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Deconstructing the Construct of 'Struggling Reader': Standing Still or Transforming Expectations and Instruction?

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In this paper, the authors critically examine the construct of 'struggling readers.' The paper presents this examination across a lifespan of reading: birth to age five; elementary, middle and high school; beginning college; and adult. Discussed for each group are (a) typical characterizations of struggling readers, (b) assumptions underlying these characterizations, and (c) responses and/or implications. The authors conclude with a discussion of patterns across the five groups.

What image emerges when you hear the phrase *struggling reader*? We asked this question as we opened a Problems Court session during the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Reading Forum. Our colleagues attending the Problems Court offered a range of responses that included descriptions of specific reading problems identified in schools, as well as descriptions of students who "can't read grade-level texts," "have difficulty comprehending meanings expressed in complicated texts," and "aren't interested in reading." Some attendees questioned the term *struggling reader*, indicating that it has become counterproductive as a label in instructional situations that support students' reading development. Other attendees suggested that reading abilities are often narrowly defined, which is problematic because students not conforming to these narrow definitions are too often and too quickly identified as having

problems. Thus, we opened the session with a query about the term itself, and an argument that rather than being helpful, it may be dysfunctional (if it is the case that meaningful instruction is not associated with its use) and unrepresentative of the very students in need of support in reading programs at all educational levels.

As we have learned in our discussions with teachers, parents, and students, the term *struggling reader* has varying definitions and is assigned to students for different reasons. For preschool teachers, struggling readers may be described as those who match certain demographics (generally poor, urban or rural, non-English speakers). For elementary teachers, struggling readers may be defined as those who score within the bottom quartile on a standardized test. For middle and high school teachers, struggling readers may be viewed as the legacy of the unmet responsibility of previous teachers. For college instructors, struggling readers may be those unprepared to read and comprehend college-level materials independently. For the adult reading teacher, struggling readers may be poor, often people of color, and increasingly, persons whose first language is not English. While these definitions do vary depending on the learning context, one commonality across contexts is that learners who become identified as struggling readers often reside in socially disenfranchised groups. This common thread—especially when juxtaposed with the otherwise-wide variation in how, when, where, and why the term is applied to readers—suggests that further exploration of this construct is needed.

What implications are derived from the use of this label? What theoretical, racial, linguistic, economic, geographic, social, cultural, or academic biases underlie the various definitions of struggling readers? What is the consequence to the struggling reader? Why are people of color overrepresented in groups identified as struggling readers? Are those considered to be struggling readers pawns to those who seek to gain political clout, additional monies, or recognition when high percentages of students perform well on standardized tests? Are there alternative constructions that expand rather than delimit views of struggling readers? What could reading models, such as Alexander's (2005/2006) lifespan perspective, add to our understanding of how readers develop across a lifespan and perhaps inform conceptions of readers who vary from the norm? Questions like these stimulated our interest in deconstructing the construct of struggling reader.

Toward our goal of critically analyzing this notion of a struggling reader, each author assumed responsibility to examine one group of struggling readers: birth to age five, elementary, middle and high school, college, and adult. This paper reports the efforts of those examinations. For each group, we present (a) typical characterizations of struggling readers, (b) assumptions that underlie these characterizations, and (c) responses and/or implications. Next we discuss patterns in the discourse surrounding discussions of learners identified as struggling readers across the five groups and then consider new instructional directions and responses.

Perspectives or Theoretical Framework

Two perspectives inform this examination: Alexander's (2005/2006) lifespan model of reading and the culture of disability perspective advanced by McDermott, Goldman, and Varenne (2006). Alexander's (2005/2006) lifespan model of reading views reading as a developmental process that unfolds across a person's life. Alexander purports that knowledge, interest, and strategic processing are key elements to reading development as the learner moves through the stages of acclimation, competence, and proficiency/expertise. Young and less-skilled readers typically operate in the acclimation stage which is characterized by limited domain

knowledge and use of surface-level strategies. In the competence stage, readers have developed interconnected domain knowledge and are able to apply deep-processing strategies. Finally, in the proficiency/expertise stage, the learner demonstrates rich knowledge, effective and efficient strategy use, and personal investment in the domain. Alexander argues that educators must consider the roles that knowledge, interest, and strategic process play across a reader's lifespan and that reading education and support must be available across the lifespan for readers who are still developing. McDermott, Goldman, and Varenne (2006) argue that educators are too quick to judge disability and too slow to consider alternative indicators of learning and literacy development. They assert that educators must consider historical and cultural perspectives when teaching students, especially those who have special needs or struggle with learning.

Taken together, these two theoretical perspectives justify our examination of the construct of struggling reader. While a lifespan view supports our look across phases, from birth through adult, an historical, cultural frame supplies questions to guide our examination.

Birth to Five Years

A lifespan model of literacy development places children's literacy beginnings at birth. The first five years are considered a dynamic time when young children develop the precursors required for successful later literacy development. Many believe that what happens during these first five years establishes the trajectory of children's literacy growth. Alexander's (2005/2006) characterization of the first phase of her model, acclimation, as the precipice of literacy development captures the significance many ascribe to these first few years. Characterizations of struggling readers in this phase follow.

