfolios and made file folders for the six preservice teachers. Inside each file folder I included the following:

Online responses organized by courses;

Transcripts of initial interviews;

First Week of School Journal and dialogue journal;

Electronic Portfolio (printed copy);

Reflexive journal and summaries of emerging themes developed case-by-case

In the second phase of analysis I used the constant-comparative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I began analysis by reading and rereading all of the data (electronic responses and messages, transcribed interviews, student teaching journals and electronic portfolios) and identifying short phrases or utterances that seemed to have relative meaning to the purpose of this study. I looked for content-based patterns and references about literacy instruction and teaching that seemed socially constructed by the group and/or extracted from

interaction with others. I wrote notes to myself in the margins such as "family driven" or "language as power." Next, I organized repeated phrases into categories and developed category titles for each set. Through this process, I found that there were several emerging themes that did not directly relate to the research questions. I collected those phrases in a category labeled "other themes." I wrote down the dominant themes that related to my research questions and organized them in a table. I went back to the data three times, making sure I included all relevant data and excluded phrases that did not apply. The categories changed and new ones emerged as I revisited the data. As initial themes emerged, I wrote summaries describing each theme and then shared these themes with participants via email. Participants were asked to verify and elaborate on their perceptions of these initial themes. This process, known as member checking, was used as a way to ensure the credibility and confirmability of the data. It allowed participants "a chance to indicate whether the reconstructions of the inquirer are recognizable" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 142).

In the third phase, I compiled a list of all of the themes and sketched out portraits for case study on a large poster board. Then I began cross case analyses to look for recurring patterns and themes. I examined the cases to see how they were similar or different and what unique characteristics they shared within each category and theme.

In the fourth phase, I narrowed my focus to two of the six participants. Discourse analysis, informed by Gee (1999), was used to uncover the unique ways in which two different participants developed their teaching selves within the reading specialization program. First, I looked for language patterns and links within and across all written statements and online exchanges between individuals. Then I looked for conceptual units or phrases that were constructed by each participant. I tried to uncover how meanings changed over time by rereading the data according to the date of posting and by creating a thematic timeline that represented emerging ideas and socially developed themes for each participant. Then, I used Nudist™, a qualitative software program, to code all of the data into preliminary themes and search for repeated words and phrases.

I revisited the data a third time, using Gee's methods of analysis to uncover social, cultural, and situated meanings of individual responses. However, while Gee (1999) offers specific steps for analyzing text, he also emphasizes that there is "no lockstep method in doing discourse analysis" (p.119). Modifying his analytic technique slightly, I used Gee's (1999) six building blocks (semiotic building, world building, socioculturally-situated identity, relationship building, political building, and connection building) to guide my analysis and to uncover how these two individuals used language to make sense of their learning. Gee explains:

> These building blocks are carried out in negotiation and collaboration with others through language…Clues or cues in the language we use help assemble or trigger specific meanings through which the six building tasks are accomplished. In turn, these situated meanings activate certain cultural models, and not other ones. Finally, the social languages, situated meanings, and cultural models at play allow people to enact and recognize different Discourses at work (p.86).

Among many discourse analysis methods, Gee suggests that researchers ask questions related to each of the six building blocks in order to get a whole picture of an individual's use of language and then use this information to address and to illuminate relevant issues of one's study. I used Gee's building block questions with eight online responses, four with Abraham's online responses and four with Adrianna's online responses. (See Appendix for sample questions). For example, one of the questions addresses world building and asks, "What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, bodies, objects, artifacts and institutions relevant in this situation?" To answer this question I examined one online response at a time and looked for evidence that would represent values and situated meanings used by the participant. For instance, in Abraham's online response to the article "Examining the Literacy Perceptions of Non-Reading Parents" (Crawford, 1996) on March 28th 2001, I asked myself what situated meanings and values his words and phrases seemed to illustrate.

My interpretation: *The term decipher seems to be attached to Gough's class, emergent literacy from the case study and assessment class, illiterate parents seems to be an issue that Abraham connects with being a fourth grader and having a friend whose parents couldn't read. The length and meaningfulness of the narrative in this response appears to suggest that Abraham values his own personal-lived stories to make sense of the readings.*

I addressed all twelve questions in the same manner. Then I used the answers from these building block questions to guide and inform emerging themes for the two case studies.

Finally, following the discourse analysis for Abraham and Adrianna, I compiled a list of all themes related to the study and wrote portraits for each participant.

Researcher's Role

My role in this study was as a participant observer as characteristic of many qualitative research studies. My participation was that of a friend and mentor. I spent 12 months getting to know the students in the reading specialization program informally by attending cohort gatherings, tutoring celebrations, and class meetings. I visited several individuals in their student-teaching placements and shared private emails concerning literacy instruction. I read most online responses and general messages and often sent words of

encouragement and support to the entire group. I never served as an evaluator to any of the students. In addition, while I refer to data collected in the last month of their program (archived electronic messages and interviews), much of the insights into participants' identity development came from experiences with students over the course of their three semesters in the reading specialization program and my knowledge of them personally.

Summary

Six preservice teachers who belonged to the reading specialization program between January 2001 and June 2002 participated in this study. Two of the six participants were selected for further in-depth analysis. Data consisted of the following: collection and printing of all archived electronic responses and messages; open-ended interviews; "The First Weeks of School" journal and dialogue journals; electronic portfolios; follow-up interviews; and the researcher's reflexive journal. Data analysis occurred in four phases and culminated in two case studies along with a cross-case analysis.

Below, I describe the history of the reading specialization program and illustrate the types of electronic messages that were posted and responded to in the general messaging bulletin board.

The Reading Specialization Community: A History

The reading specialization program has a long tradition at The University of Texas at Austin. In fact, it is the oldest field-based reading specialization program in the country (J. Hoffman, personal communication, April 12, 2001). The program was first initiated by Dr. Frank J. Guszak and has been in continuous operation for almost forty years. Currently facilitated by Dr. J. Hoffman and three doctoral students in language and literacy, the program stresses a need for teachers to be knowledgeable, flexible, and adaptive in their teaching of students. They emphasize

> The use of assessment tools and strategies that reveal the complexity of student learning and growth; the importance of instruction that builds on students' strengths and challenges them to extend their reading into new areas; and the responsibility of the teacher to actively communicate with parents and administrators regarding instructional philosophy, teaching plans, and student progress (Hoffman, personal communication, October 31, 2002).

Prior to the start of the program each year, Dr. Hoffman and his team of graduate students make presentations to student groups and classes to promote the goals of the program. Students are encouraged to interview faculty to discuss the match between their personal goals and those of the program. Students are advised of the program philosophy, organization, requirements, and expectations. On average,

twenty to twenty-five students are admitted in the spring semester. Students move together as a cohort through the three-semester sequence, taking all of their courses as a group. All courses are taught at a local elementary school that serves a predominately Hispanic community. In addition, elementary teachers from across the city serve as "observation" and student teaching supervisors or cooperating teachers. Some of these teachers have worked with the reading specialization program for over fifteen years and others are graduates of the program who have completed the state requirement of three years of teaching experiences before rejoining the program as cooperating teachers.

Group Dynamics

To understand the group dynamics established online, I reread all of the archived electronic messages posted to the cohort's general messaging bulletin board from January 15th, 2001 to June 15th, 2002. The general messaging bulletin board was typically used for social messages. I noted reoccurring titles and message topics posted over time. Then I counted the total number of electronic responses for each semester. In sum, there were 2,488 messages posted to the reading specialization electronic bulletin board from January 15th, 2001 to June 15th, 2002 (Appendix E for chart of total responses). In my overview of the messages, I identified five types of messages; 1) Welcome messages; 2) Questions and Concerns; 3) Sharing; 4) Celebrations; 5) and Emergencies and

Losses. Following, I describe these categories and give a few examples to illustrate the kinds of messages that occurred online.

Welcome Messages.

In the spring semester, I noticed many welcome messages posted to the "new group." These messages included comments such as: "Don't worry you will get the hang of this"; "You don't know what confusion is yet girl!" "You will learn so much from tutoring, I did!" or "Welcome to our family." The students in this study wrote back thanking the more experienced students for their words of encouragement and often asked them questions about tutoring or their student-teaching experiences. These welcoming messages seem to be customary in the reading specialization program and were initiated by past students excited to pass on hopeful comments to new members. Often during this time, new students to the program take over or dominate the electronic messaging board. However, this did not happen with the group in this study. Even during their last semester of the program, Spring 2002 students continued to post messages about their internships or questions about lessons. In the third semester there were a total of 1,093 messages, compared to 699 messages in their first semester of the program. Welcoming messages showed how students included others and how they felt strong comradeship to the program (e.g., calling it a "family"). This also speaks to the history of the program and how past students were encouraged to share their experiences with the new group of students joining the program.

Questions and Concerns.

Across three semesters, many messages dealt with course information, meeting times, book requirements, and assignments. Students wrote about their questions, concerns, and fears about new information. However, over time these messages became more personal. Individuals sent comments to the general message board about their individual concerns and fears concerning lesson plans, readings, home visits, and working with their cooperating teachers. Responses to question and concern messages were sensitive and honest and students and faculty attempted to give supportive advice and information to help the members of the program feel at ease. Furthermore, students' willingness to write their questions and concerns online demonstrates how comfortable they felt as they risked what others thought of them in return for encouragement and information.

Sharing.

Students shared many teaching-related ideas and comments online. They wrote about books that were great for kids or books that everyone needed to read. For example, Lynn wrote about a Barbara Kingsolver book she read over spring break. Others recommended books for their tutors or books that lent themselves to instructional themes. Websites, teaching units, and course assignments were also shared. Success stories and little triumphs concerning students, jobs, passing tests, or just getting rest over the weekend were common among the messages. These comments seemed to bring the students together. By sharing inspirational notes or

passing on teaching ideas, students supported each other and valued each other's common commitment to children.

Celebrations.

Over the three-semester period, birthdays, births, weddings, job announcements, and social gatherings were written about. It was common to see a message titled, "Happy Birthday Heather!" and then twenty-two messages responding "Happy Birthday!" or "Now that you are legal we need to go out!" Others wrote about being a new aunt or the birth of a stepsister. Parties and social gatherings were common among this group, and there were many announcements for happy hour, holiday celebrations, or just a "PARTY AT MY HOUSE!" Students typically responded with comments such as "I need a drink!" or "Please come. Everyone needs to be there!" At the end of the semester, when students were interviewing for jobs, many posted messages such as "I GOT IT!" or "I think I blew it." These comments were responded by messages titled, "Don't give up" or "I am so proud of you!" Sharing personal and professional celebrations was one way this group came together socially. They became part of each others' lives and referred to themselves as the "Cohort E Family."

Emergencies and Losses.

Like all groups, this group went through many personal losses and these messages were shared with everyone online. Deaths, accidents, fears of war and terrorism were just a few of the comments that were posted to the group. These

comments were generally followed by comments like, “You are in our prayers,” or “Let me know what we can do.” In one instance, a group of students went to happy hour after class and got caught in a flash flood. A student’s car got washed away, along with many of her course work and books. Two hours after the incident happened, there was a message on the general board, explaining the events and how students needed help. Immediately, there were twenty-eight threaded responses to the original message sharing comments such as “Oh my god, I hope you are ok”, “You can have all of my notes, don’t worry”, or “Don’t forget we are all here for you.” One week after the incident, the student wrote back messages of gratitude and thanked her fellow classmates for their concern and help. Much like writing about social gatherings or life celebrations, being able to write about losses and emergencies brought this group together intimately. They were invested in each other’s lives and were concerned about their group welfare.

New Members

In the fall of 2001, the first group of students was joined by a new group of ten students joining the cohort. When the first or original group discovered new members where joining their group, they sent many welcoming messages to the new students. There appeared to be little reluctance to these additional students, yet I noticed ten messages that addressed the groups’ cohesiveness in October 2001 as students were forming presentation teams. These messages represented

the conflicts that some felt about bringing the two groups together and working as one group. In one message titled, “This has to stop!” Kara addressed the need for students to stop identifying themselves as the spring group or the summer group and to join together as one group. Others responded in agreement and wrote about their feelings of pride and commitment to being a member of the program. This was the only conflict I noticed online; however I am sure there were more as every community has their struggles.

Summary

Overall, the group wrote about teaching and learning ideas, they shared concerns and fears along with celebrations of themselves as individuals and novice teachers. There appeared to be few (if any) put downs among the students and faculty, but instead much teasing and kind-hearted joking. Losses were disclosed, yet words of hope and encouragement quickly followed. At the same time, this group appeared to be extremely respectful and trusting. They risked sharing their failures and concerns with each other and at the same time announced their personal and professional achievements along the way. They depended on one another for instructional ideas and discussed ways to best teach their students. And they celebrated. They announced birthdays, happy hours, holiday parties and family births.

The Organization of Chapters Four and Five

In chapter four, I describe the themes from six participants' online messages and responses that were posted to the program's electronic bulletin boards between January 15th, 2001 and June 15th, 2002. These themes depict the kinds of messages and course responses that were constructed in the program and serve to illustrate the nature of discourse explored by participants in this study. Additionally, it provides insight into the ways preservice teachers in the reading specialization program developed their understanding of reading instruction and their identities as reading teachers.

In chapter five, two case studies are presented. These case studies are detailed descriptions of two different preservice teachers, Adrianna and Abraham, who participated in the reading specialization program. I examine their background prior to joining the program, their individual reasons for becoming a teacher, and the themes that evolved from their online responses and other related data.

CHAPTER 4

NATURE OF ONLINE RESPONSES

The purpose of this chapter is to portray the nature of participants' online responses and messages posted to an electronic bulletin board over three semesters. I describe four emerging themes: responsive teaching, teaching against the grain, knowledge and confidence in literacy instruction, and images of teaching. These themes, generated from participants' online responses, provide insight into socially negotiated discourse related to teaching reading, which informed the teacher identities of participants in this study.

Across the four themes discussed in this chapter, two threads were discovered. First, participants readily borrowed the words of others to make sense of their own reading responses and teaching experiences (Bakhtin, 1981). Second, they used narrative as a form of reflection to present their ideas and understandings about literacy instruction (Meyers, 1998). I will discuss these in the context of each theme and return to them at the end of this chapter.

Responsive Teaching – "Its all about the kids!"

From the first semester until the end of their internships, all of the participants wrote about and discussed the importance of keeping kids at the center of their teaching. They considered two major aspects of this child-centered,

responsive teaching: 1) learning about students' family backgrounds, reading interests, and abilities; 2) and making reading meaningful and engaging by individualizing, giving students ownership of their learning, and empowering them to relate their learning to their own experiences. They often referred to Freire's (1973) notion of "reading the world" as a framework for thinking about meaningful literacy instruction. "Reading the world" was a phrase often embedded in participants' online responses and used to make sense of related readings. Freire's writings seemed to be directly related to how participants interpreted responsive teaching and how to make literacy an essential component of child-based pedagogy. At the same time they wrestled with issues related to culture and bilingualism, individualized instruction, and testing.

A central issue related to child-centered, responsive teaching was assessment. For example, Belinda commented about the purpose of assessment as a way to learn about her students' reading abilities and interests. In response to "*The Promise and Challenge of Informal Assessment in Early Literacy" (*Teale, 1986) Belinda wrote:

> Assessment should be used to improve the teachers' classroom curriculum and enable him or her to give each student the help they need and deserve. To provide proper education in reading and writing a teacher needs to know the level at which each student can perform. The teacher should gather data regularly in a variety of settings so he or she can determine

> how and when the student performs their best. From there a teacher should provide suitable materials to help that student excel. (02-11-01)

Two weeks following the above response, Belinda questioned how to move beyond knowing a student's abilities and individualizing instruction. She pondered:

> My only concern is how is a teacher supposed to teach a class when there are students at such different extremes of ability like Mike and Sherry? Once I know the individual needs of my students- how can I best serve all of them without pulling them out of my class for intensive help? How can I avoid giving the advanced students busy work so that I can work with the weaker students?
>
> (2-25-01)

Belinda seemed to believe that knowing her students' individual needs was essential to being an effective reading teacher, yet she questioned how such teaching could take place among a diverse classroom of students. Belinda, as did many others in the cohort, seemed comfortable sharing her questions and dilemmas online. By assuming a questioning stance, Belinda was able to consider the practical aspects of responsive teaching and the varied needs of her students within a supportive environment. Others in the cohort took similar positions towards the practical aspects of responsive teaching and reflected on the complexities of individualized instruction.

Learning about students' instructional needs was an aspect of responsive teaching that was prevalent throughout most of the online responses. Participants commented on the importance of knowing one's students and how this type of insightful instruction can influence how a teacher views her students. For example, Ellie commented:

> The first and fundamental challenge for teachers is to embrace students as 3-dimentional creatures, as distinct human beings with hearts and minds and skills and dreams and capacities of their own, as people much like ourselves. As a student I can certainly relate to this. This is how I want my teachers to look at me. This also reminded me of our case study assignment. I know that as I have learned more about him as a person, I tend to look at his work differently. I would like to think that as a teacher I would be able to know all of my students this well. I realize that it will take time but I feel it is worth it (2-10-01).

Ellie and Belinda both believed that kids must be at the center of their teaching but were aware of the challenges they would face as responsive teachers.

The preservice teachers' beliefs about the importance of responsive teaching and learning about their children seemed to be shaped by course readings, classmates' comments, and feedback from Dr. H. Learning how to be a responsive, child-centered teacher, was an active process of questioning, negotiating, and building upon the readings and ideas of others.

Dr. H. repeatedly stressed the need to learn from students and to use this knowledge in order to teach reading. In the following example, Lynn questioned the difference between gaining knowledge from a child and pushing a child to learn. In response to a chapter in *Literacy and Schooling* by Judith Langer (1987), Lynn shared:

> I even feel like that with Lousia, the 2 yr. that I live with, thinking, [quoted] *there's so much for her to learn, there's so much in my head that I want to teach her, to show her, to explain to her, knowledge for her learn, understand, and use later…* in THAT circumstance is that a bad thing? I mean, it's not like I'm testing her, but to some degree (after I say something several times, I kind of expect her to remember it - in the short term anyway -) I guess that I am... BUT then she'll remember something that I had said 2-3 DAYS earlier to SOMEONE ELSE, not even to her... so ... Oh ... okay I think I'm WAY off topic... (02-15-01)

Dr. H. responded:

> Louisa (?) has a lot to teach you. Learn from her. She will take care of most of her own learning as well. The "want" to teach is part of you and your 'vocation' as a teacher. It's natural and good . . . you just have to learn that you can't pour information into her. . . that's what Langer's article is about in the end. (02-15-01)

Dr. H. explained the importance of stepping away from the notion of teacher as knower and instead become a teacher who discovers what children have to offer. Lynn's tension seemed to be related to her struggle between becoming a knowledgeable reading teacher and becoming a teacher of students. Dr. H. helped guide her thinking to understand that being a knowledgeable reading teacher and teacher of students is the same thing.

At the same time, comments from peers served to reinforce the notion that kids need to be the cornerstone of teaching. Heather wrote, "No matter how much we think we know, the kids will always surprise us. (02-03-01)" Rista responded, "Amen!!! I think this has been a very common theme in our classes. We always assume we know what they know, but our goal should be to find out what they know, not assume. Great response! (03-03-01)" Belinda made similar comments about learning from her students and making reading meaningful in her response to the article "*Creative Teacher*" by Silvia Ashton Warner (1965). She shared:

> The main idea that I took away from this article is the words must mean something to the child. I think this is very important in any learning process. I truly believe that if a child cannot find some connection between what he or she is supposed to be learning and something in their own life, the child is going to have no use for the information and become bored. (02-14-01)

In another instance, Rista made a connection between an article about a woman's writing group and valuing students' experiences as a literacy teacher. Rista wrote:

> *Writing as a Foundation for Transformative Community*:
>
> We need to follow the example set forth by Tenderloin and really begin to value all aspects of our children and adult tutors. Not just their intelligence, but also their social skills. Not just their ability to draw pictures, but their ability to draw straight lines. Not just their ability to sing in choir, but also their ability to rap. Not just their ability to read a story, but their ability to tell one. Not just their ability to debate causes, their ability to understand and feel compassion toward the underlying cause. (03-21-01)

Rista's response exemplified the importance of knowing students beyond school and valuing their home life and cultural experiences. She used the readings to strengthen her own beliefs and values associated with responsive teaching. Negotiating students' needs and understanding their responsibilities as classroom teachers was a prevailing issue many wrestled with over the three-semester program.

In the following example, Rista grappled with her identity as a teacher and her civic duties as an American citizen. She, like others in the program, struggled with how culture and being an immigrant defines students and their learning in

school. In response to Trueba's (1998) chapter, *Education of Immigrant Children,* Rista stated:

> Value a student for who they are, all of who they are, not just their culture…Do we value a student's Mexican-ness or do we value the student and what they do with that particular heritage has given them? (04-20-01)

Dr. H. and several classmates reacted to Rista's comment and a lengthy conversation took place online concerning immigrants, bilingualism and making learning meaningful for students. Dr. H. replied, "I don't know how you would begin to do this. If it's their culture, it's who they are. How can you not value one's culture and value who they are?" Dr. H. didn't just affirm Rista's comments but questioned and disagreed with her. Then Brice, a classmate fervently commented by using all capital letters:

> YOU DON'T HAVE TO COMPLETELY ABANDON YOUR OWN HERITAGE TO BECOME AMERICAN--THE UNITED STATES IS FOUNDED ON DIVERSITY. I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMBRACE THESE KIDS' CULTURE AND INCORPORATE THEM INTO ENGLISH, MAINSTREAM AMERICAN CULTURE AS WELL (4-21-01).

Rista commented back:

> I never implied we should ignore a child's culture. I believe what I said was -We should set up programs to help you to become successful here…

> When immigrant workers come into this country with the idea of taking their families back to the home country one day, and then imply that we must educate the child to succeed in this country so that they can move back home later on, I DO HAVE A PROBLEM. While I'm taking into consideration all the needs of that child, my energy is diverted from seeing to the needs of a child who will continue to remain in this country into adulthood and has a much greater need to understand the key to success here (4-21-01).

Candi added her thoughts to the topic about valuing students' language and culture and helped move Rista and the other preservice teachers to grapple with new, difficult issues. She wrote:

> I think it's important to remember that we are teachers of ALL children, not just the ones we think are going to stay in America. And, that being American is not a value for all of these children. And, who are we to tell them that it should be? I don't think Trueba talks about developing SPECIFIC curriculums for these children. Rather, I think he supports bringing these children into the curriculum by valuing where they are from and what they know. So many times, teachers ignore the cultures and languages that children possess and push Americanism and English. How does that make the child feel about himself? He feels that his culture and language are not acceptable and not as important as English. It's always

> amazed me how we push Spanish speakers to learn in English-only classrooms as soon as they can, not valuing the ability to be bilingual, but then when students enter High School and start taking their foreign languages, it's suddenly incredible to be bilingual. I think we need to accept all children for who they are; culture and language make up so much of who people are. A good teacher will take her children's interests into account, regardless of culture. This means if your white middle class Rebecca likes ballerinas, you may introduce her to a book about ballerinas. I also don't think we should think of these children in terms of tortillas, the hat dance, Pancho Villa, and low riders. There is so much more to their culture than the stereotypes that have made it to America. If we don't ask and value those cultural experiences, we (not just as teachers, but as educated citizens) will never know anything but the stereotypes (4-22-01).

Rista agreed with Candi's comments and shared her past experiences in a Mexican family. Her personal experiences with the Mexican culture inform her teacher identity and help others consider issues such as stereotyping cultures and making judgments about students. Rista explained:

> I grew up in El Paso, Candi and both my stepsister and my stepbrother are Mexican. I spent the last 20 years with both and love them to death. I know, from first-hand experience, the Hispanic culture is not about

> tortillas and the hat dance and Pancho Villa, and that was my point. (As for low-riders, my student happens to be obsessed with them. :-)) Again, I think the message got lost and we are on the same page here. My point was that as educators we have to be careful NOT to buy into stereotypes about other cultures. So often we think that making a minority child comfortable within the school system involves having Minority history week or lessons about their prior country's heroes and historical figures. I don't think if I asked my student who Pancho Villa was that he'd have any clue. And who am I to make a judgment about that? His culture may no longer be that of the Mexican. It may be a culture of the Mexican-American, and when we make assumptions about their culture based on their prior country of origin, we are, in a way being just as discriminatory as someone who assumes they want to embrace Americana. If our goal is to provide role models they can identify with, more power to us, but too often our attempts to talk to minorities about "their culture" are just snobs to make US feel more comfortable with the differences we see (4-22-01).

This lengthy discussion provides a contextualized example of how preservice teachers in the reading specialization program challenged each other's beliefs, questioned each other, and negotiated issues without simple solutions. Mercer (1995), though focusing more on elementary-aged students, asserts the importance of learners engaging in this kind of dialogue, what he calls

exploratory talk. He suggests that providing students with opportunities for dialogue and collaborative problem solving – allows them to come to a fuller and more critical understanding. In this study, through co-reflection and exploratory online talk, participants were co-constructing an understanding of a responsive, child-centered teaching pedagogy by borrowing the words from course articles, challenging each others' responses and recreating upon their own understandings through these interactions.

This above discussion also demonstrates two important points related to their understanding of this type of pedagogy. First, it shows how some participants in the program did not always accept simplistic notions of responsive, child-centered pedagogy. They wrestled with issues of culture, language, and how best to serve the needs of all students. Dr. H. encouraged individuals to question their beliefs and to raise issues that would help them clarify their own teaching philosophies. He did this by nudging participants to think beyond simple assumptions about students and teaching. Secondly, it illustrates how constructing a responsive, child-centered stance was extremely subjective and personal for the participants in this study. For instance, Rista's personal experiences living with Mexican stepsiblings helped her to reflect on cultural tensions many teachers experience and informed her teaching identity. Additionally, Rista seemed to use narrative to emphasize the importance of this issue and to organize her personal

beliefs related to teaching immigrants. Rista's use of story in this instance, may also serve as a way for her to become aware of her developing self as a teacher.

During the second and third semesters of the program, participants continued to examine their role as teachers and the importance of responsive teaching. Course readings continued to play an important part in how participants constructed their identities as teachers. Building a curriculum that is meaningful and useful for individual students was essential for Ellie's developing teacher identity. In response to chapter one of *Classrooms That Work* (Cunningham & Allington, 1999), Ellie quoted from the text and added,

> *Not only do children bring to school huge differences in the amount of reading and writing experiences, they have had, but they also come with their own personalities*. I think that this sentence perfectly sums up *why no single approach will ever teach all children* (10-01-01).

Here, Ellie borrowed Allington's words and embedded them in her writing in order to clarify her own beliefs. In another response to *Classrooms that Work*, Ellie commented and made connections across texts, "Children have knowledge of their world. It is important to tap into this knowledge and to teach children to use what they already know about their world to increase their reading comprehension and to make reading meaningful." Ellie's reference to children having knowledge of their world seemed connected to Freire's phrase "reading the world." Ellie appeared to hook on to this phrase to express the importance of

child-centered instruction and her role as a teacher to utilize this knowledge in thoughtful ways. She seemed to appropriate Freire's ideas and used them to guide her philosophy of teaching children and to make sense of the practical applications of responsive reading instruction.

Valuing students' knowledge and tapping into this knowledge was one way that most of the participants defined themselves as teachers. Once again, Ayers's words were used to illustrate what these preservice teachers valued and strived to become. Lynn wrote:

> *Good teachers, then, become students of their students in order to create more vital opportunities for real learning.* Teachers should spend key energy figuring out how they [students] THINK, EXPERIENCE, and MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD. This is information that you must use to adjust your lesson plans to meet the unique needs of each of your students.

Being a student of students was exactly how Adrianna described herself as a teacher. During our interview, at the end of her student teaching semester, Adrianna shared:

> The kids take center stage in my life. I want them feel that way so I do that a lot. By asking them constantly what is going on- in their lives, about their sports, about their families. I push myself to make sure they know. I do. And again that is by really personalizing and individualizing

> everything I do with them. My comments, my praise, my questions, my challenges, anything and everything is personalized.

Responsive, child-centered teaching was a framework for thinking about literacy instruction that was developed and negotiated by the participants. The development of this framework was influenced by the program's clearly stated objectives, the faculty's goals, and course readings. This framework was carried out members of the program negotiating and critically examining the practical and theoretical aspects of individualized instruction. Further, it was a salient theme used to think about reading instruction and teaching children.

All six participants believed they must learn about their students' lives and utilize that information to teach responsively. At the same time, the group was committed to child-centered instruction and believed it was their responsibility as teachers. While most of the participants "took on" responsive teaching as their own value, the degree of influence of the readings and online responses is unclear. While some participants may have entered the program with values aligned, others were perhaps influenced by the readings and responses or more willing to change their past beliefs about teaching and children. What seems clear is that readings, peer responses, and faculty comments were influential in helping participants refine and clarify their values and reasons for joining the reading specialization program. Overall, as a group, the participants maintained a common commitment to children. Coupled with the commitment to children and

responsive teaching, “teaching against the grain” emerged as another pervasive theme reflected in the online responses.

Teaching Against the Grain

From the beginning, Dr. H. encouraged participants in the reading specialization program to question traditional literacy instruction and challenge assumptions about teaching and schooling. They were expected to be critical of their readings and share insights with others. During her interview Rista recalled, “We were expected to be critical and question just as long as we were willing to back up our argument.” Adrianna affirmed: “If I wasn’t bringing up an issue, then it was Kris or Rista was or Abraham. Everyone was encouraged to be critical. It was beautiful!” With this type of emphasis on critical reflection, it is not surprising that participants often questioned conventional ways of teaching and wondered what it would take to teach differently. They also wrote about standing up for students and doing what was best for them despite the current trend of high-stakes assessment.

“Teaching against the grain,” a phrase borrowed from Cochran-Smith (1991), was officially introduced to the students during the start of the Introduction to Teaching: Applied Learning and Development in the second semester of the program. During this time, “students examined a range of factors that could distract them from responsive teaching” (J. Hoffman, personal

communication, November 23, 2002). However, “teaching against the grain” discourse occurred before the Teaching: Applied Learning and Development course. For example, three weeks into the first semester, Adrianna wrote about the challenges she might face when teaching non-traditionally. She wrote the following message on the community literacy message board:

> This article makes me wonder what type of administrative challenges or time constraints I may be faced with if/when attempting to teach non-traditionally. How can I make sure I don't end up teaching in a school system when I'll give up and fall into out-of-the-textbook-worksheet type of mind numbing routine? What kind of steps did the teachers who did the learning logs, etc take to enhance their forthrightness? (02-07-01)

A few weeks later, on February 26th, 2001 in response to the article *The Role of Decoding in Early Literacy Instruction and Assessment* (Juel, 1986) Brice, a fellow classmate, wondered how teachers could better educate parents and explained how important it was "to read to their children and foster emergent reading.” Belinda responded to Brice’s thoughts:

> I wonder the same thing. I think it was in an article from last week that got me thinking about this. I think it would be awesome if a teacher could have a meeting with the parents of each student before they even go to school for the first time. In this meeting they could discuss the amount of reading that takes place at home and how important it is to foster their

> child's reading at home. From there, the teacher could have an idea of the students reading levels before the first day of class. Just something else for us to think about when we are in the classroom (2-27-01).

Belinda considered one way to change or reform current school assessment by meeting with parents before school started and finding ways to increase students' reading development. She was considering the possibilities to reinvent accepted practices and to consider better ways to meet the individual needs of students.

Participants' understandings were being influenced by readings that defined literacy in new ways. After reading Kozol's chapter "Invisible Minority: The Growing Crisis of Illiterate America," from his book *Illiterate America (1986)*, Lynn embraced Kozol's challenge to view literacy in a new way. She quoted Kozol and wrote:

> I really think he's [Kozol] is challenging us to have a different view- a more "sane, essential and realistic" view of "humane literacy." It was kind of like he was challenging us, BUT also he believes that WE can do something about it! Have an effect, WE=you +me!!! (03-08-01)

Lynn seemed inspired by Kozol's challenge and empowered to make a difference. At the same time, her reference to "WE" illustrated Lynn's affiliation with her fellow cohort peers and their common commitment to change current literacy practices. Lynn's interpretation of Kozol's challenge seemed to inform her

teacher self and gave her the means to see teaching against the grain as a community goal where teachers can transform the current understanding of children's reading failures. By borrowing Kozol's words and giving them voice in her own writing, Lynn seemed to try on a new perspective related to literacy instruction and take on the challenge that Kozol gives all teachers. In another example, Ellie inferred that as a group, she and her peers could reform reading instruction. In response to "Nontechnical Assessment" (Johnston, 1992), Ellie quoted from the text and replied:

> I became instantly interested in this article when I read the quote at the beginning. *We need to produce students who know how to think. And we need new tests to help us.* But I truly feel that the real assessment comes from the student and teacher relationship in the classroom. *The most powerful assessment for students learning occurs in the classroom, moment-to-moment between teacher and students.* AMEN!!! That's how we help kids. (04-21-01)

Ellie used a quote from the article to state her position that popular forms of assessment are not effective and that students can be better helped if teachers are willing to learn from their students on a "moment to moment" basis. Both Belinda and Lynn referred to their fellow classmates as "we" implying that, as a group, they can become teachers who go beyond traditional ways of teaching reading.

They both appropriated the belief that teaching against the grain was an honorable view of teaching and that they could indeed make a difference.

In her article "*Learning to Teach Against the Grain,"* Cochran-Smith (1991) advocates a teacher education program that places student teachers with cooperating teachers who are committed to teaching against the grain; teachers who are actively attempting to reform teaching and schooling. This collaboration, according to Cochran-Smith, can intensify the opportunities student teachers have to liberalize and reinvent schooling. Even though not all of the students in the reading specialization program were placed with "cooperating teachers who were actively attempting to reform teaching and schooling," (p. 285) as a cohort, they seemed to be working together to understand what it takes to teach against the grain. In many of their online messages, participants referred to teaching against the grain as a philosophy that bound them as a group. For example, during our interview in the Spring 2002, Rista shared, "Anybody who is in Hoffman's cohort and who believes a small portion of what Hoffman thinks is not your typical teacher…" Adrianna made a related comment about the group's commitment to non-traditional teaching: "Do you think that every teacher out there is as conscious and open-minded as cohort E is?" This collective commitment illustrates how the participants identified themselves and how this philosophy informed their visualizations and images of being a teacher.

Discussions related to teaching against the grain sometimes centered on professional responsibilities and goals as future classroom teachers. On October 15, 2001, Abraham wrote his expectations as a non-traditional teacher. He asserted: "We should, as aspiring teachers, be prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty by actually introducing our students to a variety of experiences and situations that can only normally be found outside the classroom." Ellie made similar comments about non-traditional teaching, stating, "I think as teachers we need to look critically at our classrooms and think outside the box on how we can improve the learning environment for each student." These professional expectations placed students' needs at the center of teaching and learning and were fostered by the group's affiliation and common goals.

At the same time, participants continually considered the complexities of becoming a non-traditional teacher. Rista wrote about her challenges while teaching with others who "didn't seem to teach against the grain." She shared: "It is hard to go out there and be surrounded by typical teachers and to be surrounded by kids who are a result of typical teaching and to be an atypical teacher who wants to reach the kids in an atypical way. " The understanding that unconventional or teaching against the grain teaching takes hard work and a commitment to children was a salient theme throughout the program, yet students seemed to lean on their peers and the language in course readings for inspiration.

For example, Abraham borrowed William Ayers' (1993) words to clarify his own hopes and visions of teaching. He stated:

> Ayers says to teach with a heart and a brain- to see education as a deeply humanizing enterprise, to teach toward opening infinite possibilities for your students- requires courage. I fear that many teachers out there don't have the desire to go above and beyond when it comes to providing for their students. But we have the courage that Ayers so fondly talks about when he says, *We can look inside ourselves, then summon strengths we never knew we had, connect up with other seekers- teachers and parents and kids- to create the school and classrooms kids deserve- thoughtful places of decency, sites of peace and freedom and justice.* I believe what Ayers is talking about.

Students in the reading specialization program turned to each other, the professor and readings to negotiate their common commitment to teach against the grain. Interesting, however, was that while the idea of teaching against the grain was a common theme found in all of the online messages and in our interviews, each participant had a slightly different understanding of what it meant to her/him. During our interviews, Abraham shared that teaching against the grain meant "not getting fired" and doing what was "best for students." For Adrianna, teaching against the grain was about helping students become aware of social injustices and being responsible to children. Rista believed that teaching against the grain is about "not being satisfied with mediocre." She shared:

> Against the grain teacher is a teacher who looks at each child as an individual and asks herself, what do I need to do for this kid to help it be successful? Not just in my classroom, not just on the TAAS, but also in life – period. To be successful in life. Against the grain teacher is a teacher who is willing to do the research – to figure out what is going to be best for the kid and then push for that plan to happen. To push for other teachers to do the same thing. To actually take an investment in the kid's life. Not just have them for a year and they have to pass the TAAS test.

Belinda believed that teaching against the grain was about doing things differently. She shared: "I don't want to do everything by the book. I want to try different things…so my classroom will be inviting to the kids and they will say WOW."

Lynn believed that teaching against the grain was about using innovative methods of instruction like improvisation to help kids experience literature and express their feelings. Ellie advocated classroom meetings as a way to establish a safe environment for students to solve their problems. Each of these interpretations aligns with the multiple identities, past experiences, and varied images of teaching participants brought into the program. As they responded online with others, they investigated and refined their beliefs and used their multiple identities as filters to make sense of their readings.

While participants had different ideas of what teaching against the grain meant for them, each individual focused on students and their learning needs. In fact, many wrote about their aversion to high stakes assessment in light of students' learning needs as a way to conceptualize teaching against the grain. Rista believed that "teaching against the grain required more than just preparing children to pass high stakes assessments. She believed that teaching must help children to "be successful in life." Rista's attention to the "TAAS" reflected the conversations and readings that addressed high stakes testing all three semesters. Participants continuously challenged the need and importance of tests like the T.A.A.S. (Texas Assessment of Academic Success now called T.A.K.S. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) and its impact on teaching and children. Belinda wrote a response to an article titled "Nontechnical Assessment" (Johnston, 1992). She pointed out:

> I became instantly interested in this article when I read the quote at the beginning. *We need to produce students who know how to think. And we need new tests to help us.* I feel like we constantly get back to the issue of tests in this class. And I feel that the general view of these tests remains the same with each new discussion. At first this quote confused me a little. But by the end, I was able to understand… I am really not sure I believe that "*if we had the right tests, then teachers would teach better*." (04-11-01)

Lynn similarly opposed the importance of high-stakes assessment and drew on her own personal experiences as a university student. She declared:

> I am VERY familiar with the idea of "teaching to the test." I feel like TONS of professors do that EVEN at UT!!!! I was mad and frustrated when the teacher/professor was reading to us the exact information that was going to be on the test…It's like the teacher is just skimming by, doing the bare minimum and as for the last four years I've paid for that education and I don't appreciate the instructors "just skimming by."

Practical experiences offered another layer to teaching against the grain. For example, Rista challenged the usefulness of high-stakes assessment and related these strong opinions to her fifth grade tutee.

> I loved the part on standardized tests and how much they DON'T tell you. I know this needs to be filed under "Tired Topic", but I cannot fathom why school districts and those that are the powers that be are still so fixated on standardized tests. I know it's because they don't understand how they really work, but come on!.. When will people understand that standardized testing does not work accurately or adequately in today's world? Manuel tends to pronounce words like "state and "school" as "eschool" due to his Spanish background. Does this make him a bad reader? I think not! (11-15-01)

Abraham struggled with his beliefs about high stakes assessment and never came to terms with how these tests influenced student learning. In response to Ayers' (1993), Abraham contradicted himself in the same response. He wrote,

> I feel scared for the kids who still have to deal with these tests and embarrassed that we are still using them. Although, I guess this type of testing is better than no type of testing at all. It is just like Ayers says; *Sorting children into winners and losers is the main business of the standardized tests* (10-29-01).

Abraham's response illustrates how he was still working through his understanding of high stakes assessment and approximating his beliefs against those of the course readings and peer comments. His comment, "I guess this type of testing is better than no testing at all" suggests that Abraham was highly influenced by common understandings of testing and was wrestling with these issues as a future teacher. Negotiating high-stakes assessment and reflecting on the practical challenges teachers face was a significant topic among participants' online responses and conversations. Rista articulated it well in our interview:

> Because it is hard anyway – against the grain teaching. This is something they talked about – it is hard to stand up and say – when everyone is worried about I've got to do TAAS practice and we have to worry about TAKS and crap like that – and standardized testing and worksheets. When all of that is flying around and your team is planning this and making

> stacks of worksheets and crap like that it is hard to stand up and say – no thanks (4-27-02).

High stakes assessment issues were addressed and revisited throughout the three-semester program. Issues related to teaching against the grain such as high stakes assessment spiraled over time and suggests that this was a complex topic for the preservice teachers and not one that could be easily discussed and then forgotten. Through their online responses and numerous course readings, participants had multiple opportunities to explore difficult aspects of high stakes assessment, reading instruction, and teaching against the grain to make sense of their teaching identities.

As they reflected upon perspectives related to teaching against the grain, they were refining their beliefs and considering their agency as classroom teachers – meaning they looked for ways to control their future classrooms and have a voice in the way their classrooms function. The community supported this agency through their affiliation with each other in the reading specialization cohort and their common goals as reading teachers. In terms of agency, much of what individuals wrote about was borrowed from the writings of Richard Allington. From the chapter "Beyond the Classroom: Things Worth Fighting, from Classrooms that Work" (Cunningham & Allington, 1999*)*, Allington describes "changes, adaptations and additions" that classroom teachers can control (p.258). Specifically, he encourages teachers to make decisions that will

increase the literacy growth of their students such as setting their own "schedules for uninterrupted blocks of instructional time" and "deciding how children are supported by services such as reading recovery, speech, resource" (p. 267).

For most of the participants, having control over student grouping or classroom scheduling was a facet of teaching against the grain they could conceptualize as new teachers. For instance, Abraham firmly believed he should have control over when his students get "pulled out" for support services. He shared during our interview:

> My belief is that teachers should control the elements of their classrooms and control the time and the way kids get pulled out. I mean you are the teacher and the teacher should know the best time for a kid to be pulled out. I don't want to be in a school where control is taken from me in my (3-25-02).

Similar to Abraham, Belinda expressed a need to control her schedule and block out time for writing. She announced:

> I want to fight for a whole block of time where my kids are writing for an hour – some teachers don't realize the importance of having uninterrupted time were kids are reading or writing, but I do and when I am interviewed, I will ask the principal how they do schedules (3-10-02).

Lynn did not express a need to control a block of time in her future classroom or when her students were pulled out of class, but instead she wanted her students to "enjoy literature for the sake of enjoying it." She shared,

> Next year, I want to get kids excited and I love doing read alouds. I want them to sit on the carpet and notice things in the pictures the way artists do. I want to bring in whatever artwork I have done and show them how to do it… and also having them do connections, observations, and wonderings…

Lynn's example illustrates that finding ways to actively reform and reinvent teaching, or teach against the grain, like Cochran-Smith (1991) suggests, can mean different things for different people. Lynn believed that reading for enjoyment was more important then teaching students to answer questions and pass a test.

All participants, in some fashion, explained how they would reinvent their future classrooms to teach non-traditionally. In the statements above, Abraham borrowed the words of authors of course readings as he negotiated his own beliefs. Lynn and Rista drew on their personal experiences to make sense of their learning and came to a personal and individualized understanding of teaching against the grain. Thus, "teaching against the grain" was a socially negotiated construct that seemed to inform each participant's teacher identity. The development of their unique understandings of non-traditional teaching influenced

the construction of themselves as teachers. At the same time, they were articulating their agency as novice teachers and thinking of ways to define their professional selves in terms of actions.

Knowledge and Confidence in Literacy Instruction

Participants wrote about and discussed their developing knowledge of literacy instruction and grappled with their changing abilities and fluctuating confidence as reading teachers. They appeared to be aware that their knowledge and their effectiveness as classroom teachers grew over time. For example, one month after university classes started, Belinda wrote about feeling unprepared to teach:

> I feel like I am completely unprepared to be in the classroom and be responsible for the growth and success of my students. I understand that I am still a little more than a year from being in charge, but now I am realizing exactly how much more I have to learn. I wish that all the people who think that education is an easy major could sit through our classes and realize that we work our butts off. (02-28-01)

However, this view changes. At the end of the program, during our interview, Belinda believed she had grown as a knowledgeable, reading teacher. She shared:

> I have a huge understanding of reading now – from first grade level to seventh grade level readers, and it is just amazing having to choose books

> and going from level one to eighteen…I feel confident being able to teach reading. I feel confident in knowing that I can pick a text out for a child that they will be successful in that they will learn from. I feel confident that I can guide them into a better understanding of why they are reading – what it is useful for – um that they are going to read forever. (03-15-01)

Belinda's self perception changed from "completely unprepared" to having a "huge understanding of reading." Much of Belinda's extended learning of literacy instruction was associated with her field-based experiences. She recalled:

> I tutored reading, I taught guided reading. I helped kids just read aloud. Sentence study, word work. We did it all. …I have grown so much, mostly from interacting with the kids and seeing how much I change everyday because of them. I don't feel unprepared or irresponsible any more (3-10-02).

Belinda's view of herself as a knowledgeable reading teacher was influenced by her students' successes as well. She believed that she could help her students read better because she was knowledgeable in reading instruction, though other subjects were still challenging. In our follow up interview, Belinda admitted, "teaching reading is easy, but math is extremely frustrating." She shared: "I just don't feel like I have been trained in math, and I don't feel confident teaching it." As an example, Belinda compared her students' reading abilities to their math skills:

> In math they just come up to me with their paper and say I don't get it – I ask them have your read the questions? They don't even try. But I feel like the kids really try in reading. And I feel like I don't have as much patience in math as I do in reading (3-10-02).

Belinda's expertise in literacy instruction and her lack of math knowledge affected the way she viewed her students' abilities and her own capabilities as an effective teacher. While her expert knowledge of reading instruction allowed her to guide her students, scaffold their reading instruction in appropriate ways, and maintain high expectations, her lack of math knowledge may negatively influence her students' achievements.

Abraham made similar comments about his students' learning abilities and his expanding knowledge. He told me: "I see more of what they (the students) are capable of doing now than I did before. I don't know, I see more positive things. I think before I take things for face value. This was a low girl and this was a high girl and now I see the most amazing things from these kids." He went on to describe a little boy in his class who appeared to be extremely "low." He stated, "I remember looking at him and thinking he is a low kid. Not fully grasping that this kid could do amazing things. So I just gave him a little bit more – that extra push and I mean he was the first one done with the entire project."

Ellie was also aware of her developing knowledge as a reading teacher and believed her knowledge of literacy instruction enabled her to assess students more

effectively and guide their learning. She commented:

> I started off not having a clue. …I truly felt like I went in there not having a clue on how to help kids read. Really, I didn't have a lot of time in the classrooms working with kids, but you look at the tutoring end of things over the couple of semesters and I feel much more confident in my ability to assess the child and know where they are and then work from there. So my confidence has grown… and a lot of it was going back after tutoring and sitting there with 21 other people and shared, this is what I did and learning from them (4-15-02).

Again, we can sense Ellie's growing confidence and awareness of her own developing knowledge about reading instruction. She valued her work with students and the conversations she and her classmates had after tutoring. According to Ellie, sharing and learning from her peers was essential to knowledge construction and meaning making. It is interesting, however, that Ellie never felt fully prepared to be a reading teacher. In our interview, she shared, "I'm not a reading teacher, I'm not even a teacher yet." For Ellie, tutoring one student or interning in the classroom as a student teacher was not enough experience to become a real teacher. She also explained that in her student teaching classroom, she never taught reading. According to our interview, she shared, "I just led small reading discussion groups and gave spelling tests. I never had to teach reading because they were all readers." Ellie's perception of her

students as readers, who did not need to be taught reading, may have influenced her own self-efficacy or sense of self as a reading teacher. Ellie's student teaching placement, in which she interned in a multiage classroom with two partnering teachers, may have also contributed to her worries about herself as a teacher. In this structure, Ellie was never given complete control over the classroom, nor was she given control over planning her own reading and writing lessons. Instead, she partner taught with one of her cooperating teachers and often followed their lesson plans. While this was a valuable experience, it may have influenced the way Ellie viewed her abilities and her teacher identity.

Lynn described her knowledge of reading as an understanding of "the language of reading" and an ability to use literacy terms appropriately. In our interview, she recalled,

> Before Hoffman's class I didn't know any of the language…[Lori: What kind of language are you talking about?] Any of the words, reading strategies, guided reading, running records, miscue analysis…. Now I am aware of the things I do and say when I am teaching reading, but this is exactly what I am struggling with in math – what words to use. What words to come out of my mouth to help the kids understand concepts – you know the language (5-1-02).

Lynn was conscious of the language she used to teach reading, but much like Belinda, she felt inadequate to teach math. She claimed, "I just don't know the

words to explain mathematical concepts and that is frustrating."

Lynn wrote and spoke about her knowledge as "an awareness" of her language as a reading teacher because many of the course readings, especially from the first semester of the program, discussed the importance of being a metacognitive reader (one who was aware of their own reading strategies). These articles seemed to have an influence on Lynn's view of herself as a reading teacher. Lynn was also encouraged by Dr. H and classmates to become "aware of " herself as a reader. For instance, in response to an article titled *The Role of Readers' Schema in Comprehension, Learning, and Memory* (Anderson, 1993) Dr. H. complimented Lynn for her self-awareness as a reader, her understanding of the reading process, and how this knowledge would help her as a classroom teacher. He wrote, "This is such a thoughtful and personal elaboration on schema theory and the reading process. Your awareness of these processes is incredible and powerful when you turn it toward the act of teaching." Dr. H. wrote the above comment to Lynn during her first semester in the program and at the end of the program, during our interview, Lynn shared that the schema article was an important one for her learning as a reading teacher. It is possible; therefore that Dr. H.'s comment and her personal understanding of schema theory influenced how Lynn viewed her knowledge as a reading teacher and her ongoing development. Further, she seemed to use this framework throughout her course responses and in our interview to interpret her teaching abilities and believed that

knowing the language of a certain area would help her to teach it.

At the same time, Lynn never seemed completely certain of herself and her abilities as a reading teacher. She seemed tentative of her knowledge and abilities. She may have felt unsure of her knowledge and abilities as a reading teacher for many reasons. First, throughout all of Lynn's online responses she wrote from a student position – wanting to be informed by course readings and the program faculty. She often made comments such as "I don't know anything… or … that's why I am asking you [Dr. H.] because you are the expert and I am just learning." Secondly, she shared that she felt somewhat disadvantaged because her cooperating teacher was new to the reading specialization program and did things differently than what she was learning in her course work. She often compared her classroom internship experiences with those of her best friend who was working with a cooperating teacher who had been associated with the reading specialization program for many years. Third, Lynn's online responses were often scattered and unfocused. She seemed to embed quotes from the readings into her responses but often did not reflect on their importance or their instructional purpose. She borrowed the words of course readings but never seemed to make them her own or use them in completely appropriate ways. Also, she rarely questioned the readings or criticized what she was learning. In this way, her student stance seemed to keep her from delving deeper into issues and related practices associated with reading instruction.

Grappling with their expanding knowledge and their confidence as novice teachers was common to most of the participants. As they grew in their learning and considered their development as literacy teachers, each participant wrestled with feeling certain about their teaching and knowledge, and at the same time questioned how to use this knowledge in the classroom. Abraham admitted:

> I am completely confident in my abilities to do anything in the classroom. A hundred-percent confident. But still there is the whole back of my mind thing going on that I don't know what the hell I am doing. …It is a big blur because I don't know where I will be but I can envision my classroom. I can envision my curriculum and my philosophies.

In much the same vein, Adrianna discussed her growing understanding and expressed her need to continue learning. She shared: "My capabilities might not be as strong right now but with practice I will be the kind of teacher who can really transform classrooms and the attitudes in schools."

One aspect of being a preservice teacher is not knowing what job you will have in the future. This limbo stage seemed to keep each of the participants tentative about themselves as teachers. They were becoming teachers in a reading specialization program and working as teachers in their internship classrooms, yet they were not "full fledged, paid teachers." Adrianna explained, "We are unpaid teachers." Many felt that student teaching was merely a dress rehearsal for becoming a "real" teacher. As Rista stated: " I have a lot to learn, and I think most

of it will be when I get my own classroom and become the real teacher. So call me next year and we'll talk!"

On the whole, as the participants read and responded to articles and worked with students, they became more aware of their learning experiences. They wrestled with their self-confidence and questioned their future as classroom teachers. Their opportunities to explore their own learning and teaching identities with others through online responses and apprenticeships seemed to help them come to see themselves as real teachers imagining their hopes and goals for the future.

Images of Teaching

Research on teacher preparation suggests that soon to be teachers often rely on previous teaching models and socialization experiences internalized during their own schooling to inform their formal teacher education (Lortie, 1975; Zeichner, Tabachnick, & Densmore, 1982). Evidence from this study illustrated that many of the participants' used narratives to describe past schooling experiences and make sense of their practical teaching experiences. They used their stories to make connections between their lived experiences, to build on the ideas mentioned in course readings, and to visualize their future classrooms. In essence, these narratives seemed to help individuals go beyond their previous experiences and reinvent their individual images of becoming a reading teacher.

For example, Rista remembered her former teacher Mrs. Morgan who "had such excitement in her eyes" and who "guided us in getting that idea to fruition."(4-29-02). Memories of Mrs. Morgan influenced Rista's image of herself as a "navigator," and helped her become more aware of her own professional vision. During our interview, she concluded:

> I want the kids to come in and feel like they are the captain. I want them to be the ones to do the exploring. I am just here to direct them if they are going the wrong way. And help them get to the point where they feel they are the captain of their own ship. I mean how amazing is that? (4-29-02).

Rista reflected on her own love of discovery and her desire to lead students to their own learning. In another example she wrote about helping her fifth grade tutee become more invested and interested in his learning, "My student is very interested in martial arts, so I am going to focus on that and help him connect the discipline it takes for martial arts to other things." (01-10-01). These examples illustrate how Rista relied on multiple images and memories of schooling to inform her teacher identity. At the same time, personal stories related to family influenced her developing teacher self.

Rista often expressed anger towards school systems and often raged on the injustice of high-stakes assessment. Her angry feelings towards school systems were connected to memories of her younger sister who failed second grade. She recalled, "so here is my sister failing a grade and I figured I am so fricken T.O.'ed

by this…and the more I thought about it the more I was like I so want to be Mrs. Morgan." Additionally, to a response to "Consequences of Family Literacy for Adults and Children: Some Preliminary Findings" (Philliber et. al., 1996), Rista wrote about "students failed by the academic system" and stated: "I believe adult illiteracy will continue as long as the general populace continues to place blame for illiteracy on the illiterate rather than the system." (03-21-01) Rista's teacher identity seems to be influenced by her memories of Mrs. Morgan and her personal narratives related to high stakes assessment.

Rista also identified with the image of teaching non-traditionally or teaching against the grain. But this image was challenged during her student teaching internship. In our interview at the end of the program, Rista shared, "I started out student teaching with a really strong idea of the type of teacher I wanted to be and I found that idea assaulted when I went into the actual classroom." She continued:

> I was so bright eyed and bushy tailed- rose colored glasses at the beginning and I went through and saw a CT [cooperating teacher] who was a phenomenal teacher and made the assumption that she was an against the grain teacher– ok since she is a phenomenal teacher in some respects- she must be phenomenal in all respects- but she wasn't and that went against a lot of what I had learned and agreed with in Dr. H's classes. And now I am at a point where every teacher is different and I have come

> back full circle in that I believe what I was taught in Dr. H's class as far as against the grain teaching. Making sure you focus on the child- making sure that it is a positive experience for the child. Instilling a sense of wonder and a sense of hunger for knowledge – instead of just teaching. Orating (4-29-02).

Rista's image as a "teacher against the grain" was challenged by her classroom internship. This struggle was exceedingly difficult for Rista, but through self-reflection and support from her student teaching supervisor, Rista was able to re-conceptualize and embrace her self-image as a teacher. She explained, "I had an epiphany in Dr. H.'s class that there are teachers and there are lecturers and I want to be a teacher!" It seems that her self-awareness and passion to fight against school systems that failed students and to "instill a sense of wonder and hunger for knowledge" prevailed despite Rista's difficult internship experience, and in the end, may have influenced where she decided to teach. After graduating, Rista accepted a job at a charter school and "refuses to play the game" most schools play in order to teach students. Britzman (1991) claims that the most powerful self-image for student teachers is one that captures self as "the author of the teacher she is becoming" (p. 6). Through multiple images and personal narratives, Rista was authoring a teacher identity that would help her cope with ambiguities, conflicts, and the demands of teaching as well as create possibilities for her

future. Online responses enabled her to reflect on her practical experiences and reconsider the teacher she was choosing to become.

Ellie, like Rista, relied on her personal images of learning and schooling to inform her teacher identity and classroom practices. Ellie's image as a reading teacher seemed to be shaped by her position as an older, non-traditional student in the reading specialization program and her practical experiences as a student teacher. Ellie believed she was "more mature and older than the others." She decided "to become a teacher a bit later in life than most others in our cohort" because she wanted to find a career that would be "worthwhile" and "help children." She recalled:

> After watching my nieces grow up and go to school, I wanted to help kids succeed academically in order to take full advantage of all our society has to offer. I believe all children deserve an intelligent, caring and committed teacher. A teacher with the skills and patience to help them succeed. This is the role I hope to fill (3-15-02).

Ellie believed that her thoughtful and "worthwhile" career choice as a teacher could "help children make academic strides" or "improve a student's social skills." Ellie was often cautious of being too idealist about "changing the world" and focused on the "reality" of teaching children and families. Suspect of her peer's idealism and their goals to change the world, Ellie recalled, "I hope that *my* life experiences have taught me to be a little more realistic about things."

McLean (1999) argues that images of self as teacher are critical to the process of becoming a teacher because they constitute the personal context within which new information will be interpreted. This research indicated, like McLean's claims, that Ellie's self-image as a mature individual highly influenced the way she interpreted course readings and practical experiences. In response to a chapter from Nell Nodding's (1992) book *The* C*hallenge to Care in Schools*, Ellie became angered by Noddings' failure to acknowledge real-life situations in our schools. She wrote:

> I have real problems with the statement: *Schools today are not supportive place for children with genuine intellectual interests*. I think this is very elitist. Noddings wants this daughter to care about pets and such but what about getting to know and care about these kids who have discipline problems or are not as "motivated" as this ideal daughter? (12-1-01)

Following this, she compared Noddings' comments to a recent article in the newspaper about a local elementary school. She concluded:

> Blackhome Elementary… This is a school that has trouble-keeping teachers, 90% of the students are low income, and 53% of the students passed the TAAS reading test. I think that these students and their parents have enough to worry about…Please, no more Noddings! (12-1-01)

She questioned the practicality of a caring curriculum and was interested in "instilling a core elementary education for all students." It is unclear why Ellie

dismissed Noddings' suggestions as non-practical. Perhaps, Ellie's response to Noddings' caring curriculum was filtered through her concern with being practical and "realistic" and that she interpreted, perhaps too quickly, Noddings' writings as unrealistic and not attentive to real concerns of teachers.

Ellie seemed more interested in the real problems children bring to school and how to help them learn in safe environment. Ellie's self-identification as a mature teacher and her focus on the realities of classroom teaching influenced who she was becoming. This perception may shape how she views her students and the school curriculum. During our interview, Ellie shared that she valued her internship experiences because for her "the reality is out in the classroom." She explained, "knowing the kids, their families and the complications that are involved" was essential for Ellie's developing self as a teacher. She added: "Tutoring one child one or two days a week, where is the reality in that?" (3-15-01)

Ellie's focus on reality and the value of classroom experiences seemed to guide her identity development. In response to William Ayers' (1993) chapter titled "The Mystery of Teaching," Ellie concluded:

> Sometimes it does seem to be a bit of a mystery to me. I see my CT's react almost automatically to something unexpected and I can't help but wonder how they knew just what to do. They both assure me that there is no mystery – the answer is years of experience. …Ayers just makes you

> want to be the best teacher you can possibly be but he does not sugar coat the task (10-25-01).

Ellie's appreciation for Ayers' pragmatic image that doesn't "sugar coat" teaching built on her own beliefs about becoming a teacher. Another illustration of how Ellie viewed herself as a teacher came during our interview when I asked her to describe her vision of the future. Ellie responded, "I don't know yet… I'm not a real teacher yet. But I see myself working with a diverse setting – or some other needs – like in the community." Ellie does not see herself as a real teacher perhaps because she believes that as a student, learning to become a teacher takes time and experience with students in real situations.

Ellie's inclination to not be too idealistic has played a major part in her image as a teacher. In July 2002 Ellie accepted a job in Houston, Texas at Orangewood Elementary, a school with a very large African American population. When we talked on the phone after she accepted the job, she shared, "I hope that I can be realistic about what I can do my first year of teaching!" I wasn't surprised by Ellie's comments. Her self-image as a mature and realistic teacher was articulated throughout the three-semester program. However, it is unclear whether Ellie ever changed or acquired a new image as a result of the program or whether her cooperating teachers' influenced her views. Further, I wonder whether Ellie's self image as a teacher was impacted because she believed that her classroom experiences were more beneficial than her coursework or

whether she viewed her mature, realistic experiences to be more valid than what she was learning in the program. Did she privilege her age and past experiences over her learning in the program? One possible explanation could be that because of her age, Ellie felt older and more mature than her classmates and this difference within the group, influenced her interpretations of the readings and her self-image as a teacher. Nonetheless, it could be understood that Ellie relied on her "mature, more experienced" self-perception to guide her responses and define who she was becoming as a reading teacher.

The other four preservice teachers, like Ellie and Rista, relied on multiple images of teaching and past schooling experiences to author their teaching identities. These images influenced the way participants interpreted readings and helped them make sense of the complex and personal dynamics that characterize the process of becoming a teacher. At the same time, images of teaching became more defined and clarified over time for each participant. Online responses allowed individuals to examine their past, present, and future as reading teachers. In chapter five, Adrianna and Abraham images are discussed in detail and illustrate how one's multiple identities shape their understanding of teaching and becoming a teacher.

Overview and Interpretations

Looking across all four themes, the preservice teachers in this study borrowed the words of others and used them for their own purposes. Much like Bakhtin (1981) describes, "Our speech [writing] is overflowing with other people's words, which are transmitted with highly varied degrees of accuracy and impartiality" (p. 337). Ellie borrowed Allington's (1999) words and embedded them into her writing in order to clarify her own beliefs about responsive teaching. Lynn used Kozol's views of literacy to inform and challenge her to teach non-traditionally and Abraham relied on Ayers' comments to inspire him and help him wrestle with difficult issues such as high-stakes assessment. Rista and Adrianna challenged the writing of authors and appropriated them in personal, meaningful ways that informed their decisions as teachers. Overall, appropriating the words of others helped preservice teachers construct their understanding of teaching and learning and in some ways, take on the values and beliefs of the reading specialization program as their own. Bakhtin (1981) explains:

> The tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, and models and so forth- but strives rather

> to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior… (p. 342)

Using language to co-construct and negotiate their teaching identities also influenced their self-understanding and self-efficacy as teachers. Lynn hooked onto the metacognitive aspects of reading and reading instruction suggested by Dr. H. and applied this perspective to her understanding of other subjects and her confidence as a reading teacher.

The preservice teachers also used personal stories to make sense of their present classroom experiences and make connections to their developing identities as teachers (Danielewicz, 2001; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Personal connections were often expressed by telling informal stories of one's past or current situations. Stories allowed for individualized learning and connections across varied experiences. It is unclear whether preservice teachers used narrative in their online responses because the program director encouraged them to make personal connections to their learning, or because they were reading several course articles related to the power of narrative, or that is was the most natural way for connecting with others in the group and constructing one's beliefs in a safe environment. Whatever the case, preservice teachers in this program co-constructed their teaching identities by tapping into multiple resources such as course readings, faculty and peer responses, and connections between individual stories.

Summary

Participants co-constructed their teacher identities by drawing on personal experiences and appropriating common ways of being a reading teacher by borrowing the language of peers, course articles, and program faculty and using it for their own purposes. Four themes-responsive child-centered teaching, teaching against the grain, knowledge and confidence in literacy instruction, and images of teaching provided insight into the socially negotiated teacher identities. At the same time, preservice teachers preferred to use narrative to reflect on their lived experiences and beliefs as teachers. Often they challenged one another's' comments or criticized authors' perspectives. In this way, online responses helped participants co-reflect and explore their understandings of reading instruction. Specifically, stories of one self as knowledgeable reading teachers seemed significant to participants' identity as teachers and their expectations of students' achievements. Further, prospective teachers made sense of the course readings and their practical experiences in varied and individual ways. This process was both complex and personal. In order to better understand the complex and personal nature of identity development, in the next chapter I focus more intently on two participants from the original group of six.

CHAPTER FIVE

TWO CASE STUDIES

Two case studies and a cross-case analysis are presented in Chapter Five. I examine the identity development of Adrianna and Abraham, two preservice teachers who participated in the reading specialization program. Adrianna and Abraham were chosen as case studies because they offered divergent and contrasting perspectives concerning their decision to teach, their past schooling experiences, their student teaching placement, and their dispositions towards teaching reading as evidenced through their online responses and messages. Abraham, being the "only guy in the program" in his words, seemed to take this gendered view and let it influence how he viewed his development as a teacher. Adrianna saw herself as a writer and poet in the program and used this slant as a filter when responding to course readings. This orientation towards teaching also seemed to influence her image as a teacher and her instructional practices as a student teacher. At the same time, their learning experiences as students were quite diverse.

Adrianna did not have positive memories of being in school and Abraham did. Yet both shared very personal experiences of learning in school and made connections to their readings. They also used narratives as a reflective tool to share past experiences and to articulate their goals as teachers. Additionally,

Abraham and Adrianna went to extremely different schools for their student teaching internship. Adrianna worked at Maryville Elementary School with a student body ethnic composition of 3% Black, 93% Hispanic, and 4% White with 96% of the students on free or reduced lunch (this is often an indicator of socio-economic status). Abraham interned at Blanton Heights Elementary School with a student body ethnic composition of 5% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 79% White with 19% of the students on free or reduced lunch.

Finally, their individual perspectives about writing and posting online responses were also taken into consideration. Adrianna enjoyed writing responses online and valued her peers' reflections. She read all of messages and responses posted throughout the entire time in the program (Interview 3-25-02). Abraham did not like using online responses and claimed they "cramped his style." He read others' responses only when required. When responding online, both Adrianna and Abraham used humor in their writing and made many connections to their personal lived experiences. I wanted to tap into these similarities and differences to illustrate the identity development of two different preservice teachers in the reading specialization program.

Adrianna's Story

I first met Adrianna online in January 2001. As a veteran teaching

assistant for the reading specialization program, I often read students' online responses and general messages. For the most part, students posted announcements concerning their tutoring lessons, course assignments, and personal requests for information or help with students. I read most postings and periodically responded to individuals. On two occasions, I emailed Adrianna. The first letter was in reference to Adrianna's response to an article by Paulo Freire and the second was about her interest in an adult writing group as illustrated in the article titled "Writing as a Foundation for Transformative Community in the Tenderloin" (Heller, 1995). Both emails were short and complimentary. Our correspondence gave Adrianna and I the opportunity to get acquainted, but it wasn't until late in the first semester that I finally got to know Adrianna and meet with her face-to-face.

On April 15th, 2001 I attended the Community Literacy class and observed Adrianna and her classmates present their final literacy projects. All of the projects focused on literacy in the community. Adrianna and her group presented the significance of graffiti in the community and the power of writing. They showed a homemade video with local graffiti and discussed topics such as federal and state laws concerning the use of graffiti and its impact on the community. They concluded that graffiti is an authentic form of writing that teaches us about the voices of various community members. In addition, graffiti should be both honored and respected for its rich use of written language and for appreciating the

multiple literacies of a community. Adrianna's final presentation reflected her commitment to writing and the rights of under-represented individuals such as minorities and immigrants.

Over the next three semesters, I continued to attend classes, read students' online messages, and post responses. Sporadically, I observed tutoring lessons, participated in school celebrations and joined a few of the cohort's social functions. My role in the program was as a friend and a doctoral student who was "interested in the group's learning."

One year after the community literacy course, I interviewed Adrianna for this study. Although we had become friends and shared stories of living and traveling abroad, I didn't know much about Adrianna's personal history. During our interview, Adrianna told me about her experiences growing up and what led to her becoming a teacher. She laughed and cried as she described her journey of becoming a teacher in "cohort E."

In addition to our first interview, I have read all of Adrianna's online responses and her journal entries over the past three semesters and have uncovered themes that seem to contribute to Adrianna's identity development as a teacher. In the following section, I will describe Adrianna's cultural background and her experiences as an immigrant. Then I will illustrate her evolving self as a member of the reading specialization program and her future self as a teacher.

Home and School Background

Adrianna is a twenty-five year old Eastern European immigrant who came to America when she was eight years old. She was born in Romania and moved to Hungary months after her birth. When Adrianna was two years old, she and her parents moved to Israel to stay with relatives. Adrianna lived in Israel for six years then moved to America. At the age of eight, Adrianna spoke four languages - Romanian, Hungarian, Hebrew and English. When Adrianna immigrated to America, she experienced many hardships. She had "little money as a child" and was "ridiculed by teachers and peers about her English skills." She shared: "When I started attending Catholic school, I became the Jew, the outsider, the immigrant…my teachers told me I talked funny and it destroyed me."

Determined to speak English well, Adrianna made the decision "to learn as much" as she could and "to teach herself" to read and write. At a the age of 9, Adrianna recalled learning English by watching soap operas and Sesame Street with her mom. She explained, "Sesame Street was a religious experience for me as a kid. I learned so much. That is why I speak English."

Adrianna's struggles with learning English continued until she was in fifth grade. She confessed, "It wasn't until fifth grade that I could express myself with confidence." However, by middle school, Adrianna's ability to read and write English had developed beyond that of an average student. She developed an

"amazing appreciation" for the "power and beauty of the English language."

With much encouragement from her mom and dad, Adrianna started writing short stories and poetry. By the time she started college, Adrianna identified herself as a "writer and a poet" and decided that she "wanted to become a journalist." She pursued her love for the English language and in 1999 graduated with a degree in English Literature from a large southwestern university. Since college, Adrianna has published several of her short stories and poems and has an extensive writers' portfolio.

Many of Adrianna's poems and stories are about growing up as an Eastern European. She has written about living in Romania and Israel and being surrounded by other European immigrants in the United States. She shared, "I lived in a Jewish neighborhood in Pittsburgh where immigrants from all over the world settled and prospered." Being surrounded by other immigrants helped Adrianna get through some "excruciatingly tough times (especially the immigrations)." Through it all, she was able to build strong connections to her cultural and linguistic heritage.

The Decision to Teach

Adrianna never intended to become a teacher. She wanted to be a journalist and a poet, but during a trip to Mexico she had a chance to talk to a group of children. Adrianna's goals for the future were never the same. During

the summer of her sophomore year in college, Adrianna went to Mexico with a local missionary group. One afternoon, after working all day on a church project, Adrianna climbed to the top of a nearby mountain to write in her journal. Within minutes, several local village children walked up to Adrianna and began talking to her. They asked her to teach them how to say English words. Adrianna recalled fondly, "I didn't know Spanish, so I began speaking to the children in English, then in Hungarian and even in Hebrew." Adrianna and the children used nonverbal gestures, pictures, and four different languages to have a discussion. Adrianna remembered this experience as the reason she chose teaching as a career.

> I went up to the mountain and I was thinking to myself, 'oh God, why am I on this planet? Why am I here in Mexico?' I was just questioning my whole existence and out popped these kids. And then the most glorious, fulfilling–most rewarding two hours of my entire life passed before me. It was an answer to my prayers. Beautiful. This is why I am on this planet (3-25-02).

But, the memory of Mexico soon faded and Adrianna went back to school in the states. She continued writing poetry and working on her degree in English. She made plans to attend graduate school and work on a Master of Fine Arts degree in poetry.

Unfortunately, Adrianna's undergraduate grades were not high enough for

her to get accepted into a top-tier graduate school. She recalled, "I just needed to pull up my grades and get a nice portfolio together. And so my first thought was the college of education. It will be easy, and I will get A's. And so I enrolled." With the ultimate goal of going on to graduate school and becoming a freelance writer and poet, Adrianna enrolled in the school of education. When she heard about the reading specialization program, Adrianna thought the courses sounded "interesting," and they matched her interests of being a poet. In the spring of 2001, Adrianna joined the reading specialization program. Much like her missionary experience in Mexico, Adrianna quickly realized that belonging to the reading specialization program would be an "answer to my prayers."

Joining the reading specialization program was life changing for Adrianna. Within weeks of the first semester, Adrianna seemed to shift her identity from "being a student to becoming a teacher." Initially, she was influenced by the program's literacy philosophies and her immediate fondness toward her peers. She remembered feeling connected to her classmates and to the university professor. She stated, "I just fell in love. I fell in love with Dr. H. and other students and the readings!" Even though Adrianna intended on taking education classes to get "easy A's" after the second week of the semester, she changed her perspective completely. She affirmed:

> I showed up for the fourth class and they were showing a video on the beautiful books and talking about Freire and just with the discussion and

> dynamics between everybody there I thought oh my God… I want to be a teacher! That is what I want to do (3-25-02).

Adrianna's feeling of membership in the cohort and the group's commitment to children initiated Adrianna's decision to become an educator. Deciding to become a teacher with the others in the cohort was a "natural, exciting and challenging" choice for Adrianna. Upon joining the program, Adrianna questioned her classmates' abilities, but quickly realized that they were all "incredibly smart and committed individuals." She recalled

> I love the cohort. …I feel so blessed. When I see them it inspires me and it brings me a new sense of hope…I really like them a lot and that was a huge change... And I think your identity is defined by who you know and who you are friends with, and who you associate yourself with….who you are proud to call your own. I am proud to be in cohort E (3-25-02).

Adrianna was proud of her association with the students in reading cohort and was inspired by their common goal to become teachers. This sense of belonging allowed Adrianna to learn with others, to build close relationships with her classmates, and to define herself as a teacher of children.

A Member of the Reading Specialization Program

Adrianna's love of her peers and the program faculty helped define her place in the cohort. She was enthusiastic, positive and supportive of others.

Adrianna often shared her excitement for the assigned readings by announcing: "These are amazing, honest and incredible! Universal truths!" Or she wrote, "I love this! I feel like I'm traveling you know, one of those-whoa, there is SO much out there yet to see/learn type of exciting yet scary sensations." Adrianna also used humor and wit to express herself and motivate her peers. In one response she wrote, "Boomshakalaka – truly inspirational as I can hardly contain myself." And in another she said, "I already read the next chapter. I feel like a dork. Ayers is bringing out the dork in me!"

Adrianna's ability to express her thinking and excitement for learning was exceptional. She captured phrases and used literal expressions that demonstrated her exceptional knowledge of the English language and her developing understanding of literacy. In one response Rista wrote, "I so like you. Don't ever loose (sic) that spirit, Adrianna. Each time you open your mouth or write your thoughts, I smile and become that much more energized about teaching! Thanks!" In another response, Dr. H. wrote, "Adrianna, you write beautifully and open your thinking for everyone to engage with."

Adrianna often suggested teaching ideas that others borrowed readily. For example, in the first semester of the program, Adrianna and Rista came up with a journal idea called "JAM Journals." This journal idea was shared with the entire group and used by most everyone. Online, Adrianna's peers wrote to her thanking her for the idea and requesting more "incredible Adrianna ideas!"

Adrianna built close connections with her classmates and learned a great deal by communicating online and interacting face to face with others in class. She enhanced her learning in the cohort by responding online. Communicating online gave her the "chance to openly understand each other, accept each other and learn from" her peers. In fact, posting and reading online responses in the program was one way for Adrianna and her classmates to be "accountable" and "responsible" for what they were learning. It gave them opportunities to raise questions and share things like, "hey this makes no sense" or say, "I am going to use this for the rest of my life!" or even, "I have tried this and it totally works."

Adrianna used the online responses and message board as a space to raise questions and clarify meanings of literacy concepts with her peers. For example, in a response posted in the first semester of the program, Adrianna questioned "pull out" programs common in schools such as special education, reading recovery, literacy groups, and content mastery. Adrianna asked, "What can be done about this – practically I mean? Is there a system of catch -up where kids can be made to feel that they have not been left out?" In another response for the Reading Assessment course, Adrianna wrote to one of her peers, "We all seem to be asking the same question – how can we change this sinking ship system of testing?" Adrianna turned to the other members of the reading program for solutions to educational issues.

Adrianna reflected on her own growth as a teacher and used online

messages to share her enthusiasm with other members of the program. At the end of the spring semester 2001, Adrianna wrote a message about the book she was reading:

> I'm reading Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) just for shits and giggles and I am loving it (it's amazing and heartbreaking in the truth it offers). For those of you who haven't, PLEASE, please, please, add it to you ASAP list of things to read. YOU NEED PEDAGOGY OF HOPE (4-28-01).

The next semester, Adrianna and a classmate shared their recommendations for additional readings – both helping each other to extend their concepts of language and learning. In an online message about Delpit's (1995) book *Other People's Children* Heather wrote, "I know I have said this 1 million times but everyone should read *White Teacher* (Paley, 1992)." Adrianna replied, "O.K. I will. Have your read *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991) by the way? It will break your heart. You have to read it."

Adrianna reached out for help when she didn't understand literacy concepts of reading instruction. In one message in the second semester of the program, Adrianna asked her cohort for help concerning her student teaching internship. She posted this message on the general board titled "Help!"

> Many of my 2nd graders have been asking me "how do you spell." when they do their journal entries. Ms. Hill wants them to "look it up," which is

> fine but there are other options so… what should I do? Create/learn/use a spelling strategy folder list? Am I making sense? Can anyone give me a few quick pointers? Please don't tell me to look it up (10-1-01).

Adrianna depended on others in the program to support her and at the same time she helped others extend their learning. This dialogic relationship allowed Adrianna to negotiate her role as a teacher and build stronger relationships in the program. Writing and reading course responses helped Adrianna clarify her own misunderstandings. It helped her to conceptualize difficult notions of teaching and literacy instruction and was a "priceless" experience; one that was "crucial to her development as a teacher."

Becoming a member of the reading cohort was transformative for Adrianna. She found a community in which she belonged. hooks (1994) talks about the agency of community: "A feeling of community creates a sense that there is commitment and a common good that binds us" (p.40). She suggests that this sense of community can also lead individuals to a sense of individual and community agency and to action. This was the case for Adrianna. Convinced that she found her calling to become a teacher, Adrianna was energized by the need to gain a deeper understanding of both the theoretical and practical underpinnings of teaching reading. She shared, "At first I had no idea. Then it hit home for me and I started doing a lot of my own reading and reaching out to others for help and I think it was like a roller coaster of a ride." This personal agency to "learn as much

40as I can" brought Adrianna closer to her peers and shaped who she was becoming.

Building Relationships

Greene (1984) believes that online communities such as the one used by the reading specialization program can be "a space of dialogue, a space where a web of relationships can be woven and a common world can be brought into being and continually renewed" (p.296). Likewise, Adrianna used the online space to get to know others and enjoyed the opportunity to "peek into their minds … and experience them as individuals." She was able to understand "what other people where doing in their observations or what they understood about the readings. It was like a window into their minds, their hearts and bodies." As she grew closer to her classmates, she expressed pride in their collective knowledge and commitment as teachers. In one response she wrote, "I don't think that every teacher out there is as conscious and open-minded as cohort E is. Do you?" In another message she wrote, "I'm insanely proud to be in this totally dedicated and inspired cohort, full with future teachers who agree with this." In another response Adrianna wrote, "I'm relieved and excited that these are the types of thinkers we are encouraged to listen to and follow here in the world of Cohort E." Being an active member of the cohort drew Adrianna closer to her peers and united them as future teachers. Going through similar experiences with peers and

being able to share those happenings online validated Adrianna's concerns and calmed her fears. She shared, "It is nice because I see that they are crossed-eyed and wigging out too, and it is ok that I am crossed-eyed and flipped out myself, because we are all going through it together."

Whether discussing course readings online or comparing student-teaching experiences, Adrianna developed an intense respect and love for her classmates and an excitement about becoming a teacher. The group's collective commitment to children and thoughtful teaching shaped Adrianna's identity. One month before graduation Adrianna proudly told me, "We have become heroic, chivalrous and responsible. I feel at home emotionally, politically, and spiritually."

Shifting Images of Becoming a Teacher

Responsible Teachers

As Adrianna gained a clearer understanding of whom she was growing into, she often discussed the group's responsibility as student teachers and prospective teachers. In doing this, Adrianna seemed to mirror the group's attitudes towards children and at the same time contributed to their values as a group. In one response Adrianna wrote, "What do you think our personal responsibility should be as we are just emergent teachers?" This type of question addressed the group's agency as educated literacy teachers. Adrianna was searching for answers to make instruction more effective for her students and encouraged her classmates to do the same. In her response to using word walls

Adrianna pondered:

> Question: those word walls on p. 54 "the, of, and, a, to, in, is, you, that" are not on our classroom Word Wall. I think they should be- our kids are still having difficulties with them, but for some reason THEY AREN'T UP THERE. What should I do? My C.T. doesn't spend very much time on the word walls, which kind of worries me. What should I (as a mere Observer) DO? (10-29-01).

In another response to an article about high stakes assessment, Adrianna articulated her responsibility to children and suggested ways to transform the current testing system. She urged her peers to do the same. Adrianna advocated, "Let's start with taking personal responsibility: talk about it as much as possible to people- not on a soapbox, but just bring it up in conversation as much as possible for starters. Then petitions, then boycotts, and then maybe a revolution." Adrianna believed that being a member of the reading cohort was about taking responsibility for children and becoming change agents. Being responsible for students and their learning was a notion that was also emphasized in Adrianna's classroom internship. She recalled:

> The part about teacher responsibilities of creating a literate environment and a lot of structured time for reading and writing and letting children embody literacy in their own activities resonates/echoes exactly what we've been discussing in Reading Methods and what our C.T.s

> (cooperating teachers) have been demonstrating. Literacy takes time and effort and patience (11-2-01).

Adrianna borrowed inspirational words from the readings to emphasize the responsibility teachers have to their students, families, and communities. She copied a quote from William Ayers' book:

> *Recognizing that the people with the problems are also people with the solutions, and that waiting for the law-makers, the system or the union to "get it right" before we get it right is to wait a lifetime. We can look inside ourselves, then summon strength we never knew we had, and connect up with other teachers and parents and kids- to create the schools and classrooms we deserve. Thoughtful places of decency, sites of peace and freedom and justice.* Powerhouse quote -full of wisdom and words to live by! (10-7-01)

Adrianna appreciated Ayer's philosophy. She commented, "Ayers provided the type of support that makes me feel confident. I'm very grateful for the clarity he offered us and the renewed sense of purpose and hope."

Learning from her peers, developing relationships and articulating common goals as a community of learners both online and face-to-face shaped Adrianna's evolving self-identity as a teacher. Without the help of classmates, Adrianna would have been "deprived of our chance to openly understand each other, to help each other and to grow as responsible teachers." Overall, the

group's collective commitment to literacy, learning, and children attributed to Adrianna's image as a teacher.

She fondly recalled,

> So much has happened through the cohort that has changed me and who I am and how I look at things and my goals and my role in life and my role in the immediate community. It has enhanced my consciousness and has completely freezed my awareness of the privilege and the honor and the responsibility that comes with this title of teacher (3-25-02).

Imaging the Future

Adrianna's image of becoming a teacher was influenced by the cohort's collective commitment to teaching, her own love of children and the knowledge she was gaining. In many of her responses, Adrianna created images of her future classroom, her vision, and her professional goals for the future. In one of the first articles Adrianna responded to by Freire's book (1973) titled *The Importance in the Act of Reading*, Adrianna wrote: "The need/instinct for discovery/exploration seems relevant in the case of most children. I hope to adopt/cultivate/pass on this type of outlook to my students and kids (2/5/01)." In another response only two days later, she grappled with a teacher's role in the community and the importance of this role as an educator. On 2/8/01, in response to reading Scribner's (1981) *Literacy in Three Metaphors* Adrianna wrote:

> After reading and then rereading this article, I started to grasp the

> importance of knowing/exploring/celebrating the community you want to teach in before you go about teaching it's non-literate population. This is a crucial and priceless lesson.

In a Silvia Ashton Warner's book (1963) titled *Creative Teacher*, Adrianna was reintroduced to Leo Tolstoy, an author she admired and loved for a long time. By viewing Tolstoy as a role model whose instruction was driven by students' needs, Adrianna seemed to dream about who she wanted to become. She related to Tolstoy and wanted "to be like him." This connection to a role model helped Adrianna visualize herself as a teacher. Tolstoy's student-centered nature sparked Adrianna's vision of herself as a teacher. She praised his nontraditional teaching and questioned, "Why haven't we branded his ideals in our hearts? His actions are genius, pure and loving and selflessly brilliant and honest, no?"

In the second semester of the program, Adrianna shared a humorous confession about her future classroom. She wrote, "There is a fantasy classroom list I have been keeping- just ideas that pop to my head- everything from design to themes to colors and the ways the future will smell…I'm crazy ... but at least I'm with it. This chapter really opened up an elaborate window of thinking for me… a window where details and dreams count."

Adrianna continued to visualize herself as a teacher and the impact the program and her peers had on her changing identity. In May 2002, during our interview, Adrianna shared:

> I look at things and my goals and my role in life – it has enhanced my consciousness and has completely freezed my awareness of the privilege and the honor and the responsibility that comes with this title of teacher… The other day I got pulled over for speeding and the cop is like you teach second grade? Wow! And I thought he was going to let me go there for a minute. But I mean it is shocking even how a fire fighter is so much what we think of as heroic and chivalrous. That is awesome. And it is cool to think that is exactly what we are and what we have become totally heroic and chilaveraous and responsible. It is an honor. I have become a lot more sensitive of my identity. I am at home, emotionally, politically, and spiritually. …Even with people I don't talk to for a long time – I will say I am a teacher now – there is so much implication with that- beauty – I love it.... I love being that.

Adrianna's mutually caring and trusting relationships with others in the cohort and the course readings seemed to be a force in her teaching identity development. Her affiliation with other classmates enabled her to imagine herself as a responsible and heroic educator. At the same time, these personal relationships gave Adrianna the opportunity to examine her past experiences and share stories about her life that related to her learning as a prospective teacher.

Life Stories and Connections

Making personal links to the readings and internship experiences was an important aspect of the reading responses. Students in the reading program were required to reflect on their connections to the readings and explain how they were making sense of their learning. Adrianna's personal connections related to her life stories as a writer, an immigrant, and a multi-language learner. Adrianna's personal stories were valued by peers and her university supervisors and were consistent with the philosophies of the program. Throughout the three-semester program, Adrianna used her experiences and beliefs as a lens to view all other learning, shaping and shifting her identity as a teacher.

From Poet to Teacher…

Adrianna identified herself as a poet and a writer from the first day of courses. She made sense of course readings and literacy instruction through the eyes of a writer. At the same time, Adrianna's experiences as a writer and language learner matched the program's theoretical principles of literacy and the use of language as practical, political and transformative. In one of her first online responses in the spring of 2001, Adrianna questioned Scribner's three metaphors in literacy in connection to her perspective that poetry is an art form. She shared, "If I were her editor I may have suggested adding a fourth dimension: Literacy as Art. It falls too far from the "state of grace" category in my opinion."

Adrianna utilized her experiences as a writer to build on her understanding of literacy. In addition, Adrianna's disposition as a writer was confirmed by the course readings. In her response to Freire's (1973) *The Importance in the Act of Reading* Adrianna wrote,

> The three main points he (Freire) presents are that reading consists of critical perception, interpretation and rewriting what's been read. His opinions and poetic style of communication are especially relevant to me as I spend much of my free time writing and publishing poems/short stories (tons of them about my childhood language challenges (1-23-01).

She concluded the messages by sharing, "It's absolutely flawless! I love it, love it, love it!" Adrianna's favorable receptions of Freire's theories reflect her cultural dispositions and the importance of connecting one's stories with becoming literate. In an article by Heller (1995) titled "Writing as a Foundation for Transformative Community in the Tenderloin," Adrianna made many connections to storytelling and the universal need to write. She wrote

> I think even the title of this article reflects the poetry and poetic voices within it…. I realized how universal the need to write is, what a deep desire it is among many of our nations' poorest people… Articulating and reflecting, creating a name for ourselves, saying something, being heard, these are connections that all writers share: graffiti artist, novelists, poets, and children alike- regardless of race or SES. This article moved me to

tears-it's connected to everything I believe in (3-26-01).

Adrianna viewed herself as an experienced and knowledgeable writer and aligned herself with other great authors who wrote about their experiences as teachers.

In response to *Creative Teacher* (1965) by Ashton-Warner Adrianna exploded with excitement when she read about Leo Tolstoy's philosophies on teaching. She quoted Ashton-Warner's words and then commented on Tolstoy's passion:

> *As usual he (Tolstoy) began by disregarding all existing traditions and refusing to follow any method of teaching already in use. First he must fathom the mind of the peasant child, and by DOING AWAY WITH PUNISHMENTS, let his pupils teach HIM the ART of teaching.* I can't believe I didn't know all about Leo Tolstoy! He is one of my favorite all time authors incidentally but now I'm insane with amazement! I want to be like him! Why haven't we branded his ideas in our hearts? His actions are genius, pure, loving and selflessly brilliant and honest, no? LET'S GIVE IT UP FOR PASSIONATE AFFECTION! (2-24-01)

Adrianna made similar comments about William Ayers' abilities as a writer and a teacher. She commended, "His style is impeccably poetic and natural. He is just an amazing writer! I can't believe how WITHIT Ayers' writing is- style and methodologies- CDJB for Continuously Dropped Jaw of Bewilderment."

Adrianna responded to many of the articles as an editor. In an article by

Purcell-Gates (1997) titled *Stories, coupon, & the T.V. Guide: Relationships Between Home Literacy Experiences and Emergent Literacy Knowledge*, Adrianna stated that she was not pleased with the research style of writing in the article and evaluated the content as an editor. She wrote,

> *Beware to all those who fall asleep while reading research reports!* That's what the article would have been called had I been the editor. The article makes a lot of good points, but, in my opinion, is too area-specific to make the generalizations it makes (3-20-01).

In another example, Adrianna responded to a peer's reflection on Delpit's (1995) article, *The silenced dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children*. Adrianna critiqued Delpit's writings on culture and power from an editor's perspective, "First of all, there are 11 bad words the editor forgot to remove… I must say her writing style was on the offensive. Her writing style is rather abrasive and like a difficult pill to swallow." Similarly, Adrianna responded to Heath's (1995) article *Stories as Ways of Acting Together* from a writer's perspective. She wrote,

> I really like the idea of gaining literary perspective through the process of writing, rewriting, telling, retelling, framing, reframing, etc. These are the universal truths of editing! (a crucial element to writing, the sooner learned/appreciated the better) (2-07-01)

Adrianna's comments to classmates' took on an editor's perspective. She often

told peers that their writing was clear, easy to read, and well summarized. In a response to Lynn's reflection she wrote, "Excellent summary of Teale's points" and later in the letter noted, "I like how you phrased your puzzle." In response to Jasie she wrote, "You're good with your use of examples-very effective writing skill!" She commented on others' use of language and ability to express their opinions. "Powerhouse quote right there, Heather. That sentence was beautiful."

Although Adrianna continued to respond to most of her readings as a "writer and editor," by the end of the three-semester block, she modified her perspective and seemed to focus more on the significance of becoming a teacher. She revealed:

> Whether it be prose or poetry it is kind of like drivel at the end of the day. It comes down to expressions that are really in many respects political and like very much indications of the time. And I am still a very big reader in all kinds of fiction and of course poetry and writer, but at the same time, compared to what we are doing in the cohort, it blows anything out of the water. Because of its usefulness in what Jim has introduced and what everyone is trying to understand this idea of literacy as power and so on (3-25-02).

Adrianna seemed to place more emphasis on her identity as a teacher than she did at the onset of her program. She did not give up her identity as a poet, but seemed to rank it behind that of being a teacher. She compared poetry as being an

important form of political expression, to teaching as a means to help people live better lives. The transformative nature of teaching seemed to energize and shape Adrianna's developing self as teacher. She shared the following statement with me during our interview:

> The usefulness comes in the fact that this is something that can make people better and can make people vote and can make people choose better; to make better choices and make better lives for themselves and educate themselves… suddenly for me there is this whole new dimension where I am going … this is worth while. This is what I want to do. And to be able to teach people how to use things is a lot more encouraging and rewarding and stuff like that (3-25-02).

In another example, Adrianna considered the personal benefits of teaching compared to writing during the first week of student-teaching internship. In her "First Weeks of School" Journal Adrianna wrote, "One of the rewards of teaching is knowing that as a teacher you have the opportunity to (instead of making them dependent on you) empower kids with strategies and tools to seek further knowledge and understanding on their own."

While Adrianna negotiated herself as a poet and a teacher, she was forced to examine her physical appearance as a writer and to conform to the social expectations of teaching. When Adrianna joined the reading specialization program, she physically represented herself as an "artist and a European." She

often wore vintage clothing, little (if any) make up, and no bra. Her fashion preferences mirrored her self-image as a writer and poet. She shared in our interview, "I am a writer and an artist. My mother is an artist, and she never wore a bra. It is just the way I do things, and that is the way I am and I don't wear one, and I don't need one. I am poet." However after Adrianna began student teaching, she was required to examine her self-image and how she presented herself as a prospective teacher. The vice principal at Adrianna's student teaching school told Adrianna that her style of dress was unprofessional and that she needed to wear a bra or leave the school. Adrianna felt insulted and angered by having to "change who I was." She expressed her frustration:

> It was just crazy to make these claims and so insulting. It is just the way I do things and that is the way I am and I don't see the social barriers concerned with not wearing a bra. And it was really hard not to take it personally because that was my first inclination. How could they? I bust my butt for these people, and I don't even get paid. How could they? This is my body and these are my boobs… how could they? (3-25-01)

Adrianna conformed to the administration's requests because she wanted to continue working as a student teacher, but she remained resentful about the "superficial mask" she was expected to wear in order to be accepted as a qualified teacher. Adrianna disclosed:

> Now I show up earlier than I have to. I dress up more than I have to. I

> brush my hair and do all that kind of stuff and still bust my ass. And despite this whole thing- I want to make sure my focus remain on the kids (3-25-01).

As a result of conforming to the administration's dress code, Adrianna believed that she received "more respect and compliments" from the teachers she worked with. She confessed, "Now I feel that since I've changed, there is more respect, and people nod and say hello and compliment me." In fact, her confidence and reputation have changed drastically, "I guess as my confidence is building, my reputation is building for the positive and that is a drastic change." Even the vice principal, who apparently initiated the whole controversy, seemed to respect Adrianna more as a professional. Adrianna explained, "Now she says things like- oh my goodness Adrianna, I can't believe you are doing all this stuff. Or, you are setting such a fine example for the other teachers."

The "bra incident" influenced Adrianna's developing self as a teacher and seemed to force her to reexamine her professional role as an educator. She stated, "Now as far as presenting myself, there is a lot more professionalism, and I guess I am just growing up." But "growing up" and shifting her self-image from poet to teacher has not impacted Adrianna's desire of instilling the love of poetry and writing in her students. She revealed, "Even though I am a teacher now…I still want to encourage kids to notice the good things about being a writer" and by "getting published and working hard" she wants her students "to be like Shel

Silverstein and leave something crazy in the world." Adrianna values the power of written language and believes in the transformative power of literacy. These two aspects seem to shape Adrianna's need to help children become change agents, while holding on to her own love of poetry:

> I am a poet so I want to show them it is possible, and I want to be an example…I want to be an advocate for these kids. Politically and economically. Politically I want to nurture young poets. I want to nurture young politicians and people who make differences (3-25-01)

Britzman (1991), borrowing from Bakhtin's work, talks about two conflicting kinds of voices novice teachers contend. An authoritative voice, or centripetal defines what a teacher is and does in relation to the kind of authority and power teachers are expected to deploy. And the centrifugal, or internally persuasive voice speaks to one's deep personal convictions, investments and desires. These two voices are in constant tension, positioning multiple identities. Adrianna seemed to vacillate between the authorative voice of the school administration that defines how a teacher is expected to dress (i.e., with a bra) as opposed to her own internal voice that is committed to being a writer and artist. These voices seemed to haunt her identities as a poet and teacher and sometimes conflicted her as she tried to define herself as a teacher. Among the various voices Adrianna was negotiating, she was coming to terms with the complexities of becoming a teacher and the social expectations that are connected to being a classroom teacher.

At the end of Adrianna's student teaching, eight months after she was asked to wear a bra, she continued to struggle with her own self-images and those of the being a teacher. She seemed to negotiate institutional mandates for conformity and constructing her own voice that focused on her responsibility to children. In many ways, she did not appear to give up, but was willing to accept the expectations placed on her in order to be a teacher. She stressed, "I still really want to get a MSA in poetry and be the writer I am meant to be and go nuts and do my own thing. But why do that now… I love being a teacher."

Being an Immigrant and Multiple Language Learner

Much like she made sense of course readings and literacy instruction through the eyes of a writer, Adrianna connected her experiences as a Romanian immigrant and multiple language learner to becoming a teacher. Her cultural background and life stories as an immigrant resonated with the dominant theories in the reading program, making it easier for Adrianna to develop from a student to a teacher. Adrianna was proud of being an American but willing to be critical of her own rights and those of her students. For example, in April 2001, Adrianna responded to *Literacy for Stupification: The Pedagogy of Big Lies* (Macedo, 1995). She shared her difficulties of being an immigrant.

> And all those insights about the pledge of allegiance- wonderful! I have SO many stories about that. When I was in high school, I wasn't allowed

> to say the pledge of allegiance (because I wasn't officially an American and all)- I even got detentions and in-house suspensions for it when I did (4-10-01).

Yet through her struggles, Adrianna expressed pride in being an American and appreciated Macedo's critical perspective:

> The beauty of this country is that we can openly question and discuss these types of issues…In many ways you can tell Macedo loves his country and is proud to be an American because he is so critical of it and expects so much more and EXERCISES his RIGHT to speak and write freely. This is eye opening, nauseating, headache inducing, vertigo causing- but so, SO true. Give me more (4-10-01).

Adrianna's past experiences were often used to justify her developing philosophies on teaching English. She believes that teachers must nurture the cultural and linguistic differences of their students and at the same time hold high expectations for students to learn standard English – equipping them with the "cultural capital"(Bourdieu, 1998) needed to be successful in the America. In a response to *Explaining Reading Difficulties* by Taylor (1995), Adrianna strongly resisted the authors' philosophies of teaching English and wrote:

> On top of p. 33- "devoting attention to the linguistically unique child, the child who comes to school speaking a language or a dialect different from the dialect or language spoken in school and used in reading materials…"

> First of all, this is a huge mistake! There's an enormous difference between a dialect and a language! These two should not be put in the same category! This grouping is both unprofessional and insulting! It trivializes languages (with their own speech patterns, culture, history, EVERYTHING that comes with a foreign language) to the same level of a regional dialect- I beg to differ! Furthermore, how far are we as teachers to allow these suggested "accommodations?" I am not referring to bilingual education- I am referring to the ENCOURAGEMENT of incorrect/unprofessional written and spoken language…. These "accommodations" are a recipe for doom- this reminds me of how gypsy slang was worshiped in Romania during the time of totalitarian communism ([sic] were being a well-read educated person was bad and being an ignorant peasant was good) (04/16/01).

In this same response she related her experiences of learning English in school and questioned second language instruction. "My teachers told me I talked funny and it destroyed me. Then again it also built character … would saying to a slang child: You're speaking incorrect English be too harsh?" At the end of the response, she rated the article. "Rating: I wish I could send these authors to Eastern Europe so they can see first hand the catastrophe and chaos that result from most of their philosophies. This article was infuriating."

During the following semester, Adrianna interned in a second grade

classroom at Maryville Elementary, a Spanish-dominant school, where most students speak English and Spanish in their homes. Adrianna requested this placement because she wanted to be immersed in a school that valued languages and cultural diversity. She wanted to extend students' cultural interests and bring her own experiences into the classroom. She recalled in our interview one of the first responsibilities she took on as a student teacher:

> I always did a read aloud. And with those I have tried to incorporate some sort of cultural interest that the kids were having. I would try to introduce about the rest of the world. And my background lends itself to lots of fun discussions and Eastern European folktales (4-25-02).

She also wanted to work in a Spanish community where she could improve her Spanish fluency and use her past experiences as an immigrant to help young immigrants' adjust to a new culture.

Adrianna's need to bridge her cultural values with becoming a teacher were demonstrated by a response she wrote in relation to a chapter in William Ayer's book *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* (1993*)*, Adrianna wrote;

> Culture is fluid-changing…" (p. 76) I agree with this and recall going to public grade school myself (how I was adored, admired for my cultural difference/ethnicity). When I started attending Catholic school, I became the Jew, the outsider, and the immigrant. Moral of the story? American schools, these hundreds of thousands of little communities, depending on

> their location and population play a hug role in the way they "deal" with "culture." What about the old and crusty teachers who refuse to understand that as they teach they are being taught?
> (10-1-2001)

Remembering what it was like "to feel set apart or segregated" Adrianna reflected on the impact teachers and schools have on their students. She inquired how to improve situations where students were not being supported. In another response to an article addressing the instruction of ESL students, Adrianna had an adverse reaction:

> THE UGLY: p. 96 (this made me very upset, so I made it in red): "Students who are taught English at an early age in school can LOSE fluency in their native language, thus JEOPARDIZING family relations and communications at home. This is DETRIMENTAL to both the parents, who feel DISCONNECTED from their children and DISEMPOWERED in their new country, and for children, who are LOSING important guidance and communication from their parents and LOSING a sense of cultural identity and belonging… I disagree so much with this, I had to count to ten. It hurt my feelings. It raised my blood pressure, it made me want to call this lady and invite her to Maryville or Suez (10-03-01).

In the rest of the response, Adrianna discussed the importance of cultural and

linguistic flexibility and used her experiences of learning many languages as a justification. She wrote:

> ESL students can also be encouraged to continue their native language usage at home. Not everyone drops their native language and switches to English. In fact, in many cases, holding on to their native language, practicing it, being proud of it encourages linguistic and cultural flexibility. (i.e. most of the 2nd grade kids in my class, the 4th grade boys I tutor, and me- I'm still fluent in Hungarian and Romanian and I can get along in Spanish and still feel like a human) (4-16-01).

By the end of her third semester, Adrianna's perspective of an immigrant and multiple language speaker changed very little. She seemed to gain more clarity about herself through her online responses, her student-teaching placement, and her strong commitment to learning English. In our interview Adrianna shared,

> I have a huge deal of empathy and probably has to do with the fact that when I was little I was an immigrant and a new immigrant and very very very poor. And so I think empathy has a lot to do with being a teacher. I had some rough experiences when we first moved to the states. I lived in an area that was pretty bad and pretty dangerous and went to a school- a public school that I think traumatized me and raised a lot of questions about my future as an American and as a part of this country and so

> learning English was a big deal and I want to be around to help kids who have problems learning this too (4-25-01).

Student teaching at a school whose community members mainly spoke Spanish and valued Mexican culture, influenced Adrianna's self-image personally and professionally. She recalled, "My dad always said, you are as many languages as you know. Now my identity is changing again because my Spanish is getting a lot better." Adrianna never separated her teaching self from her identity as an immigrant and multiple language learner. Adrianna built on this aspect of self to propel her commitment to working with children who share similar experiences and cultural differences. In her "First Week of School" Journal Adrianna commented on why she wanted to teach on the "East Side."

> The East Side is an amazing place (magical, in my opinion)… I lived in Israel. That community, most assuredly, was much more varied- lots of Moroccans, Egyptians, Israelis, Russians, even Italians. All of whom, aside form speaking their native language, spoke Hebrew. Many of my family ties were very similar to what is prevalent on the East Side- commitment, devotion to uniqueness/individuality and cultural pride (8-15-01).

Adrianna's personal experiences of living abroad, being an immigrant and learning English matched the philosophies of the reading program and the school she interned with. Even though Adrianna experienced some resistance to a few

articles relating to cultural and linguistic diversity, overall her core beliefs and cultural identity did not fluctuate. She said it perfectly in her response to Ayer's comments about culture and language: "(p. 60) *I believe that culture is the frame through which all of us make sense of the world.* ME TOO!" Adrianna's personal experiences were constantly affirmed as she became more defined as a teacher of children.

Engagement in Learning

Building on the Words of Others

Adrianna is a self-driven learner. In the reading cohort, she often went beyond what was expected of her and always found ways to extend her learning. Adrianna read "recommended" professional books and articles outside of her required course assignments. She was determined to teach herself: "I can't just sit back and let others teach me. I have to teach myself." At the end of the first semester, Adrianna read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Pedagogy of Hope* by Paulo Freire (1996). Adrianna was "madly interested" in Freire's teachings of adults and "just had to read it." Later during the summer months, Adrianna sent an online message to the cohort's general bulletin. She stated, "YOU NEED TO READ PEDAGOGY OF HOPE- IT WILL CHANGE YOU FOREVER."

Adrianna never hesitated to share her enthusiasm towards her readings. For example, after the first week in the Reading Methods course (second semester

of the program) Adrianna took the professor's advice and purchased *Guided Reading* (Fountas & Pinnell, 1991). She read the book cover to cover in one week. *Guided Reading* became an essential resource for her tutoring lessons and her classroom internship. She referred to the book many times in her online responses. In one response to *Classrooms That Work* (Cunningham & Allington, 1991) Adrianna shared "This chapter gets double thumbs up. But that's just because the concepts are undeniable truths… Even greater is the book *Guided Reading*- all the ideas one could ever want and more. Why not just mortgage the house and buy *Guided Reading*?" Just before graduating, Adrianna shared with me, " I still have *Guided Reading* at my bed side." This book and its "practical wisdom" guided Adrianna's development.

Adrianna leaned on her professional readings as "words to learn from." Authors of books and course readings became Adrianna's "confidants" – experts with whom she interacted. She often borrowed authors' words or examples to scaffold her own learning. For example, in response to an article on the importance of storytelling, Adrianna wrote: "Note to self: "listen more sensitively" to stories of your students, "exploit the power of their stories," and openly "declare the need for and the power of story." In another example, she explained, "this book is about how to direct children's attention toward letters and sounds to enable them to use strategies, not learn skills. Perfect! Repeat after me: recognizing, searching, rereading, chunking, that could be our new motto –

why doesn't my teacher have this in neon lights above the word wall?" Adrianna used many of Ayer's words to direct her teaching and gain a deeper understanding of herself as a developing teacher. Adrianna made note of Ayer's words to redirect her own goals for the future. She wrote: "Elementary teachers need to visit and revisit the basic curriculum question regularly, and as before, their best allies in this pursuit are the students themselves. WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES ARE MOST WORTHWHILE…print the basic curriculum question in bold letters…post it on the wall…" Ayer's wisdom seemed to match Adrianna's personal beliefs about teaching and legitimized her future plans as a teacher.

By borrowing an author's words, peers' comments or advice of Dr. H. and graduate students, and rewriting those words in her online responses enabled Adrianna to gain a deeper understanding of her theoretical stances and the practical importance of being a literacy educator. Bakhtin (1988) reminds us that identity is not fixed, but is socially negotiated with others through language. Language is borrowed and the struggle to borrow, to negotiate, to claim ownership over that which can not be possessed, to take up that which already seems finished constitutes what Bakhtin calls "the ideological becoming" of a person. As Adrianna negotiated and voiced her "ideological" self, she was able to draw from theoretical as well as practical aspects of reading instruction.

We Practiced What We Were Learning

Connecting practice with theory started during the second week of courses. Adrianna recalled, "We practiced everything we were learning in class." She seemed to be equally excited about Freire's notion of critical literacy and at the same time, value the step by step instructions of how to plan for a guided reading lesson in Fountas and Pinnell's (1991) *Guided Reading*. She borrowed from both aspects of literacy to strengthen her own understandings. Adrianna explained the practical value of tutoring combined with the theoretical aspects from course readings. She explained:

> I never expected to have learned and picked up so much- in theory and in methods because I think that the combination of the two was the biggest deal for me… We were introduced to all of the concepts and then practicing [sic] them. We were allowed and encouraged to practice everything we had been taught- so for me that was the only way to saturate my learning- with that kind of practical knowledge that it would take to instruct somebody…. everything - running records, guided reading, routines of poetry and shared reading- I use all of that- everyday (4-25-02).

Making connections between practical and theoretical frames "took more involvement and effort but through the tutoring… led to the most development." These types of connections were a goal of the reading specialization program;

Adrianna and her peers were encouraged to practice everything they had been taught. Adrianna affirmed, "…For me that was the only way to saturate my mind with that kind of knowledge and the competence it would take to instruct somebody. "She felt that "pushing towards practicing the methods and understanding the theories opened doors" for her and gave her a greater "understanding and appreciation" for teaching reading.

Having the opportunity to write about practical aspects of reading instruction with the theoretical underpinnings of literacy seemed to strengthen Adrianna's developing self as a teacher. At the same time, she did not appear to struggle with the practical and theoretical aspects of teaching because she was encouraged to build on her personal and professional beliefs while at the same time experimenting with instructional strategies of reading instruction. In a community literacy response Adrianna proclaimed:

> In Adult Literacy (the volunteer program for teaching reading to adults) we have to provide lesson plans that attract and bedazzle our students so much that they can't wait to come back. This relates to organic teaching. It is not only beautiful, but also amazingly practical. It just makes a lot of sense (2-20-01).

After reading (3/7/01) "Making Dialogue Dialogic: A Dialogic Approach to Adult Literacy Instruction" (Fallon, 1991) she wrote, "This is exactly what I needed to read right now! How practical she is!" Then she summarized:

> Fallon focuses on something called the dialogue journal (intended to be written in the active voice), which ideally does away with the inhibition that comes with not knowing what to say. She mentions many practical facts - such as the gap which exists between the teacher and the adult student and that often times, the adult thinks a particular response is expected of them. Fallon encourages teachers to concentrate on what their students are expounding on through their journals and on stimulating their interests in the area that interest them (3-07-01).

Adrianna then tied in the practical aspect of Fallon's dialogical theories:

> I just began tutoring the adult assigned to me from Literacy Austin - he is older, from Brazil and has a very minimal command of the English language. He told me what he wants - to be able to have a pleasant conversation with a friend, to be able to order a pizza, to talk to his mechanic, to talk to his children's teachers. I made lists and am now working on creating vocabulary books he can practice from. Also, since his goal is to pronounce correctly rather than write correctly, I'm encouraging him to listen to recordings of my conversations and narratives. Eventually, I'd like him to be able to record himself telling stories and giving accounts of his days - a sort of audio journal, we'll see how it goes. This is just like Freire's reading one's world! (03-07-01)

Theoretically, most of the concepts brought up in class or through the

readings matched Adrianna's personal disposition towards literacy. Yet, Adrianna grappled with the practical applications of her experiences and the realistic role of a teacher. Towards the end of the first semester in the program, after reading Crawford's (1996) "Examining the Literacy Perceptions of Non-Reading Parents" Adrianna shared:

> My mom thinks that it is instinctual for parents to want their kids to succeed and live better lives then they did. I couldn't say. I've never had a child. That's why I would feel like a somewhat of a hypocrite going into a trailer park home of on of my students or into some rotting project in the ghetto and tell the parents of one of my students "what's up." Then again, this will probably be necessary. Or will it?
>
> (3-28-01)

She continued her response, "Teaching is not just reading and writing and math and good manners and stuff, but teaching the VALUE of education and literacy? AGH, but how exactly?" These practical questions of instruction and helping families created challenging images for Adrianna. In the message she responded to her own question:

> If it's not the teacher's job to convince, but to teach, who will convince these parents about the value of education/literacy? The teachers? Why? Won't teachers be overwhelmed and frustrated enough with an overpopulated class that's difficult to manage and mostly failing? When

> will the teacher find the time to call everyone individually or to arrange something individually? (3-28-01)

While Adrianna negotiated the practical and theoretical implications of literacy instruction, she took many opportunities to directly apply what she was reading. In response to one of Ayer's chapters, Adrianna wrote about an inquiry activity:

> Do a sustained study *on a subject you know nothing about- one interest table, one bookshelf reserved for topic books*- I am so excited to read about this because it is something I've thought about every since I started Cohort E (3-28-01).

From this idea, Adrianna developed a school-wide recycling plan. She shared her ideas with the cohort.

> *Developed a school-wide recycling plan*- (p. 96)- Which reminds me of Environteering, if anyone is interested. There's an enviro group at UT dedicated to the education of elementary kids and they have a six-week program of set lessons. I begin teaching it next week and will keep everyone posted (3-28-01).

Many times, Adrianna tapped into the theoretical and practical importance of a text and used it with her adult or child tutor. As she borrowed from theorists and practitioners alike, and tied it in with her own experiences and beliefs about educating children, Adrianna displayed an understanding of literacy instruction that projected who she was becoming as a classroom teacher. bell hooks, (1994)

believes that "when our lived experiences of theorizing are fundamentally linked to processes of self-discovery, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two- that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other." Like hooks (1994), Adrianna did not appear to separate theory and practice but seemed to practice her developing theories of literacy in relation to her life learnings. In fact, Adrianna's theorizing seemed much like self-reflection. She made thoughtful responses about the theories she was learning, connecting them to her own beliefs, while exploring the practicality of her ideas with her tutees and in her field based internships. The course texts, her online responses and the practical application of her developing knowledge seemed to provided her with the tools for bridging theory and practice. Furthermore, as she self reflected on her teaching and her beliefs and engaged with the words of others, she began to visualize who she was becoming as a teacher.

Summary

Adrianna decided to become a teacher after joining the reading specialization program. As a valued, enthusiastic member of the program, Adrianna felt connected to her peers. This affiliation and her relationships with peers influenced Adrianna's identity as a teacher. She referred to her past experiences as a student, multiple language learner, and a writer. These

orientations towards learning to teach shifted over time as Adrianna appropriated words and encouragement from the readings and her classmates. During student teaching, Adrianna was faced with a personal conflict and struggled with her own disposition as a poet and the social expectations of being a teacher. Yet through it all, Adrianna viewed her interactions with peers in the program and her love of children monumental to her development as a teacher.

Current Teaching Position

Adrianna currently teaches at Maryville Elementary School (the same school she student taught) as a six-grade science teacher.

Abraham's Story

I came to know Abraham by reading his online responses and general messages during the spring of 2001. I often laughed as I read Abraham's messages about being a "lucky guy among so many women" or his pleas for group happy hours. At the same time, I noticed Abraham's commitment to teaching and his ability to share interesting stories about himself as a reader. On May 8th, 2001, I met Abraham face-to-face during his oral exam for the Reading Assessment and Development class. I was an observer to the process, not an evaluator. He came into the meeting with two classmates and talked about his learning over the semester. Abraham spoke freely about his understanding of reading development and joked about being nervous. Afterwards, I asked Abraham and the other students to tell me how they felt about using the online bulletin board for course assignments. Abraham told me that he did not like "using TeachNet" because it was "not a useful tool" for his learning.

When deciding which six participants to explore for this study, I asked Abraham because he was the only man in the program and because he did not like responding online. I wanted to learn how he communicated with others online (considering he did not enjoy using TeachNet), and how or whether such dialogue contributed to his process of becoming a teacher.

On March 25th, 2002, Abraham and I met a local bar and talked for two hours over Mexican martinis. During our tape-recorded interview, we discussed Abraham's learning in the reading program, his experiences as a student teacher, and his job search.

Home and School Background

Abraham, a native Texan, was a traditional fifth-year university student. A white, middle class man in his early twenties, Abraham had changed his major three times before joining the college of education. Abraham grew up in a small, rural community outside of Houston, Texas. He was raised in a predominately white, Jewish, high-socioeconomic environment. In his words he grew up "in a wealthy, nicely kept, clean community." He attended Townhall High School (pseudonym) and graduated with academic honors. Although Abraham's parents divorced when he was young, his parents have remained in the community together with his grandparents and extended family. Talking about his own early education and literacy, Abraham shared:

> When I was learning to read, every adult I knew could read, and it was my assumption that eventually I would too. I received help and instruction from my parents and my grandparents.

Prior to joining the college of education, Abraham had many volunteer-teaching and mentoring experiences. During his sophomore year in high school,

Abraham served as a 4th and 5th grade Sunday school teacher at the Jewish Fellowship Temple. He taught Hebrew and religious classes for two years. As a freshman in college, Abraham founded a new Jewish fraternity chapter and served as the Recruitment Chairman, Fraternal Educator, and President. He was an active member in various other groups such as College Republicans, Longhorn Singers, and Men Against Sexual Assault. He volunteered in community improvement projects such as school tutoring, city wide-read-a-thons, and food drives. When Abraham decided to change his major from business to education, he had an opportunity to volunteer as an assistant counselor at the Pyramid School, a home for abused and neglected boys ages seven to seventeen. Abraham mentored these young men and taught character development and personal responsibility classes. These experiences greatly influenced Abraham's professional goals to become an elementary teacher and eventually to become an elementary school counselor.

Deciding to Become a Teacher

During his senior year, Abraham decided to join the reading specialization program because of his love of reading. He remembered, "I have always loved reading and my minor is in English, and it just made sense to specialize in reading." As an adult, Abraham considers himself an avid reader. He "reads all the time" and "loves talking about books." Additionally, Abraham has known the cohort professor for many years. He recalled, "I knew Dr. H. and that he was the

best. I was lucky to get in."

Abraham is the younger of two boys in his family. His older brother recently graduated with a law degree and is working in a large international law firm. Abraham's father is also an established lawyer in his home community. Like his brother, Abraham started college hoping to major in business and attend law school. However, during his sophomore year, Abraham enrolled in the College of Education and began working towards a minor in English. Even though it seemed like the "right" decision for Abraham to become a teacher, his family and friends questioned his career choice and were concerned about his financial welfare. Abraham remembered:

> My mom and dad, in the beginning, thought that I was a moron. How could you throw your life away doing something like this? Come on! My brother is a third-year law student at U.T., and he just got back from an internship from London – so he's going to make a lot of money. To him, it was the stupidest thing I could do.

Abraham's fraternity brothers also doubted his decision to become a teacher. Many of his friends expected him to "be a business major or a lawyer or something along those lines." In his "First Weeks of School" Journal, Abraham wrote about joining the reading specialization program and becoming a teacher:

> Originally, teaching was the gateway for me to get into counseling. So I was planning on teaching for just a few years, however now I am not so

> sure. I kind of want to teach reading or work with readers. Maybe even teach upper level English.

Abraham was confident in his decision to become an elementary reading teacher amidst the pressures from friends and family. He confided, "I know that my reward won't be money or even the ability to support a family, but I think giving back is more important. I hope I still think that when I get the first paycheck."

Abraham also decided to become a teacher because he likes having fun with his students. He explained "I have always loved being with kids…I get a kick out of talking with them." When considering his family's and friends' concerns about his career choice Abraham explained:

> I ended up being the president of my fraternity. Usually the president of a fraternity doesn't end up being a teacher and spending most of their day with kids. But most of them are jealous because I get to have fun at work, and they are slaving away at classes or not enjoying what they do. I think for the most part people are just jealous of the fact that I am doing what I want regardless of income.

Abraham admitted that when his brother (who just graduated from law school) came to visit him in his student-teaching classroom "he had the time of his life." Abraham remarked, "And he was so jealous. He will always be jealous because we were having so much fun. And it is things like that that make me view myself as a teacher and make me reaffirm my decision and choices." He concluded,

"Even though I won't be able to provide for my family, I still want to be a teacher and have fun doing it!" The only male student in the reading program, Abraham used humor and liked to have fun with his classmates.

A Member in the Reading Specialization Program

Abraham had fun with his classmates by writing teasing comments and humorous side notes. His classmates appreciated Abraham's playful nature and sense of humor. He built friendships with his peers, wrote comical messages and teasing remarks, and tried to make everyone laugh. Starting from the first semester, Abraham used humor in his reading responses. On February 26th, 2001, Abraham wrote a late response for the Reading Assessment and Development course. He confessed:

> I want to tell whoever is supposed to respond to my response that I am really sorry that it is so late. I'm not even going to tell you my excuse as to why it wasn't on time tonight because you most likely won't believe me anyway. However, I just want you to know that if I am ever abducted by aliens again and held hostage only to once more be probed relentlessly, I will try my hardest to get them to drop me off before 8:00pm on Monday night.

Belinda responded to Abraham thanking him for the humor and teasing back, "Interesting about the aliens though-maybe its an experience you would like to

share with the class? Really though, thanks for the humor. This is the last response for me tonight and I needed it right about now."

In the fall semester 2001, Abraham commented about reading *Phonics They Use* (Cunningham, 1999), a book full of information about phonetic rules and learning strategies. He concluded:

> It is weird for me to read this kind of book for two reasons. To begin with, it's like a textbook and I hate textbooks. In addition, the subject matter would most likely cause many people to rather have their eyes pecked out by a flock of wild geese than actually read about…Despite the fact that it is textbook like, the subject matter is not as entertaining as Seinfeld, and not to mention I have no choice but to read it; I like it!

Ellie responded back to Abraham with a similar teasing tone, "It is good to know that this experience has forced you to branch out and try different reading material." In another example, after Abraham returned from a trip to Israel, he sent a message to the cohort:

> Hey everyone, if you didn't see the Daily Texan on Friday the 22 then go and get a copy because I was in it. Believe it. I was quoted a couple of times on page 10 about my trip to Israel. Why are you still reading this email… you should be out of the house by now trying to get a copy of the paper. Go, go get it. Now.

Rista wrote back, "I got 30 or so copies and mailed them to all of my friends and

family! I kept a few copies for myself, of course. One's taped to my mirror to give me daily inspiration, and one's in my J. Bain scrapbook. C" Abraham responded to Rista, "It is due to people like you and the love that this cohort shares that I want to stay in college forever." This comical exchange is typical of Abraham's relationship with his peers and the way in which he created a place among his classmates.

At the same time, Abraham made humorous comments about being the only male in the group. For example, a message was sent to the general folder inviting people to go see "The Mexican" a movie starring Brad Pitt. Abraham responded to the message asking if he could attend.

> Is this a female kind of thing or is the token male invited to attend as well? The reason I ask is because I wouldn't want to disturb any quality time that ya'll might want to spend swooning over Brad Pitt (4-2-01).

In another example, Abraham made it clear that he was the only guy among girls. In a message titled "Good Luck Ladies!" from a peer outside of the reading specialization program, Abraham wrote back: "I suggest that you look at my portfolio first… I might not be the most attractive male, but I didn't realize that I could be mistaken for a lady."

Abraham enjoyed being the "only guy" in the cohort and commented often about being lucky to be among so many women. Abraham wrote:

> To my new and experienced cohort ladies:

> I wanted to ask a question because I'm not sure if I am dreaming or not. Now am I correct in thinking that my beautiful cohort of 23 girls just got bumped up to 33 girls? Because if this is true than I think this qualifies me as the luckiest kid on the whole campus. I love this major (5-24-01).

In another message, Abraham shared, "I am starting to think that it is my lucky day- do you mean to tell me that I can get drunk with 20 girls at one time! WOOH WOOH count me in for sure. Oh yeah, I am definitely in the right major." Having fun with his classmates seemed like one way for Abraham to create a space for himself in an all-girl cohort. In our interview, I asked Abraham how he felt about being the only male in the cohort. He reflected, "I felt so comfortable and I learned so much. I think it had a lot to do with the fact that I had been with these girls for a year and a half, we had a good time together, and I am not worried about proving anything."

Abraham also enjoyed socializing with his female classmates outside of class. During the first semester, Abraham invited his classmates to three parties at his house and organized weekly happy hours for the cohort. It is important to note that these messages where posted to the general folder, where social and personal messages were commonly posted. Over the summer he wrote a message titled: "Just An Idea: Did someone say happy hour? All summer? Every week?" In the message he wrote: "You girls make me so happy I just want to cry tears of joy! Just tell me when and where I can go and get drunk and I'll be there, no problem."

Following this message, Abraham received many teasing comments about having a drinking problem. He teased back:

> All right. All right. I am a drunk…but at least I'm out of denial stage. So now it's on to the second stage referred to as Coping With My Problem. However, in order to work through this difficult stage I will need the help of everyone else in the cohort by meeting me at 4:00 for happy hour instead. That ought' a cure me…Right?

During the cohort's student teaching semester, Abraham suggested that the group "meet for happy hour every single day of the week." He announced:

> I will nominate myself to be the person who will attend all of them. I want everyone to know that this will be a huge personal sacrifice for me, but I am willing to make this sacrifice for each of you because this is a cause worth fighting for!

Abraham's fun-loving attitude and social engagements helped him and his classmates manage the stress associated with course work and student teaching. However, beyond his personal and professional disposition of having fun, Abraham was very much committed to making a difference as a teacher.

Images of Becoming a Teacher

In this section, I explain how Abraham's image of teaching was being influenced by his shifting perspectives about child-responsive instruction and how

these changing perspectives both shaped his online responses and inspired the connections he made as a prospective teacher. When Abraham joined the reading specialization program, he seemed committed to an image of teaching that would save the failing state of education. His passion to change the world seemed to shift to a passion committed to teaching children. This newer image is crucial to Abraham's development as a teacher because it influenced the way he viewed his responsibilities as a classroom teacher.

Change the World.

From the first day of class, Abraham grappled with the "failing state of education" and "negativity towards schools." He was angry about the current problems in education and expressed a commitment to make changes as a male teacher. He expressed that teachers need to be empowered to change the current system and to "make a difference." For example, Abraham commented on the failing state of literacy education in response to the article "Literacy and Schooling: A Sociocognitive Perspective" (Langer, 1987). He wrote about his anger and disappointment in "the faults and holes in our literacy education." He recounted, "Why did we, as a society, let this happen to us? We are at a pivotal point in our education system where changes can be made but at the same time I am furious at the fact that changes have not been made"(2-14-01). His anger diminished toward the end of his response when he concluded, "I refuse to bitterly

ramble on forever about our failing literacy education because I don't believe it is all that bad." Abraham appears to be struggling between a popular accepted discourse about how teachers and schools are failing students and a hopeful view as a prospective teacher who wants to make a difference.

Abraham's peers and the program faculty supported Abraham's hopeful perspective and encouraged him to stay positive. Jennifer wrote back:

> Wow!! Great response. Articles like this one are meant to make us look really hard at our ways of thinking. They always make things look really hopeless. I'm glad to see that you still see hope somewhere in the mess.

Two weeks later, Abraham responded to the article "Consequences of Family Literacy for Adults and Children: Some Preliminary Findings" (Philliber et al., 1996) and wrote,

> What bothers me is what was said in the article; *Retention is one of the most serious problems faced in adult education programs. Out of 5, 672 students receiving instruction it was found that half of the students left within the first 16 weeks and only 40% were enrolled for more than 20 weeks* …. Seeing that I live in America I think that I have the right to rant about my utter disappointment in our society … I just wish that people would want to better themselves because they need to be educated plain and simple. I hate to know that so many quit and a vast amount of those who stay are just being forced to.

Abraham seemed troubled by the retention and dropout rates and again reacted with anger. But many of Abraham's classmates and university supervisors responded to Abraham's anger and encouraged him to think differently about literacy issues and the needs of students. Nora agreed with Abraham's comment and wrote back, "I hate this too. But you are right we see it in all age groups…. We have to remember that there is probably a reason so many quit, perhaps they had a bad experience in the education system-made to feel dumb, never given attention, never encouraged." Dr. H responded to Abraham's comments by encouraging him to reflect on his role as a teacher. He shared, "I think these kinds of statistics should challenge us to think and reflect on what we are doing. Sure we can blame the young for not sticking to it…or can we ask why?" Dr. H. seemed to be pushing Abraham to think beyond a "manufactured crisis" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) perspective that is popular among the general public and reconsider his responsibilities to children. Nonetheless, both comments affirmed Abraham's angry feelings about schooling and challenged him to think beyond his own deficit assumptions. Abraham's need to make a difference as a teacher shines through in his responses to the readings and he continued to negotiate articles that blamed teachers and students and those that offered practical ideas to help children.

In the Reading Assessment and Development course, students read many articles on alternate forms of assessment. Issues related to high stakes assessment

were not new for Abraham. He had strong feelings about the use of high-stakes assessment and searched for answers that might improve testing. In response to "The Promise And Challenge Of Informal Assessment In Early Literacy" (Teale, 1986) Abraham wrote:

> It's refreshing to read a piece that criticizes standardized tests and encourages schools, teachers, and researchers to reevaluate our methods in an attempt to better our students and their learning process in the future (2-12-01).

In support of Abraham's comments, Adrianna wrote back, "Damn right it's refreshing, but unfortunately the folks struggling under the reign of standardized test can no longer be refreshed. They need to be relieved, am I right?" Adrianna's response called attention to the responsibility teachers have for students and encouraged Abraham to consider child-centered solutions.

Soon after the response from Adrianna, Abraham's perspective seemed to shift slightly. In the following response, he focused more on children's learning rather than the systemic failures of literacy instruction. In response to "Assessment of Emergent Literacy: Storybook Reading" (Sulzby, 1986), he wrote:

> What truly turned me on to this type of assessment was one statement in particular where Sulzby describes what a teacher should say if the child feels he/she can't read whatever print is in front of him. She states that to

> encourage a child to read, the assessor can prompt the child by saying, *It doesn't have to be like grown up reading - just do it your own way.* Is that not fantastic or what? In my opinion, telling the student to Just *do it your own way* is the ultimate way to personalize the assessment to the child, all the while catering to the specifics of what that particular child can and can't do. In all honesty, isn't catering to the individual what assessment should truly be about? (2-19-01)

Abraham seemed to be more sensitive to children's personal experiences and individual learning styles and more willing to focus on students' abilities as a solution to testing. Practical applications mentioned in the article seemed to help Abraham conceptualize theories related to child-centered teaching and assessment. In another example, he wrote a response to a classmate in reference to using children's own words to read and write. He commented:

> To make it their own! One of the most important things that I believe you said is that it's not a testing situation. I think that makes all the difference and takes so much pressure off of the children. In this type of situation they can just relax, learn with their friends, and not stress out.

In the beginning, Abraham's online talk about education resembled a popular attitude that teachers and schools are failing children. This disposition appeared to change as Abraham made connections to practical applications and strategies to help students. At the same time, he seemed more willing to consider teaching a

"student-centered activity" rather than teaching to "fix societal problems". While Abraham always appeared to be hopeful about becoming a teacher, his position on literacy education expanded. He wanted to focus on students' abilities instead of their failures. While interacting with others and considering varied perspectives, Abraham seemed to appropriate a more child-centered view of teaching and channeled his anger toward practical solutions.

In the following response, Abraham criticized authors Johnson (1992) and Trueba (1998) for blaming school failure on the outside world and argued for examining the positive achievements of schools and teachers. He wrote:

> *As a consequence, the weaker student, whose work needs to be framed most positively, will have his work framed most negatively.* This statement tends to blame the failure of students on the teachers while the next statement from Trueba's "English Literacy Acquisition" article tends to view the failure of students on the outside world. He writes *the success or failure of students is viewed as a function of structural social factors, and less on the part of school treatment. This seems to have emphasized the focus on failure. More recently, the focus on success is consistent with an overall recent trend in the social sciences to look into the school treatment as a complementary explanation for success or failure.* What is important to me about these two viewpoints is not whether the students are failing due to teachers or outside factors, but that the people mentioned here are

> focusing on failure. Why is it that teachers are focusing on the failures of their students and that researchers and reporters are doing the same? It seems to me this only creates negativity towards schools and the learning process. Shouldn't the focus of teacher be what their kids are achieving? (4-4-01)

Abraham refused to "bitterly ramble on about our failing literacy education," and looked for ways to make changes. He commented:

> I am sick and tired of always hearing about what students of today aren't capable of doing and where to blame their failures. In my opinion, everyone in the world should listen to me, screw their heads on straight, and put the students' priorities straight. Let's evaluate the positive things and not dwell on where the blame should or should not fall.

Once again, Abraham's focus on student success illustrates a shift in his views about students and teaching and this appeared to influence his developing identity as a teacher.

At the same time, Abraham became more conscious of his changing perspectives as evidenced by his response to *Classrooms that Work* (Cunningham & Allington, 1999, p. 188-190). Abraham wrote:

> The author says, *Too often children are viewed as having substantial deficits in world knowledge because their expertise does not match the curriculum in our schools.* I am familiar with this idea since we have

> talked about it before in our classes and I have heard it from many other teachers and speakers in the past… I am confident enough now to realize that this happens and to be able to keep a watchful eye out for it in the future (11-5-01).

This response illustrates Abraham's awareness of the conflicting discourses surrounding children and teaching. He seemed to grow into and accept of a new image of teaching that is additive and responsive.

Abraham articulated his new image of teaching with a new vision- to change the world for students. In a response to Ayers' (1993) book *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*, Abraham wrote about his visions for the future. He announced: "One day I hope to be able to incorporate lessons that will inspire, motivate, and encourage every child in my class by building off of what their prior frame of references are and their individual expertise." Further on in the response he wrote:

> I have long thought that choosing the profession of teaching will undoubtedly change the life that I have so fondly become accustomed to….And so my personal search has taken me here, to become a teacher and help children. Where else could I possibly be where I have the opportunity to positively affect others? Within our schools is where so much good can be found. As Ayers writes, The *fundamental message of the teacher for ethical action is: You can change the world*. Imagine that!!

(12-2-01)

Abraham continued to negotiate discourse associated with the failing state of schooling but also seemed more willing to take on a new view of himself – a view as a teacher who can make difference in the lives of children.

The Male Role Model

Being a male in a female-dominated career and serving the needs of kids seemed extremely important to Abraham's developing self as a teacher. He wanted to become a positive male role model for boys and girls and strongly believed that schools "just need more guys in the schools for the kids." He shared:

> My philosophy still is and was before, I am a guy and I want to be a teacher because there are too many screwed up kids in the world and there are just too many screwed up kids in the world. And they need more guys in the schools.

Over the three semesters, Abraham often reflected on his image as a male teacher. For example, during his second semester in the reading program, on September 11, 2001. Abraham wrote about his hopes to become a teacher:

> I always wanted to be a teacher because I have thought that there are just too many bad people in the world out there. I wanted to be the guy who was in the classroom and provided a good role model in order to keep good kids from turning bad or to help bad kids become good.

In another response to Ayers' (1993) book *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*,

Abraham reflected on his decision to become a teacher and his vision to help kids. He wrote:

> My priorities have been slowly changing over the years and my views about myself and what I hope to accomplish have, in turn, shifted as well. My belief now rests solely on the idea that there is so much good to be done out there and I want to be the man in the middle of it (10-2-01).

Abraham's impetus for wanting to be a male role model was often connected to his past experiences as a young male in school. He narrated stories of himself as a student to clarify his beliefs as a developing teacher. For instance, in our interview at the end of Abraham's student-teaching semester, Abraham remembered being in fifth grade and only having female teachers. He confided: "You can't ask a fifth grade boy to go and talk to a female teacher about his problems. It just doesn't work that way. It seriously lacks. So maybe that is where I can do some good." In another example, Abraham explained that working at the Pyramid School, a program for young, abused boys greatly influenced his decision to become a teacher. He shared:

> I volunteered for the Pyramid school, during an ALD class. I wanted to see if I liked education. The school was described as a program for abused and sexually neglected boys ages 7-17 but when I got there I found out it was a school for sex offenders! They were boys who had abused or sexually neglected other people so you basically have some messed up

> kids in the state of Texas…So you had bad bad kids there and I was around these guys everyday. I was around these boys and to be able to help them with their homework and their reading and their computer skills and their science and math and it was just interesting… The Pyramid School really influenced me to become a teacher. To be a male role model for those boys
>
> (4-25-02).

Abraham expressed a passion and commitment for helping children, especially young men who need male role models. Becoming a male elementary teacher matched Abraham's developing image of a teacher who can save "kids from bad things." He declared, "I am a guy, and I want to be a teacher because there are too many screwed up kids in the world. They need help. They need more guys in the schools." His use of the phrase "they need help" resembles the manufactured crisis discourse mentioned earlier. This example illustrates Abraham's on-going negotiation with the popular "failing" perspective that influenced his images of teaching and schooling. Further, Abraham's vision of himself as a male role model seemed heroic. He often expressed his sadness concerning the educational and emotional state of young men, such as those in the Pyramid school and searched for ways to "help bad kids turn good." This heroic purpose, as it was articulated in Abraham's online responses and our interview also helped him justify the financial constraints of teaching and positioned him above other career

choices.

Abraham's identity as a teacher and the stories he told of himself as a student were influenced by the context of the course readings, peers and personal beliefs. He projected a teacher-as-hero image that clarified his own professional aspirations and guide his visions for the future. He emphasized a "hero" image possibly because he was the only male student in the reading specialization program or because he needed to justify his decision to become a teacher in a female dominated profession. Through responding online, Abraham seemed to become more aware of himself as a male teacher and his responsibilities to children. Furthermore, multiple factors played into Abraham's images of teaching and schooling, but being a positive role model and finding child centered solutions were significant to Abraham's identity development as a teacher.

Ways of Knowing

In this section, I describe Abraham's stories of himself as a student and volunteer instructor and illustrate how these forms of knowing influenced his teacher identity as one who valued experience over other forms of knowledge.

Being a Student

Soon-to-be teachers, like all learners, have preconceptions of what it means to be a successful teacher, how individuals should be treated, and how school institutions are run and organized (Weinstein, 1989). Lortie (1975) points out that by the time young adults reach college they have spent thousands of hours

as students, living with teachers in classrooms, observing them, and discussing their own schooling experiences. They rely on these experiences to inform their teaching. Likewise, Abraham largely relied on his educational experiences to inform his learning.

In the beginning of the program, Abraham wrote about his past schooling experiences. He embedded short personal stories of learning and being in a classroom as a white, middle class male. He inserted text from numerous articles and made emotional connections to his experiences of learning to read. These narratives seemed to encapsulate his beliefs about literacy and teaching. For example, in a response to "Examining the Literacy Perceptions of Non-Reading Parents" (Crawford, 1996) Abraham wrote about learning to read. He remembered

> As I read this article I couldn't help but think back to my own elementary school days and my third grade classroom in particular. When was learning to read every adult I knew could read and it was my assumption that eventually I would too. I received help and instruction from my parents and my grandparents but the thought never entered my mind that wouldn't be able to read nor that some people couldn't (3-28-01).

Further in the response, Abraham recalled the first time he "encountered an illiterate adult and the feeling that overcame" him. He wrote:

> When I was in the third grade I had a friend that I will refer to as Peter.

Peter was never a good reader; in fact Peter could hardly read at all. But, we were in the third grade so that kind of thing was irrelevant to us at the time since we all had weaknesses in different areas. Peter was the kind of kid who dreaded the time of day when we had to read aloud in class from our science or history books and would read ahead to scan for unfamiliar words in a feeble attempt to get practice at the section that he was supposed to read. I always chalked it up to the fact that he was just bad at language arts in much the same way that I could never learn the multiplication tables in math. However, what I didn't realize at the time was that Peter wasn't getting the same attention in reading at home like I was. As Crawford puts it, A *child's literacy development is influenced by their parents' perceptions of the need and utility for literacy.* Just before school was about to end for that year, Peter was going to have a birthday. Myself, along with about six other boys had our parents drop us off at his home and his parents drove us to a small amusement place called Games People Play in Townhall. When we arrived, Peter's parents were trying to figure out how much it would cost for each child to play miniature golf, go go-carting, and ride the waterslides. To my dismay, as we stood in the main building looking at the price sign, Peter's parents were unable to decipher what it said. They quickly turned to Peter and asked him to read it to them. My heart immediately sank with the weight of seeing all three

> of them struggle frustratingly to decode the simple meaning behind the pricing list that was intended to allow people to have a fun filled day. Sadly, Peter never did finish school. He was held back a few times and as I was graduating High school, Peter was dropping out….I can't help but think that if Peter's parents had been able to give him the kind of quality instruction that I received, where would he be now?

Abraham blamed Peter's eventual "dropping out of high school" on Peter's parents' illiteracy. He seemed to empathize with Peter's failure to read. This story may have also helped Abraham to reflect on his own commitment to children and literacy instruction. At the same time, this story also enabled Abraham's peers connect to their own educational experiences and consider a different perspective on illiteracy. Ellie, a classmate, praised Abraham's autobiographical response and shared:

> It made me think about when I was learning to read…It is easy to assume that all children's literacy experiences must be that way - until you see someone like your friend - and then you have a better idea of the reality faced by many kids.

Dr. H. affirmed Abraham's reflective story and encouraged him to build on similar ways of knowing. He wrote back, "Abraham... you have an incredible memory for some powerful stories !!!!! This is amazing."

In other instances, Abraham referred to his educational experiences as a

college student. In response to Nora, a classmate who wrote about Silvia Ashton Warner's (1965) philosophies on meaningful learning, Abraham responded:

> Why couldn't we have read this article before I took geology? Have you ever taken geo-the-devil-class-logy? If you have then you will know what I am talking about…Because of words like igneous, sillimanite, peizometric that have no meaning in my life and never will. I bombed the class…I just could not relate the concepts to my life and so I had no interest in continuing.

Much like a new parent reflects on his childhood in order to raise his children, Abraham used his schooling experiences to guide his future teaching. He wrote, "I never want my students to have to do something that is not meaningful to them. I don't want to put them through what I went through." Although Abraham's connections and stories were interesting and often related directly to the content of the articles, he rarely expanded his thinking and belief system beyond these personal narratives. Instead he made connections to other practical experiences such as his role as a volunteer Hebrew instructor, mentor, and student teacher.

Volunteer Teaching

Through high school and college, Abraham volunteered with children and young adults in instructional roles and often wrote about the practical applications of these experiences. Early in the spring semester, Abraham related his work with an adult tutee to teaching Hebrew to young children. In response to "Strategies

and Practices of Individuals Who Tutor Adult Illiterates" (Ceprano, 1996), he commented:

> I realize that this article is intended to focus on the aspects of adult literacy, but I couldn't help to connect it to my past experience in high school when I taught Hebrew to fifth graders at Sunday school. In a lot of ways, these two very different types of people (adults compared to school children) were very much alike. In this article the author makes the reference that reported *surveys of clients who have been surveyed by various tutoring agencies revealed that a large number of students were frustrated with the amount of time it took them to read assigned material, the failure they often experienced during instruction, and the depression they felt during learning plateaus.* The reason I chose to include this quote is because I know this feeling very well. I have seen it in the eyes of and on the faces of almost every child in my Sunday school class (2-28-01).

Abraham continued his story, linking the text to his students:

> These fifth graders, like adults who are learning to utilize written language, had an awful time trying to grasp the often-unknown barriers and limitations of the Hebrew language. Frustration quite frequently set in early and it was terrible thing to try to overcome. They also experienced those awful plateaus and since we only worked together once a week, the kids only real hope of continuing to learn was to do lots of work on their

> own … Though my volunteer work with adults has just begun, I can only assume that these observations I have noticed with the Sunday school kids will be quite similar to that of adults.

Abraham used his educational experiences of teaching Sunday school to make sense of his adult tutee's reading motivation, yet this connection seems cursory. Abraham skipped over the cultural and socioeconomic aspects of being an illiterate Mexican-American man (his adult student) in our country and focused on his experiences and those of his white, middle class Jewish students.

In another example, Abraham referred to teaching Hebrew and the difficulties of a struggling reader named Jamaal. In response to *Windows Into Literacy* (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993) Abraham explained:

> While reading this article I couldn't get the thought of Jamaal, the second grade new reader mentioned early in the article, out of my mind …. The reason that I thought so much about Jamaal was that many of the characteristics that the authors describe Jamaal displaying were similar to characteristics that I have seen in the students that I have taught in the past. When I was in high school I taught second and fifth grade Hebrew and Judaic classes at my Synagogue's Sunday school. While the fifth graders seemed confident in their Hebrew studies, the second graders acted in much of the same way that Jamaal did. My students, for the most part, had mastered the Hebrew alphabet but many of them had terrible

trouble reading dialog even though they could recreate simple sentences and express minor thoughts and ideas with the words that they had learned (2-05-01).

Abraham seemed to be working through the complexities of the reading process by relating Jamaal to his Sunday school students. He ended, "I can't help but wonder if a lot of it has to do with them not understanding that there is a message to decode amongst all of those unfamiliar words and sentences." Dr. H commended Abraham's efforts to reflect on his past experiences and make them relevant to his learning. He responded to Abraham: "It's just great that you have this narrative as part of your background. These cases become the basis for building professional knowledge. Yes, it was a lot to read … and it's the start of a book … not an article." Because Abraham was encouraged to build on his past experiences, he continued to do so.

Abraham's autobiographical narratives connecting his past learning experiences to course readings dominated his writing throughout the three semester program. Once Abraham started student teaching, he continued to tell stories of his classroom experiences and related them to his learning. He relied on his storied experiences as a student and his storied experiences as a practicing teacher.

Student Teaching Experiences

In the Fall 2001, Abraham began student teaching. He interned in a first

grade classroom for two and a half days a week. During this time, many of his responses were linked to his classroom internship and his cooperating teacher. This is not unusual because the course readings resembled much of what Abraham was observing in his classroom. After reading a chapter from *Classrooms that Work* (Cunningham & Allington, 1999), Abraham wrote about his work with first graders and the use of word walls. He mentioned:

> Being in a first grade classroom so much and working with children who are beginning writers, I see first hand the amount of difficulty they have in distinguishing one high frequency word from another. It gets frustrating to a teacher when a child repeatedly asks how to spell the same word over and over or spells one word a few different ways in the same piece of writing (10-01-01).

Abraham used his experiences in the classroom to inform his understanding of spelling high frequency words. He continued:

> Now, it is so great to be able to tell a kid in the class when he asks how to spell a word, "Now, where do you think you could see how to spell that word" and then simply point to the word wall. Problem solved, the word is spelled correctly, and the child gets a visual cue in the process.

Abraham valued his "first hand" experience with "beginning writers" because it enabled him to say the right words and help his students spell words correctly. In another instance, in response to Chapter 3 of *To Teach: A Journey of a Teacher*

(Ayers, 1993) Abraham found himself revisiting his "own memories of classrooms" that he had visited or studied in. He asserted:

> Too many times, during my pre-college years, I was forced to spend a year in a classroom that didn't decorate or use student work to better the environment. I remember how so very boring those years were and how bad I didn't want to be there. On occasion, I have had the very rare classroom that was designed and utilized by great teachers almost like *a canvas for the learners to express our learning process and achievements*. Those classes I will cherish…I also started to think about Blanton Hills and the classes that I see. While it is true that some, like Barbara's class are rich in student activities and centers, others are not…As Ayers says, *I want my space to say, Explore! Experiment*! So do I ! So do I! (10-29-01)

In the preceding response, Abraham linked his observations as a student to his current classroom internship and projected to his own classroom in the future. This reflective connection helped Abraham to visualize his future goals as a classroom teacher.

Another narrative example occurred during our interview. Abraham told me a short story about learning to read in second grade and how his understanding of reading instruction had changed based on his personal stories as a student and a student teacher. This was the same story he wrote about in his "First Weeks of School" Journal. He shared:

> When I was growing up there were seven subjects. We had our science, reading time, writing time, reading groups. I was in the green group. Then I was in the yellow group. There were kids in the red group. The red group was the dumb group and we all knew who the dumb kids in the class were. And it was horrible. But now it is not like that [in my student teaching classroom]. We spend an hour and a half in reading workshop while they are reading about science or about math on their own choice. We don't have a red group (4-04-01).

Dr. H and classmates capitalized on Abraham's experiences and encouraged his personal introspection. Abraham continued to connect his personal experiences with the course readings and drew on his experiences as valued knowledge source.

Hardal and Lauvas (1987) describe three forms of 'knowing' individuals draw on to become reflective teachers. According to Hardal and Lauvas, personal experiences, transmitted knowledge, and values are all forms of knowledge, which influence practical theories and teaching. Personal experience refers to educational experiences one has as a student, a parent, and an observer of education. Transmitted knowledge includes concepts, categories, theories, and commonly held beliefs that are transmitted to teachers by persons, media, and research. Values describe ethical or philosophical, political (freedom, power), and cultural awareness (cultural diversity, core set of beliefs about oppression and

disenfranchisement). Based on this framework, Abraham largely relied on personal experiences to inform his understanding as a reading teacher. He told numerous stories of his past as a student and related them to literacy concepts and personal beliefs about teaching and children. While there is much evidence that suggests Abraham did indeed draw on subject-matter concepts of transmitted knowledge, the majority of his online responses are based on personal experience discourse rather than discourse related to theories and research. He seemed to use both personal experience and transmitted knowledge to make sense of his readings. Abraham rarely made connections related to value sources such as cultural awareness, diversity, or oppression.

Yon (2001) warns that while discourse can shape how one comes to think and produce new knowledge, it can also "work to constrain, as it sets up the parameters, limits blind spots of thinking and acting" (p. 3). Abraham's over-reliance on personal experience discourse seemed to constrain him from multiple perspectives about culture and diversity. It is unclear why Abraham did not use other sources of to inform his learning. What seems clear is that his developing identity as a teacher was being shaped by his past experiences related to teaching and his self-assured attitude towards teaching reading. He seemed to join the reading program as a knowing teacher – with many pre-established beliefs about what it takes to be a reading teacher. This belief influenced Abraham's identity development in the program.

A Knowing Teacher

Abraham responded to readings as a knowing teacher – one who had valuable teaching experiences and prior beliefs about literacy education. He wrote with certainty and never expressed difficulty understanding literacy concepts. Abraham used evaluative terms when responding to course readings. He either expressed his pleasure or dissatisfaction in the assignments based on his beliefs as a knowing teacher. For example, in response to "Making Dialogue Dialogic: A Dialogic Approach to Adult Literacy" (Fallon, 1998), Abraham wrote:

> You would think by reading the title of this article that as the reader you are about to be in for the most boring time of your life. But surprisingly enough, this article was quite good and entertaining.

In another response to an article about high-stakes assessment, Abraham remarked, "I can't end this response without saying that I honestly enjoyed and felt like I took something way from this chapter. From emergent literacy down to standardized testing." It seemed that Abraham valued the usefulness of his readings like an experienced teacher, knowing exactly what was important to learn. At the same time, he was critical of readings that he perceived did not seem to teach him anything new or useful.

After reading an article related to literacy assessment in February, 2001, Abraham wrote, "I have feared this day would come and it finally has…unfortunately this one truly disappointed me…it just didn't have any

valuable points and it was probably the dullest one we have read" This evaluative tone and Abraham's failure to seek new understanding seem so early in the program illustrates Abraham's self perception and stance as an "knowing" teacher, one who has been teaching for many years and knows much about reading instruction. This self-image also seemed to help Abraham identify himself as a reading teacher who knows a great deal about literacy instruction. Another instance of this knowing stance occurred when Abraham made a comment to an article about high-stakes assessment. He added: " I think he knows what he is talking about but I would rather read about how to change a dying curriculum into a better one as opposed to how to identify a poor curriculum." Abraham appeared self confident in his opinions about literacy instruction and placed his opinions and beliefs next to specialists who have been studying the field for many years.

Abraham used phrases such as "I agree" or "In my opinion" to express his beliefs and to inform his learning. Further, Abraham often changed the text to fit his beliefs about teaching. In response to the "Making Dialogue Dialogic" (Fallon, 1998), Abraham stated: "If it were up to me, I would change the title and make it something along the lines of "making dialogue meaningful and representative to how we view the world." This response slighted the message in the article and Abraham's rewording may show that he was inflexible and unable to grasp different perspectives. He seems constrained by his "all-knowing" self-image. In another example, Abraham disagreed about why individuals tell stories.

He recommended:

> To me individuals tell stories to escape. Just think about it, why else would someone tell a story except for the reason to take themselves and the listener to another place? If it were up to me, I would change the passage that Silko wrote to read, "I will tell you something about stories, they aren't just entertainment. Don't be fooled. They are all we have, you see, all we have that allows us to escape whatever reality, be it positive or negative, that we are bound to any given moment (10-10-01).

On October 29th, Abraham clearly stated his beliefs about high stakes assessment. He wrote:

> Hands down, this was absolutely the best chapter that I have read of Ayers yet…My personal opinion is that standardized tests don't adequately display the test takers potential, but rather show proficiency in only a tight category of testable materials…I agree wholeheartedly with what Ayers is saying. These tests are so influential over the future of students.

In the above responses and others, Abraham used terms such as "my personal opinion" and "I agree wholeheartedly" to substantiate his already-knowing perspective. In response to an article about democracy in the classroom, Abraham was critical of letting children create their own rules and based these opinions on his own beliefs rather than theories or research presented in class. He wrote:

> I'm sorry but I think that life can be confusing enough for young children

> without posting clear guidelines as to what is expected or not in the classroom. I think that this kind of democratic rule making causes too much ambiguity for the children. I think clearly stated rules are better (10-29-01).

Whether he was aware of his writing stance or not, Abraham continued to write like an experienced teacher among his peers. He repeatedly used the term "universal truths" to express his understanding and belief in phonemic awareness. He responded:

> *Phonemic awareness develops through a serious of stages during which children first become aware that language is made up of individual words, which words are made up of syllables, and that syllables are made up of phonemes.* I chose this quote because I think it is the single greatest understanding that anyone must realize if they are to truly understand language and how it works through people.

Abraham seemed certain of his knowledge and wrote from a position of authority. This authoritive stance toward reading instruction may demonstrate his inflexibility as a learner. Abraham could express his attitudes about with literacy concepts but was unwilling to change his mind.

Abraham's convictions about literacy instruction and his perception of being an expert intensified over time. By the second semester of the program, Abraham wrote about teaching as being "easy, obvious and a breeze." In response

to the "Mustard Manual," a detailed report about classroom organization and management, Abraham wrote, "The funny thing is that after having this little bit of involvement in my classroom at Blanton Hills, all of the ideas in this book and the suggestions that they made seem almost routine…There was nothing new." In another response to making words, Abraham noted: "I mean, the information was great and the strategies and games were interesting but all too familiar to me." And when it came to words and word walls, Abraham considered himself an expert. He told me:

> I didn't even know what a word wall was when I came into the university …. We never had them when I was growing up. But now I do them everyday in my class and I think I do them well … Barbara (pseudonym) was telling me the other day that she takes something away from her student teachers and this year she as taken away word walls from me because she doesn't know anything about word walls and I can honestly say I can tell you anything you ever wanted to know. I am actually making all the word walls for our class.

This above response suggests Abraham did indeed learn some important content knowledge and has used this knowledge to establish himself and be recognized as a knowing teacher in his internship classroom but also shows his superior sort of attitude. Abraham also considered himself an effective classroom manager from the second day of student teaching. In his "First Weeks of School" Journal,

Abraham wrote about his ability "to take charge and get the students to listen to him." In our interview he revealed, "I have never had any problems with [the students] listening and doing what I say." He continued, "One day Barbara told me – I don't know how you do it. I am embarrassed because when you are teaching they are so good and when I am teaching they are so bad … She was like, you are in total control." When asked how he managed his classroom, Abraham shared:

> I think a lot of management stems from how you can get the kids to do what you want them to do and then still have it be fun. It could be let's play a game or when you hear me snap my fingers get up and go to your desk… I think it is all about those little tricks.

Abraham depended on his personal experiences to inform his instruction. Although he had read extensively on various models of discipline and the implications of a social curriculum, he did not appear to use this information as a source for teaching.

Abraham appeared to privilege practical experiences over other forms of knowing and contributed his expert knowledge to "being the teacher" in the classroom. In his dialogue journal, on the fifth day of class, Abraham wrote, "I think the day went very well. The kids listen to me more and treat me more like a teacher…Even Barbara says the kids think I am the real teacher." Two weeks before graduating from the program, Abraham pointed out the importance of his

practical experiences. He stated, “I tutored a twenty-two year old guy. Then they put me in a room with a fourth grader and said here you go. But I figured out what to do. I learned.” In his student teaching classroom, Abraham “jumped in” on the first day of school by “reading to the class and interacting with the kids right away.” He described these actions as being “extremely influential” in becoming a teacher. Abraham reflected on his practical experiences and concluded that these experiences helped him to “develop the most in my teaching and in my philosophies and my mental image of how a teacher should be.” He concluded:

> I think that it takes just jumping in and actually doing it before you actually know what you are doing…and being the teacher…I remember being in a team meeting and staring up at these three women who were all over 45 years and they are looking at me, and they are like what are your ideas? What do you know? What do you want to do? And I was like – what do I know? What do I want to do? And I went with it …. I did it. And I have had the opportunity to do so much.

Overall, Abraham was confident in his teaching experiences and proud of his knowledge. At the end of our interview, Abraham shared

> I am pretty confident in myself and my abilities and what I can do and as far as my beliefs about teaching – my knowledge – I feel like as far as you can possibly get in the university level. I am probably at the cutting edge of what I do know. I am completely confident in my abilities to do

anything in the classroom. A hundred-percent confident.

Abraham's identity was shaped by his position and recognition as a "knowing teacher;" one with valuable experiences and strong beliefs about literacy instruction. This belief about himself was encouraged by Barbara (Abraham's cooperating teacher), Dr. H., and Abraham's classmates. It was rarely challenged. Others' voices in the program often enabled Abraham to construct and claim this developing self as a knowing teacher.

Encouraging preservice teachers to reflect on their personal experiences can be a powerful method for helping individuals conceptualize new perceptions of teaching and make sense of who they are becoming as teachers (Connelly& Clandinin, 1990 & Mink, 1987). Yet, Abraham's emphasis on personal experience as a form of knowing defined him from the beginning of the program. While he gained in subject-matter knowledge, he seemed unable to move beyond his image as a knowing teacher to understand children who come from backgrounds different from his own.

Disengagement

Abraham's connections to practical experiences helped him negotiate his identity as an elementary reading teacher. His orientation towards practical application was invaluable to his development, yet Abraham's experiences were based on his white, middle class upbringing. As I reread Abraham's responses, I

noticed that most of Abraham's reflections neglected to address cultural and social aspects of literacy instruction. For example, when reading an introduction chapter from the book *The Need for Story* (Dyson & Genishi, 1995). Abraham questioned how stories empower individuals in the classroom. He quoted the authors and wrote

> They state that, If *certain stories are never heard beyond a narrow circle, for example, if stories of toughness are never echoed or challenged in stories heard in the classroom forum- they will never be dialogized. That is they will not be rendered a story among possible stories, other ways of being; in which case, they may not be a source of identification and power but of constraint, of limits.* How can this be? Either Anthony's story did empower his unheard voice or it didn't.

Abraham did not seem to grasp that classroom teachers and/or school curriculums may not value some students' lives. He made this assumption based on his experiences as a young male whose lived experiences were always valued by his peers and teachers. What is troublesome is that he did not attempt to imagine what it would be like to feel excluded from the mainstream or how it would feel to be different. In another example, Abraham wrote about his stereotypical beliefs of female prisoners:

> I can only truthfully say that this article didn't really thrill me…When I read this article I immediately thought of some of the women in prison

> where I do my adult literacy tutoring. A lot of these women come from a Mexican immigrant background…You can tell from talking to them that they were forced to confront many other issues in their lives and had to put education on hold. In the end, this held them back and is quite sad. Education was never a priority for them, and I'm sure that had a great influence on why they are in prison now.

Abraham made assumptions about the educational levels of female prisoners and was uncritical of their social and cultural backgrounds. In another example, after reading "The Silenced Dialogue" (Delpit, 1995) Abraham was extremely disturbed and angered by her "attack on white teachers." He wrote:

> I am saddened and disappointed that this article was chosen for our cohort. I mean, how can I take the author seriously? It seems to me that she is using this article as a way to attack white teachers and without real evidence or data. She uses quotes like, *They won't listen; white folks are going to do what they want to do anyway.* And others like, I'm *not going to let any man, woman, or child drive me crazy – white folks will try to do that to you if you let them.* Delpit outright admits that she has no conclusive research to back up her article and states this by saying, In *response to this article, which presented no research data and did not even cite a reference…* Her [Delpit] point is that non-white children are often left in the dust, in regards to education, being under the rule of white

> teachers while nonwhite teachers struggle to have their voices heard. This is most likely an accurate statement, but seeing as how I have never researched the matter myself and I can't trust Delpit I have no choice but to disregard the article…. I will not put myself into the position of trusting someone who uses angering statements poorly and chooses to play the "race card" whenever possible in a way to gain support (11-2-01).

Abraham negated Delpit's argument and disregarded the inequities mentioned in the article because he "never researched the matter" himself. I think he was trying to be funny by mimicking her claim. However, he neglects her lived experience as a black woman while relying often on his own lived experiences to justify his own teaching philosophies. He also disregarded that fact that Delpit is an established and credible educator of color who has been studying the field of literacy education for many years. In other words, Abraham could not connect Delpit's claims to his own past experiences and therefore focused on an attack of white teachers. I do not intend to blame Abraham in this example, but merely point out that when readings could not be linked to his past experiences both instructionally and culturally, Abraham rarely pondered multiple and varied experiences beyond his own. He simply disengaged.

In another example, taken from our interview, Abraham explained how he would have difficulty teaching a low income, minority population as a first-year teacher. He shared:

> This section was part of our assignment to talk about low communities but it was more on how I would deal with it and it is tricky- because obviously my background is not in a low SES community and it kind of scares me because I can't go in and identify and teach children who I don't have anything in common with and I didn't have the same experiences as them…I guess I see a difference but I don't see a difference. I see a difference in their lives and their backgrounds and how they have been brought up but as students they are going to have the same basic needs.

Abraham struggled with his image, as a white male teacher and the thought of working with children whose backgrounds were different than his own. When asked what type of school he wanted to work in, Abraham responded:

> I am in a lap of luxury. I mean the kids sit when you ask them to sit and they are quiet when you ask them to be quiet, and I know so many people who are pulling their hair out every night in a minority school because the kids just won't respond to them. No I would like to teach at Blanton Heights [where he was student teaching] or someplace like where I grew up.

For Abraham, working in a low socio-economic school means that a teacher must deal with students who misbehave. On the other hand, working in a high socio-economic school, like Blanton Hills or his own childhood elementary school, suggested to him that kids will listen and respond to him as a teacher. These

statements illustrate that Abraham is aware of his personal preferences, but is stuck in a deficit mode of thinking that informs his identity as a teacher.

Finally, Abraham has retained traditional notions of teaching based on his white, middle class background as evidenced in his online responses and our final interview. He rarely examined his attitudes and beliefs connected to his past experiences as a student. Abraham may have been constrained from understanding issues related to diversity because he interpreted course readings and practical experiences from a "knowing" position, not an inquisitive stance. In other words, he seemed inflexible in his ability to consider varied perspectives related to diversity. At first glance, Abraham was making personal connections to his readings and was being challenged by new perspectives. But with a closer inspection, Abraham remained faithful to his life stories as a source of knowledge and blocked out issues related to diversity.

Personal reflections, such as Abraham's, could be of great value to new teachers, but they can also serve to reproduce uncritical thinking. If one's reflection about teaching does not impel an individual to address issues of culture, power, and privilege then these issues can be evaded, overlooked, and even reinforced, much like Abraham's responses (Niento, 1999). Abraham's identity was being shaped by his images of teaching that were fed by his past experiences of schooling as a middle class white male. His responses lacked critical introspection into multiple perspectives, and this stance (conscious or not) may

have influenced his decision not to teach at a low-income school. I have no answers, only more questions.

How do we help students move beyond their cultural comfort zone and conceive of varied perspectives? How do we acknowledge and affirm their past experiences and at the same time nudge them to reach outside of their own narratives? Responding online seemed to help Abraham become more aware of his beliefs and come to understand himself as a reading teacher. Personal reflection on the experiences of schooling and teaching is merely the first step in helping preservice teachers to understand themselves and who they are becoming as teachers. Much more effort needs to be made to help Abraham question the partial and biased notions of literacy and to challenge his own uncontested history.

Summary

He joined the reading specialization program in hopes of "changing the world" and helping "bad kids get better." This hero-image influenced how Abraham responded to his course readings, how he related to his peers and cooperating teacher, and how he viewed his goals as a future teacher. As the only male in the program, Abraham positioned himself as a knowing teacher who was extremely confident of his abilities and knowledge as a reading teacher. Over the three-semester program, Abraham relied on narrated stories of his past schooling experiences to inform his learning in the program. He rarely questioned these

experiences or challenged their validity. Abraham appeared to disengage himself from issues of cultural diversity and this disposition clearly influenced who he was becoming as a teacher.

Current Teaching Position

Abraham teaches third grade at Minnow Elementary School a predominately white, middle class school in a small rural town in the southwest.

Abraham and Adrianna: A Cross Case Analysis

The following themes – negotiating multiple identities, sources of identity, and practice are addressed in this section to describe the common and divergent experiences of Abraham and Adrianna.

Negotiating Multiple Identities

Much like Holland et al. (1998) conceptualize identity as "composites of many, often contradictory, self-understandings" (p. 8) Adrianna and Abraham negotiated multiple identities and experiences that informed their teaching selves. I use the term multiple identities and dispositions interchangeably to explain how each participant made sense of their experiences and their learning in the reading program. Multiple identities, expressed online, influenced Abraham and Adrianna's personal images, decisions, and visions for teaching. These varied experiences and stances towards teaching, helped each participant become more aware of and more committed to becoming a teacher.

Adrianna came into the cohort an immigrant, a poet, and a student. Her varied experiences were validated in the program. She often wrote about her childhood experiences learning English and feeling different than other students. This disposition towards learning influenced her goals as a teacher – she wanted to work with children who had similar experiences of coming to America and learning English. As a poet, Adrianna believed that writing should be used to

transform society. She also viewed poetry as a means to help students play with and control language. These experiences and views about teaching and learning served as sources for Adrianna's teacher identity. However, she also experienced personal struggles that shaped who she was becoming as a teacher.

During her second semester in the program, while student teaching, Adrianna was forced to examine her identity as a poet and to "dress like a teacher" or conform to the social expectations of being a teacher. Adrianna struggled with "changing who I am" in order to please the administration. Being confronted by the vice principal forced Adrianna to redefine her commitment to children. She redefined her identity as a teacher as she became more recognized within her school. She recalled, "Now I feel that since I have changed, there is more respect and people nod and say hello and compliment me."

Abraham came into the program with multiple identities and numerous teaching experiences. These included his identity as a male student, a fraternity president, and the son of white, middle class, Jewish parents. All of these identities, much like Adrianna's, were acknowledged as important resources for learning to teach reading. However Abraham's disposition as a male learning to become a teacher in a female-dominated profession seemed to be a point contention and one that Abraham negotiated throughout the three-semester program. Embedded in most of Abraham's messages and responses were references to being the "only guy" in the cohort, being a positive male role model

for elementary students, and financial concerns. Although he downplayed doubts from his family and social pressures to "support a family," Abraham seemed at odds with his identity as a male teacher. He seemed to justify his to decision to become a teacher by creating a hero image of a teacher who could "save bad kids" and by positioning himself as a highly capable and knowledgeable teacher who found teaching "easy and obvious." He also defended his decision to teach because it is a "fun profession" much more entertaining than being a "high-paid lawyer." These accounts of teaching gave Abraham credibility and status among the others in the program. He used this position to validate his decision to teach. Writing about himself as a male teacher online helped Abraham negotiate his developing self as a teacher and provided him the opportunity to express his concerns and fears of becoming a teacher. It helped him to articulate a personal teaching philosophy and purpose that shaped his identity as a teacher.

Both Adrianna and Abraham negotiated multiple dispositions and experiences in their development as teachers that informed their images of being a teacher and their commitment to children.

Knowledge Sources

Abraham and Adrianna drew on different sources to make sense of their experiences in the reading specialization program. These divergent sources influenced their developing identities as teachers. Likewise, multiple experiences

and dispositions towards teaching informed what sources they drew from. These varied sources influenced how they interpreted course readings, instructional decisions, and goals for the future. Adrianna seemed to interpret her readings from a writer's perspective and used language as a source to construct her own knowledge. She borrowed language presented in course articles and books by quoting an author's words and reminding herself to use those words in her teaching. These comments were often repeated in her dialogue journal and her "First Weeks of School" Journal as words "to live by" and "remember forever." She playfully manipulated and added to comments written by peers and program faculty and complimented classmates' ability to write clearly and effectively. She critiqued authors' word choice or writing styles and frequently prefaced her comments with, "If I were her editor…" or "As a writer I…" these comments illustrated her self-awareness as an insider into the world of writing. This insider perspective was used as a filter to make sense of her learning (Gee, 1999). Adrianna knowingly and enthusiastically used language as a source because she valued the process of writing (all writing) and it corresponded to her identity as a poet and a writer. Likewise, her identity as a poet and writer influenced her teaching decisions.

Abraham relied on his past, practical experiences and beliefs about schooling to make sense of course readings. He came into the program having already worked with students in several volunteer teaching positions – from

teaching Hebrew in Sunday school, tutoring for a university sponsored program, and working as a counselor for troubled youth. These experiences were extremely important to Abraham's development as a teacher because they helped him to compare his procedural knowledge of working with students to new learning related to literacy instruction. He constantly drew from his past teaching with students and related them to his work as a tutor or as a student intern. Stories of his experiences were frequently included in his online responses. These allowed Abraham to build upon an identity within the program as an "already-knowing" teacher who had learned a great deal about kids and teaching prior to joining the program. Much like Adrianna, Abraham's narratives of being a student or as a volunteer instructor were highly valued and recognized as a knowledge source. His expertise as a reading teacher also played a key role in Abraham's transition into the classroom as a student teacher and how he viewed his development. Abraham believed classroom management, creating lesson plans, and working with students was simple, "obvious and easy."

Abraham's experiences teaching children matched those of his student teaching internship. He worked with white, middle class students in a community much like own childhood school. Because of this alignment, Abraham's familiarity allowed him to make an uncomplicated transition from his experiences of the past to his new learning as a preservice teacher. At the same time, it reinforced his own beliefs and allowed him to overlook issues related to diversity

and culture. His student teaching placement may have also encouraged deficit thinking and acquiescence to teaching like he was taught. It limited his ability to think beyond his own perspectives to a broader, more aware stance and allowed him to evade and overlook issues related to culture and diversity.

Practice

Abraham and Adrianna valued practical experiences with students. Practical applications helped them make sense of their own beliefs and literacy theories related to reading instruction. Adrianna made numerous connections between practice and theory while Abraham relied on his own practical experiences to inform his learning. These differing perspectives towards practice significantly influenced their teaching identities.

Adrianna joined the cohort with beliefs about literacy and language that matched many of the program's values. The more Adrianna read, the more she added to her own existing philosophies. However, Adrianna had no previous experience working with students and although she agreed with most of the literacy theories presented in class, she lacked practical experience to develop strategies that linked theory and practice. Being able to practice what she was learning with students and reflect online about these experiences helped Adrianna become more aware of her instructional decisions. She wasn't just learning subject-matter concepts related to reading, but was learning theories and applying

those theories to solve problems related to reading instruction. The emphasis on linking theory to practice was an important one for Adrianna because it helped her act as if she was already a teacher, learning from students and applying that to classroom situations. The more practical experiences Adrianna had, the more she viewed herself as a real teacher, or in her words, "an unpaid teacher."

Unlike Adrianna, Abraham came into the program having had many previous experiences with students. He seemed to value his practical experiences and beliefs about reading instruction over literacy theories. He based many of his instructional decisions and classroom management practices on his own notions of teaching and connected to classroom activities that he viewed as practical and "easy to do." At the same time, he often questioned theories that were unrelated to practice. As mentioned earlier, Abraham was uncertain about theories related to responsive teaching and had reservations about how these theories could be acted out in the classroom. However, once Abraham explored practical strategies related to responsive teaching such as personalizing word study or making reading individually meaningful, he seemed more willing to acknowledge the importance of theory to practice. Theories only became credible for Abraham when they could be applied in practical ways. Abraham's confidence grew as he mastered practical applications of literacy instruction. He viewed himself as a capable reading teacher who became knowledgeable through practical experiences with students and these experiences influenced his teacher identity.

Summary

Online responses and messages revealed that Abraham and Adrianna negotiated multiple identities and expressed different stances towards learning to teach. These varying dispositions helped define their teaching identities and influence their instructional decisions. Both preservice teachers experienced personal struggles related to their multiple identities that shaped who they were becoming as teachers.

Adrianna and Abraham depended on different knowledge sources to make sense of their teaching identities in the reading specialization program. These varying sources influenced how they interpreted course readings, instructional decisions, and goals for the future. Adrianna interpreted her readings from a writer's perspective and used language as a source to construct her own knowledge of literacy instruction. Abraham relied on practical experiences related to teaching to inform his evolving self as a teacher.

Practical applications related to literacy theories were valued by both Abraham and Adrianna and influenced their teaching identities. Abraham based most of his instructional decisions and classroom management strategies on his past practical experiences as a volunteer teacher. Reading, responding, and applying theories to field-based experiences was extremely important for Adrianna because it enabled her to view herself as a real teacher who was merely

unpaid.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which six preservice teachers authored themselves as teachers in the context of an elementary reading specialization program. This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings from the two research questions that guided this study. I close with research conclusions and a look at implications for teacher preparation and future research.

What is the nature of preservice teachers' written reflections and messages posted to an online community over a three-semester period?

Preservice teachers in this study socially negotiated common values, beliefs, and knowledge related to becoming a reading teacher by using the words and thoughts of the reading program and using it to make sense of their selves as teachers. All participants borrowed language from course readings, peer responses, or faculty comments and weaved it into their own writing. Additionally, many felt comfortable challenging the course readings and manipulating the discourse for their understanding. In this sense, they were appropriating the language and using it for their own purposes.

Four themes emerged from the online responses and messages posted over

the three-semester period. These themes – responsive teaching, teaching against the grain, knowledge and confidence in literacy instruction, and teaching images were socially constructed by the members of the reading specialization program and interpreted in personal ways. Responsive teaching and teaching against the grain were two themes that seemed to have the most influence on participants' teaching selves. All six participants wrote about their responsibility to children and families and discussed multiple strategies to keep kids at the center of their teaching. At the same time, they explored challenges to responsive teaching and often questioned the difficulty of teaching non-traditionally. Solutions to these challenges were also discussed on numerous occasions as preservice teachers considered their practice as tutors and teacher interns. These two themes helped preservice teachers articulate their agency both individually and collectively, and author their teaching selves in terms of future actions. Online responses and messages also revealed that program faculty supported preservice teachers' learning and identity development. They often nudged individuals to think differently, questioned their connections to the course readings, and supported learning.

Participants often embedded stories related to their previous experiences and beliefs about schooling and literacy instruction. These narrated responses enabled individuals to revisit their prior beliefs, build upon new knowledge gained in the program, and share with peers. Narrative responses were also used

to connect prior knowledge to new knowledge constructed from course readings, course discussions, and field-based practica. In this way, narratives helped preservice teachers connect personal understanding to professional concepts of literacy instruction. By writing narrated responses throughout the program, preservice teachers were also able to visualize their future classrooms and project professional goals.

By responding online, preservice teachers gained a deeper understanding of reading instruction. As their knowledge developed, they became more aware of their abilities and more confident of themselves as teachers. Beliefs about themselves as capable and knowledgeable teachers influenced how they viewed their students' abilities and their instructional decisions as student teachers. Finally, while these prospective teachers shared similar learning experiences within the reading specialization program, they constructed teaching identities that were distinctive and personal to their own histories.

What do preservice teachers' written reflections and messages reveal about their identity construction as reading teachers?

Online reflections and messages revealed that reading teacher identities were constructed in complex and personal ways. Preservice teachers negotiated multiple identities and expressed different stances towards learning to teach. They experienced personal struggles related to their multiple identities and were able to

become more aware of these struggles by reflecting online. Through online responses and messages, preservice teachers relied on different knowledge sources to make sense of their teaching identities. These resources also influenced how preservice teachers interpreted course readings, instructional decisions, and goals for the future. Practical applications related to literacy theories shaped individuals' self-perceptions and contributed to their self-perception as novice teachers. Overall, online responses and messages revealed that preservice teachers negotiated multiple identities, utilized varied knowledge sources, and relied on practical experiences to make sense of their developing selves as teachers. However, embedded within these online responses and messages were four sites of identity – beliefs, storied responses, co-development in practice, and voice. Below I discuss how these four sites of identity influenced participants' teaching identities.

Beliefs

Personal beliefs, cultivated by life experiences, individual histories, and knowledge of reading instruction influenced the identity development of the preservice teachers in this study. Personal beliefs served as a filter to make sense of course content, influenced instructional decisions, affected how participants viewed students' abilities, and were negotiated from the group's common goals as reading teachers.

All six preservice teachers explored their beliefs to some degree in their

online responses. Much of what the participants believed as individuals prior to the program and what they were learning in the program shaped their interpretation of course readings. Belinda valued her family and believed that becoming a teacher was about creating a caring support system for her students. These values were acknowledged and honored throughout her online responses. This outlook influenced her interpretations of the course readings and her images of being a loving, "motherly" teacher. Adrianna believed that becoming a teacher was transformative. She strongly advocated the inclusion of students' home languages and cultures. These beliefs were influenced by her own experiences of being an immigrant and multi-language speaker and were reinforced by course articles, peer feedback, and her student teaching placement, where she worked with a large, immigrant, Spanish bilingual population. Adrianna's expanding beliefs shaped her self-image as a teacher and her commitment to second language speaking students.

Beliefs about literacy instruction and their developing knowledge as reading teachers influenced how participants viewed their students' abilities. This phenomenon matches Rong's (1996) investigation on teacher beliefs. Rong discovered that beliefs about oneself as a teacher inform impressions about one's students and their academic achievement. In this study, as participants' understanding of literacy assessment and instruction grew and they came to see themselves as knowledgeable reading teachers, their beliefs about children

changed. Belinda's expanding confidence and knowledge of guided reading and choosing appropriate books for her students influenced how she viewed her students' literacy abilities as compared to their math abilities. Lynn expressed similar feelings related to her knowledge of reading instruction and her students' abilities. As Abraham's views about responsive, child-centered teaching shifted, his expectations for individual students expanded. Further, preservice teachers fashioned their teaching identities in terms of their students' needs. Students' abilities influenced how the participants viewed themselves as teachers. This responsive attitude towards students and being a teacher was influenced by the groups' common set values related to child-centered, responsive teaching. As Belinda shared, "my identity is based on my students' needs, I am different with each one of them." Rista concurred, "I am a reflection of them."

Online responses allowed preservice teachers to examine and reflect upon their beliefs with others. They often examined their beliefs about learning and analyzed how and why those beliefs supported literacy instruction. Likewise, many of them made modifications to their instruction based on shifting beliefs about literacy instruction and their abilities as reading teachers (Schirmer, Casbon & Twiss, 1997). By having the freedom and space to express their beliefs, participants became more aware of their teaching selves and more committed to becoming a reading teacher. Further, their shared beliefs and values posted online demonstrate that constructing reading teacher identities was intensively personal

and laden with individual values, beliefs, and past experiences about what it means to become a teacher.

Storied responses

Telling stories online was significant for the preservice teachers in this study. Like Romeo and Caron (2002) noticed in their study of teachers' and students' online discussions, telling stories was the preferred form of writing online. This narrative style of writing, or what I term storied responses, was a "tool of identity" that helped preservice teachers revise and create a self - awareness of becoming a teacher (Holland et al., 1998, p. 43). All six preservice teachers articulated and explored their beliefs about teaching and learning through storied responses. They discussed concerns and fears without feeling threatened or vulnerable. Storied responses contrasted from simple bulleted lists or main points that are often associated with summarizing an article. Instead, individual responses in this cohort were personal and narrative. Adrianna wrote about being ridiculed as young child, Ellie told about her cooperating teachers' classroom meetings and Abraham described a classmate whose parents couldn't read. These and other stories were always used in connection to one's beliefs about literacy instruction and reflected preservice teachers' construction of knowledge. Likewise, storied responses were self-focused, meaning that participants made connections between course readings, practice, and personal understanding. They did what Coia and Taylor (2003) call "placing the self within the social context"

(p. 151). In this way, storied responses helped individuals raise questions and reflect collectively about their past experiences and new learning.

Although responding online is often viewed as a private endeavor where individuals go home and write their responses in isolation, the online storied responses in this study served to help preservice teachers make connections and construct their personal meanings with others. They helped participants consider varying viewpoints because they often shared and responded to each other's online writing. Storied responses enhanced the construction of teacher identities for the participants in this study because it provided a safe means for individuals to build relationships and to reflect on their shifting beliefs and knowledge about reading instruction.

Co-development in Practice

Embedded within the online responses and messages were comments related to working with students in field-based practices, such as tutoring, student teaching, and the connections between practice and course content. Participants used these experiences to extend their course learning and to make sense of their responsibilities and duties as teachers. Field-based practices helped organize, form, and reform the preservice teachers' identities as teachers (Holland et. al., 1998). At the same time, because these responses were shared with others, (face-to-face and online) it allowed the group to develop their understanding of literacy instruction together in practice. Holland et al., (1998, p. 271) describe this

phenomenon as “co-development.”

Co-development occurred as the group, over time, participated in various field-based experiences. Through multiple field experiences, such as tutoring elementary-aged students, interning in elementary classrooms, and course assignments (emergent student assessment, home visit and case study), preservice teachers practiced what they were learning and reflected on their practices through their online responses. They wrote about their internships from the perspective of a teacher, making instructional decisions, assessing students and teaching. Gee (2000) explains that within an institution, like the reading specialization program, one’s identity is being recognized as a certain kind of person in a given context” (p. 99). For Gee, individuals take up a position or role “officially defined” by an institution and their identities are sustained and influenced by “how one acts or fulfills her roles or duties” within that system (p. 103). If we adapt Gee’s theories, preservice teachers in this study were being recognized by their practices as reading teachers.

Comments related to the co-development of practice were salient throughout the three-semester program and illustrate how responding online about practice was a way for individuals to understand themselves within a larger group of others. It also suggests that participants worked towards a recognized identity as “teacher.” In other words, through practice and affiliation with others in the program, preservice teachers were developing their identities. As Holland et al.

(1998) explain, “a person’s identity develops through and around the cultural forms of which they are identified; in the context of their own affiliation with those practices” (p. 33).

Voice

Elbow (1994, p. xix) defines voice as writing with “sincerity or self.” Preservice teachers’ online responses were written with sincerity and self much like Elbow describes. They presented individual dispositions towards learning to teach that were noticeable throughout their online responses. For example, Ellie wrote with a mature, realistic voice. She was careful not to be too idealistic and focused on the reality of classroom teaching. Ellie’s online voice was played out in her field experiences, instructional decisions, and the way she viewed students’ home lives. Preservice teachers also wrote with voice as Bakhtin (1986) describes, meaning they drew on the utterances of others to compose their own words or used the voices of others to author their selves as teachers. Individual online responses were often “voiced” by others’ words and ideas. Adrianna voiced the words of writers and literacy theorists in her responses and Rista drew on political notions of teaching. Further, all of the preservice teachers appropriated a teaching against the grain philosophy, but conceptualized this view in varied and personal ways that reflected their individual teaching selves. In this sense, they negotiated the voices of others to “author” themselves in specific and meaningful ways (Bakhtin, 1981).

Preservice teachers' identities developed as they searched for their own voice and thoughts amidst the voices and thoughts of others (Bakhtin, 1981). Many participants felt comfortable challenging articles and authors' writing and seemed to view the authors as real people they could argue with, not as "authoritative discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 344) or discourse that presupposes power over its receivers. They often spoke back to the writings and orchestrated the words and intentions from the course readings to redefine their own understanding. Additionally, being critical of the readings and challenging literacy perspectives was supported by the program faculty and enabled these preservice teachers to voice their developing identities. Some contested the articles more than others. Nonetheless, the fact that some challenged authoritative texts and struggled to extend, discard or keep the text for their own illustrates that the process of identity construction was dialogic and highly personal.

Conclusions

Authoring of self as a teacher, for the participants in this study, was a personal and complex process (Britzman, 1991; Danielewicz, 2001; Hall, 1991; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). Recent research indicates that becoming a teacher is a socially constructed process influenced by multiple experiences and past beliefs related to learning and teaching (Gimbert, 2001; Samuel & Stephans, 2000; Travers, 2000). Evidence from this study showed that as preservice teachers

responded online with others, they negotiated their individual values, beliefs, and past experiences associated with schooling. Additionally they constructed common beliefs and understandings within the reading specialization program that informed their teaching selves. Online responses and messages shared over a three-semester period created opportunities for preservice teachers to re-examine past knowledge and practices and gain further insights into their developing identities (Travers, 2000).

Online discourse served to create and reflect the learning that occurred in the context of reading specialization program (Gee, 2001) and fostered social interactions between preservice teachers and program faculty. Preservice teachers socially interacted through online responses and brought the words of others into their own writing. This process enabled many of them to voice their understanding of literacy instruction while collectively constructing their teaching selves (Britzman, 1991; Jackson, 2001). Posting online responses and messages enabled individuals to appropriate language (Bean & Stevens, 2000), have more opportunities for reflection, to be supported by faculty and peers (Thomas & Clift, 1996), and to connect general literacy theories to practice (Edens, 2000). Moreover, online responses served as a reflective tool to help preservice teachers understand their actions as tutors and student interns, share stories of their past experiences and beliefs, and to make sense of their learning.

Narrative theorists (Bruner, 1990; Meyers, 1998) accept that stories of one

self are social constructions rooted in specific histories and experiences unique to the author. The stories individuals tell can be used to organize views of oneself, others, and the world in which they live (Holland et al., 1998). Like Bruner and Holland et al. suggest, the distinctive ways preservice teachers constructed stories about their past experiences and beliefs about schooling and literacy instruction reflected their developing knowledge. In this way, their storied responses served as a lens through which they came to understand themselves personally and professionally, how they viewed the content of reading instruction (Connelly & Clandin, 1999), and how they envisioned themselves as teachers. However, for Abraham, his personal stories constrained his developing identity and limited him from thinking beyond his own perspectives to a broader more aware stance. These results support that preservice teachers' constructed stories helped them understand course readings related to literacy instruction (Drake, 2000). At the same time, the stories differed greatly from person to person suggesting that learning to become a teacher in a reading specialization program was highly personal and complex.

Postmodernists claim that identity is multiple, subjective, and continually reconstructed within different discourses (Yon, 2000). As postmodernists describe, data from this study revealed that teacher identities were informed by varied experiences and multiple identities played out online with others in the reading specialization program. This supports what others have found (Britzman,

1991; Jackson, 2001). Because preservice teachers were encouraged to examine their multiple identities and past experiences to make sense of their readings they became more aware of their growing knowledge and instructional abilities as reading teachers. Additionally, online responses allowed individuals to make choices about their developing selves and to gain clarity about themselves as teachers.

Responding online provided an authentic space for participants to build a collective understanding about teaching reading that informed individual, teacher identities. This collective understanding included the values, beliefs, and knowledge it takes to be a teacher of reading. Lave (1993) explains, "developing an identity as a member of a community and becoming knowledgably skillful are part of the same process, the former motivating, shaping, and giving meaning to the latter" (p. 65). Evidence from this study supports Lave's theories and suggests that preservice teachers built on the responses of others and made connections to practical internships and personal stories of being in school. This process helped preservice teachers explore and extend what they were learning with others. With the help of peers and faculty, some participants revised their understandings – some more than others. All participants did not gain the same understanding in the same ways but they filtered their learning through individual perspectives, lived stories, and multiple identities expressed online and in the greater context of the program.

Belonging to the reading specialization program and engaging in practice that united them as a group also influenced the construction of teacher identities. As Wenger (1998) describes "identification with others who make meaning together have the potential to enable one's identity" (p. 207). Responding online to practical experiences enabled individuals to reflect on themselves as teachers. In addition, as they wrote about practical applications related to reading instruction and used literacy concepts from course readings to examine their situations, they became identified as teachers. Practice and group identity, in this sense, were sources for individual identity (Holland et al., 1998) and helped participants view themselves as reading teachers.

Belonging to the program and responding with others online not only enabled preservice teachers to become recognized but also to become encultured in "ways of teaching" or learning how to act as a teacher. Geertz (1993) describes a learning community like the reading specialization program as an "intellectual village" where individuals learn ways of thinking, speaking and acting as teachers (p. 74). According to Geertz, (1993), these ways of being and belonging are internalized through the constant interaction with others. Like Geertz suggests, this study found that responding online helped individuals build knowledge and meaning making about teaching and about being a teacher of reading. Individual identification with the group, its history as a university program, and the groups' common values and knowledge all shaped the teaching identities of participants in

this study.

This study is significant to the current research on teacher identity construction because no other studies have examined and documented the online writing of preservice teachers over a three-semester period. CMC, investigated over an extended period of time, provided an excellent tool to examine preservice teachers' dynamic professional selves. Online responses were essential to this study because they allowed participants the space to individually and collectively reflect upon their learning and to examine their individual identities in relation to others in the program. Participants consistently wrote about their personal experiences to make sense of their learning and embedded the writings of others to voice their own understanding of reading instruction. Reflecting on their past experiences and beliefs gave participants the freedom to tap into their multiple identities and make personal connections to reading instruction. Additionally, the longitudinal nature of this study allowed me to trace the changes in language used by individual participants from the beginning of the reading specialization program to the end and allowed for documentation of the personal ways individuals used the words of others and expanded upon their own beliefs and past experiences to author themselves as teachers.

Sustained use of CMC and the dialogic nature of the responses provided a means for participants to expand upon their classroom conversations and to challenge each other. Spiraling of topics occurred online that would typically be

dropped in face-to-face discussions. This is a significant finding because it suggests that sustained use of online responses offered more opportunities for participants to negotiate their understandings and construct knowledge overtime. Likewise, as Schrum (1993) notes, asynchronous online communication, in addition to classroom discussions, increased participants' willingness to address complex and often inhibited topics. Exploring and negotiating complex issues have significant implications for the construction of teacher identities and how participants view themselves as professionals. At the same time, the text-based nature of CMC allowed participants to embed the writings of others into their own responses and to revisit those responses over the three semesters. Consequently, online responses seemed to give participants numerous opportunities to create and question their thoughts and share those thoughts with others. Additionally, it provided support and feedback that promoted self-understanding and pushed some individuals to reconsider their learning as reading teachers.

Another noteworthy finding of this study was that participants preferred to use personal narratives in their online responses and built upon peers' stories to make sense of their learning. Writing about their past experiences and beliefs gave participants the freedom to explore their multiple identities and present different stances towards learning to teach reading. Multiple identities served as filters for interpreting course readings and represented the ways in which individuals presented themselves to others in the reading specialization program.

Further, online responses allowed individuals to express themselves in deeply personal ways and to make connections to teaching and children that may potentially have lasting impressions on their practices future as classroom teachers.

This study also discovered that online responses supported a group identity. Specifically, group identity influenced how participants' defined themselves. Members of the reading specialization program developed a shared history and purpose for learning to teach reading. Online responses enhanced this sense of solidarity, upheld norms and values of the program, and allowed for group and self-awareness. Similarly, participants wrote about themselves in relation to what they were learning and how the group defined itself as reading teachers. They used terms related to responsive child-centered teaching to identify their purpose and goals for teaching reading and established group norms and acceptable group discourse by complemented each other and borrowing each others' words. Moreover, their conversations helped establish boundaries for how individuals presented themselves within the reading program. For example, Adrianna's identity as a writer and poet was negotiated online with peers and used to interpret course readings. In this way, Adrianna used her writing identity to make sense of her responsibilities and images of being a teacher. At the same time, Adrianna was identified as an excellent writer and poet by her peers and this identification contributed to her self-understanding. The group's identity as

reading teachers and teachers against the grain also gave participants a sense of communal agency and influenced their future visions and images of being a teacher.

Implications

The reading specialization program had a clearly defined mission for preparing it's preservice teachers that included community building experiences, carefully planned literacy coursework, extended field experiences, and a personalized model of teaching (Harmon et al., 2001). A learning community such as the one in this study provided preservice teachers with a supportive network that enabled individuals to explore and appropriate the language and values associated with being a reading teacher. The cohort structure gave preservice teachers the opportunities to stay together for three-semesters and develop a supportive community. It offered individuals peer support to discuss the challenges of course work and field experiences, and to "foster socialization into desirable professional norms and practices" (Tom, 1997, p. 153) related to literacy instruction.

Computer mediated communication served as an extension of the learning community and enabled preservice teachers to socially construct their identities with others in the program. It allowed participants to negotiate shared goals, collaborate, and increase their interest and learning of concepts (Johnson, 2001).

Further, computer mediated communication created a discourse community where preservice teachers extended their learning through online responses.

Course readings covered a variety of topics (assessment, emergent literacy, comprehension, writing, etc.) from multiple perspectives allowing preservice teachers to read both the theoretical and practical applications related to reading instruction. Some course readings like Ayers' (1993) book *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher* and articles related to social aspects of literacy (Freire, 1973; Cole & Scribner, 1981; Bruner, 1995) promoted more thoughtful, personal responses as compared to idea-related articles that merely gave suggestions for practical applications. Likewise, it allowed preservice teachers to revisit certain topics and grasp the comprehensive nature of reading instruction. This revisiting of varying perspectives helped participants appropriate the ideas presented in class to fit their own needs and those of their students. They also seemed more willing to challenge and think critically about certain perspectives that matched conflicting assumptions about literacy instruction.

As preservice teachers were learning a great deal about reading instruction they were also being supervised in field experiences. Extended field experiences helped preservice teachers practice what they were learning and this opportunity enabled them to connect their knowledge of reading instruction to fit the needs of particular students or particular situations (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Harmon et al., 2001). At the same time, practicing as teachers with students and forming

questions related to teaching and learning helped them to rehearse as teachers and be recognized as "real teachers."

Program faculty challenged simplistic views of literacy learning and teaching and encouraged preservice teachers to explore theory and practice. This support occurred online where program faculty encouraged preservice teachers to personalize their learning and draw on their past experiences to inform their professional knowledge. Further, close and personal relationships were established over time that facilitated risk taking and intimacy online. All of these features of the reading specialization program (Harmon et al, 2001) significantly contributed to the construction of themselves as teachers and have implications for preparing future educators. They address the personal nature of learning to teach in collaboration with others that was significant to this study. At the same time, these features have implications for reflection and learning to teach.

The preservice teachers in this study used a variety of reflective strategies to extend their viewpoints and articulate their learning. They used online responses, dialogue journals, "First Weeks of School" Journal, electronic portfolios, and case studies to extend their understanding of course readings and fieldwork. These reflective approaches helped preservice teachers think about their course experiences and how these inform pedagogical decisions (Zeichner, 1986). Roskos, Vukelich, and Risko (2001) call for more studies that look at collaborative reflection and to understand how reflective thinking shifts from

being a student to that of a teacher. Online responses in this study, allowed for collaborative reflection and attention to dialogic relations between peers and university faculty. Evidence suggests it provided a discursive space for preservice teachers to explore personal beliefs and assumptions related to teaching and to reinvent those understandings. In addition, this study has implications for how teacher educators encourage preservice teachers to reflect on their coursework and suggest that socially constructed reflections with others online, may lead to more in-depth considerations of literacy learning and teaching. Responding online for an extended-time period of three-semesters as shown in this study, also has implications for the level of reflection preservice teachers can make as they learn to become reading teachers.

The preservice teachers' personal stories and multiple identities were honored and affirmed by program faculty and peers. They were given the freedom to construct their understanding in personal ways. This study suggests that personal responses, supported online by peers and faculty, led to a more insightful understanding of oneself as a teacher. Likewise, narrative served as a knowledge source for most preservice teachers and allowed for collaboration and an exploration of assumptions and previous school experiences. Abraham did not challenge his previous experiences nor reach beyond his current understandings of culture and diversity. These findings have implications for the ways in which teacher educators guide preservice teachers to use their past stories to extend

professional understanding. Specifically, teacher educators can use CMC as an extension of their traditional classroom discussions to understand the ways in which preservice teachers make sense of themselves as teachers. By studying online responses, teacher educators can also reflect on their own teaching and language associated with learning to teach. Further, this study illustrates the complexities associated with learning to teach and calls for more studies that investigate how to scaffold and to push individuals to go beyond their personal histories and assumptions to teach all children to read (Florio-Ruane, 2002).

Study Considerations

This study was conducted after participants completed their teacher preparation coursework. While I was able to retrieve archived responses and messages specifically related to literacy courses, this study would have benefited from classroom observations and more interviews with preservice teachers while attending courses and completing field-based practica. Additionally, further research should be conducted by following these participants into their classrooms as first year teachers.

The use of case studies limited the sample to a small number. While case studies provided a vehicle for presenting a comprehensive and descriptive portrayal of preservice teachers' identity development, they provided only a glimpse, a slice of the whole and not the whole picture in its entirety (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). Furthermore, participants selected for this study volunteered because of our friendly relationship and were eager to please. There is always danger that what participants revealed in our interviews was information they assumed the researcher expected to hear. In addition, interviewing cooperating teachers and program faculty would have enhanced this study.

This study focused on six preservice teachers' identity construction in a reading specialization program. The findings of this study cannot be, nor are intended to be generalizable to a larger population of preservice teachers.

Implications for future studies

Much of the teacher education literature on identity development has been specific to field-based practices (Britzman, 1991; Jackson, 2001), narrative reflection (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Danielewicz, 2001) or learning to become a teacher within a learning community of practice (Gimbert, 2001; Wallings, 2000). We have much to learn from these studies.

Results of this study illustrate the complex and personal process of learning to become a teacher in the context of a reading specialization program. Online responses and messages provided opportunities for preservice teachers to develop their identities with others over time. Online discourse served to create and reflect the learning that occurred in the reading specialization program and enabled preservice teachers to examine their beliefs, assumptions, and past

experiences in collaboration with others. Yet more research exploring preservice teacher's identity development evidenced by online responses is needed. New online technologies offer multiple opportunities to socially construct knowledge through written language. Studying online discussions that support the sharing of information, insights, and personal experiences will help teacher educators gain knowledge and understanding of their students' learning and development as teachers.

Further examination of online discourse is needed along with understanding the knowledge construction and multiple discourses preservice teachers' negotiate as they move from a teacher preparation program to their own classrooms. The role of scaffolding in online responses and messages must also be further studied. Such studies may lead to an advanced understanding of how online responses can monitor, coach, and support preservice teachers' development as teachers. Further, more research on collaborative online reflection is needed to understand how different levels of reflection change overtime and are influenced by peers in learning community.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Examining Preservice Reading Teachers' Identity Development in an Online Community

You are invited to participate in a study of preservice teachers' identity development in the context of an online community made up of members from the reading specialization program at the University of Texas at Austin. My name is Lori Czop Assaf and I am a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Texas at Austin. This dissertation is in partial requirement for graduation.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a student in the reading specialization program at the University of Texas at Austin during January 2001 thru May 2002 and are currently using TeachNet (computer-mediated communication software) as a means to electronically communicate with your classmates and supervisors. The purpose of this study is to understand, explore and describe the development of teacher identity as it is revealed through written summaries and reflections posted to an online bulletin board over three semesters. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to give consent to the researcher to read and analyze all current and archived online postings from January 2001 to May 2002. The following online folders will be reviewed: Community Literacy, Reading Assessment, Reading Methods, ALD, Language Arts Methods, Student Teaching and the General cohort ET Folder. You may be invited to participate in an initial one hour long interview and a second 30 minute follow up interview. Interviews will be conducted face to face or via email depending on the needs of each participant. During the interview you will be asked to share your electronic portfolio, first weeks of school journal and your

dialogue journal. I will make copies of these documents and return them to you promptly.

In addition to this, you may be invited to participate in nine additional interviews from the end of October 2002 through April 2003. These interviews will be conducted face to face or via email depending on the needs of each participant. During these interviews you will be asked to discuss your development as a reading teacher, your current and past experiences, and how working in an online community has influenced your identity development. There will be no time commitment, unless you chose to participate in the interviews. If you participate in the nine interviews, you will be involved approximately sixteen hours.

Little potential risk, physical, social or legal is likely to occur through participation in this study. However, to insure confidentiality, all research data collected from this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet until the conclusion of this project then destroyed thereafter. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your responses will not be linked to your name in any written or verbal report of this research project. You will be presented by a pseudonym in any research reports.

It has been demonstrated through previous research that participation in a study of this kind has a beneficial influence on participants. The reflection, analysis, and interaction for individuals can lead to enhanced understanding of self and others. The study has the potential to benefit teacher education by expanding our understanding of individuals' identity development in relation to using an on-line communication tool and the role in which written reflections to an online community plays in an individual's knowledge development. It also has the possibility to help educators consider the benefits and drawbacks of such use and to re-evaluate reading teacher education course designs.

Your decision to participate or to decide not to participate will not affect your present or future relationship with The University of Texas at Austin. If you have any questions about the study, please ask me. If you have any questions later, call me, Lori Czop Assaf at 512-467-6562 or you may call my supervisors, Professor Jim Hoffman at 512-471-4041 or Professor Beth Maloch at 512-471-4381. If you have any questions or concerns, at any time, about your treatment as a research participant in this study, call Professor Clarke Burnham, Chair of the University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Research Participants at 512-232-4383.

An extra copy of this consent form is included for you to keep. You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the study. If you later decide that you do not want to participate in the study, simply tell me. You may discontinue your participation in this study at any time.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Signature of Participant Date

_____

Signature of Investigator Date

APPENDIX B

Sample online response

Monday, February 12, 2001 3:53:20 PM
Spring 2001
From: XXXXXXXXXXX
Subject: Promise and Challenge
To: Read Asses & Dev

Promise and Challenge of Informal Assessment
William H. Teale

Summary: Informal assessment not necessarily a better assessment tool than standardized test, but is, in the author's opinion, much more helpful with regard to instructional planning. The author feels informal assessments should be used because:
1. What young children are like. They have little or no experience with standardized testing and have no interest in the test itself. I have yet to hear a single person say "You know, I read the most interesting standardized test today." How can we expect a child of 4,5 or 6 to be interested in the test long enough to complete the task? We are again testing the child's ability to take a test rather than testing their ability in emergent reading.
2. Even if we taught our kids the sociolinguistic demands of test-taking and the tests did hold interest, they would still be ineffective because they test isolated skills and not reading and writing. In fact, most standardized tests separate reading and writing, something research has shown to be integral parts to each other. They (test) also seem to discount the idea of emergent literacy altogether. Context is virtually wiped out of these tests, actually changing the tasks or activities for 4, 5 and 6 year-olds.
3. Children learn part to whole and whole to part. Standardized testing focuses only on parts (skills.)
Teale sees four challenges to the use of informal assessment in schools:
1. The need to know more about early childhood literacy.
2. The current lack of high-quality informal measures of literacy.
3. The quality of informal measures will be highly dependent on teacher knowledge.
4. The community and politicians must be supportive of informal testing.

Connections: Teale's statement about children learning when their experiences

differ in some ways and are similar in others reminded me of the way Gough thinks children initially handle reading. Word A is similar in one way, but different in another way from Word B, and those characteristics are what the child uses to discern what Word A is. According to Gough, we eventually have too many words to compare to do that successfully, and so must learn the code or cipher. Teale believes children ingest the experience (the word) as a whole and only when they have enough experiences (words) are they able to differentiate between them and learn the operations (cipher.) So for Gough the cipher is eventually necessary because there are too many words, while for Teale the cipher is not necessary until there are too many words. Does that make any sense at all?

Puzzles: I have such a personal connection to this topic right now. My younger sister is an intrapersonal / physical type learner. Standardized tests are nightmares for her, because sitting still and taking a test is not natural for her. We know that children are easily distracted and are not well versed in test taking strategies, yet we continually issue testing procedures that test those very things. Then test results come out and the teacher looks and says, “Okay, her comprehension is low, but why?” If informal testing can help us to better understand the why and how- bring them on! I recently began requiring my sister to do everything out loud when we do her homework. Not only does it help her to focus, but then I can see where she’s having problems and devise strategies to help her work through those problems.

Rating: Tasty. Very Tasty. What? -Oh, sorry! That was the rating I gave to the movie Hannibal.

APPENDIX C

Sample response from peer

Monday, February 12, 2001 8:43:19 PM
Spring 2001
From: XXXXXXXX
Subject: Re: promise and challenge
To: Read Asses & Dev

XXXXXXX writes:
If informal testing can help us to better understand the why and how- bring them on! I recently began requiring my sister to do everything out loud when we do her homework. Not only does it help her to focus, but then I can see where she's having problems and devise strategies to help her work through those problems.

Hi lovely XXXXX, great response. Lord have mercy you so'said it like it be!

It's AGITATING that children have to suffer and feel inadequate do to the faults and laziness of policyholders who can't even remember what it was like to learn b/c they it's been about 100 years since they were in school. UGH! It's so FRUSTRATING, it makes me feel like I have a pure wool sweater superglued to me.

Read some of the other responses, they're really interesting - we all seem to be asking the same question - HOW can we change this sinking ship system of testing?

XXXXXXXXX
University of Texas at Austin
Elementary Education
XXXXXXX@teachnet.edb.utexas.edu

APPENDIX D

Belinda Interview 3/27/02

1. Would you describe your development and growth as a reading teacher?
2. Why did you become a teacher?
3. What are your goals and visions?
4. Have these changed since you decided to become a teacher?
5. Look at your **electronic portfolio**-How did you decide what to include in your electronic portfolio? Why are these things important to you?
6. You included your preparation program. Why?
7. How have you created an identity as a teacher?
8. When you were responding online-were you thinking about a specific audience? Your classmates? The professor? Fellow classmates?
9. How do you think posting on line-to teachnet has helped your development as a teacher?
10. Let's look at the print outs of your teachnet responses- these are for each folder that you have written to over the last year. Is there any one class or more than one that has responses that impacted your development as a teacher? Would you talk about one or two responses that may have been important or not?
11. How do you view yourself now?
12. What have you learned about becoming a teacher of reading?
13. What experiences have impacted you?

Look through your **Dialogue Journal and First Week of School Journal.**
Is there anything in these journals that you would like to share with me? Anything that would help me to understand your development as a teacher?

APPENDIX E

Main Electronic Bulletin Board- Reading Specialization Program

Total Number of Responses Posted

First semester-Spring 2001

Lynn	13	2/2 through 8/8
Abraham	47	2/2 through 8/8
Ellie	3	2/27 through 4/27
Adrianna	21	2/2 through 8/23
Rista	37	2/1 through 7/28
Bi	48	2/2 through 8/14
Whole group	699	

Second Semester-Fall 2001

Lynn	37	8/31 through 12/12
Abraham	23	8/30 through 12/23
Ellie	6	8/31 through 11/16
Adrianna	54	8/31 through 12/08
Rista	30	8/28 through 12/07
Bi	62	8/31 through 12/23
Whole group	689	

Third Semester- Spring-2002

Lynn	37	1/28 through 4/28
Abraham	24	1/10 through 4/27
Ellie	7	1/16 through 2/18
Adrianna	12	1/4 through 2/15
Rista	36	2/22 through 4/11
Bi	51	1/2 through 5/10
Whole group	985	

Third Semester: Student Teaching Folder

Lynn	10
Abraham	3
Ellie	0
Adrianna	9
Rista	2
Bi	6
Whole group	108

Individual Totals:

Lynn	97
Abraham	97
Ellie	16
Adrianna	98
Rista	105
Bi	167

Group Totals

Spring 2001	699
Fall 2001	689
Spring 2002	985
Total	2,373

Other Cohort Totals

Cohort A (Spring& Fall)	649
Cohort M (Spring& Fall)	427
Cohort G (Fall)	140

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