How Are Struggling Readers Characterized in Children Ages Birth to Five Years?

Many who assume an emergent literacy perspective of literacy growth also believe that an important goal is to maximize the number of children who successfully progress through the period Alexander (2005/2006) labels as the acclimation phase. Studies by Juel (1988) and others (e.g. Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996) indicate that those who exit first grade below a first-grade reading level are likely to continue that trajectory throughout their schooling. The percentages of children who complete first grade below level have remained excruciatingly stubborn to alter. The latest efforts to address this persistent issue was the formation in 2002 of The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP), charged to examine the existing research to identify practices, skills, and interventions used with children birth to age five that predicted literacy achievement at the end of kindergarten and first grade. The committee completed its charge and summarized the results in a report released in 2008 (National Institute for Literacy [NIL]). The report identified skills that correlated positively to literacy growth as precursors to successful literacy development: alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, letter names and sounds, and concepts about print. Other factors demonstrated to support foundational elements of literacy growth include enriched verbal interactions as well as familiarity with specific discourse patterns generated during adult-child book reading events (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Snow, 1983). This literature also identifies the home environment as responsible for providing the experiences linked to the development of these skills. Thus the children's homes should include interactions with storybooks, exposure to nursery rhymes, and

opportunities to observe and later use a variety of print forms; furthermore, these interactions should be enriched with oral language (Hart & Risely, 1995; Snow, 1983).

Implied, and often explicitly stated, is the belief that children not exposed to these environmental experiences will lack the skills positively correlated to successful literacy progress in kindergarten and first grade. Moreover, the life experiences of children viewed as at risk to fail are considered wanting, or worse, interfering with their later literacy development. Such characterizations promote certain assumptions about the children, their families, and their communities. We describe two.

What Assumptions Underlie These Characterizations?

Assumption One. Struggling readers between birth and five years old lack the skill and experiential bases needed to become successful readers in kindergarten and first grade. Although reports such as NELP (NIL, 2008) may describe literacy broader than print and phonological skills, their practical application all too often results in interventions focused on the development of these skills to the exclusion of others. These applications gain traction when grant programs such as Early Reading First (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.) require that these skills be the central focus of any federally funded intervention. In essence, such requirements reinforce in practice an assumption that successful literacy, particularly for children predicted to be at risk to fail, proceeds via a pathway of skills acquisition, specifically acquisition of print and phonological skills.

Other literacy scholars (for example, Dyson, 2008; Paris, 2005) argue for a broader conception of early literacy development, one that focuses on meaning-making processes and builds on understandings of language all children bring to formal reading instruction. Marie Clay (2001) asserted that literacy development proceeds via multiple pathways, all leading to accomplishing a shared goal of comprehension. Clay explicated how children via early interactions with family and others important in their lives develop five systems for processing information. These include systems for processing syntax, meanings of words, visual forms of objects within the environment, making sense of life events and activities, and understanding narratives. All children, she theorized, come to formal reading instruction with these systems in place, and teachers should use them to bridge formal reading instruction.

Assumption Two: Struggling readers can be identified by demographics. Demographics, specifically economics (being poor), race (nonwhite), and first language (non English speaker) can place a healthy newborn infant born in the United States in the category of at risk for becoming a struggling reader five years after birth. Demographic descriptions of struggling readers reported throughout this paper mirror those used to pre-identify children, birth to age five, with the potential to fail to read. However, as previously discussed, benchmarks for successful literacy for these youngest learners are drawn selectively from the larger corpus of abilities, dispositions, proclivities, interests, and values considered to advance literacy development. This narrowness has led to what Valenzuela (1999) refers to as s*ubtractive schooling* and what Washington (2005) refers to as a subtractive approach to developing interventions for preschool age children. Essentially, a subtractive approach is one where benchmarks for success generate from one population (typically the majority white, middle-class), yet are used as markers of success by members of other populations. The routines, knowledge of the world, and forms of expression of these other populations are essentially subtracted or removed from consideration. From a socio-cultural perspective, as described by

Wells (1999) and Wertsch (1991), such a subtractive process removes elements that form the underpinnings of all children's literacy development.

What Are the Responses and/or Implications?

Almost 20 years ago, Dr. Asa Hilliard (1991) raised the question "Do we have the will to educate all children?" Years later, Hilliard (2000) continued his focus on education as the primary conduit for change when he stated that members of the educational community need to commit to preparing future educators who are "not puzzled by how to raise the achievement levels of children from any backgrounds to levels of excellence" (p. 293). Although Hilliard did not direct these comments to a literacy audience, based on the descriptions of struggling readers, birth to age five, we find them relevant. The release of the NELP report (NIL, 2008) continues the recommendations for narrowly focused interventions for preschool and prekindergarten children of many of its predecessors. We echo Hilliard's (1991) concern that such interventions institutionalize the belief that cultural and ethnic diversity are barriers to literacy development.

We find support for our concerns in theories of literacy-learning and theories from the child development literature. Both domains recognize the unique significance of the first five years of life. Clay (2001) and Wells (1999) assert that it is during these early years that the foundation of literacy-learning develops from children's early interactions with family members and others close to them. Clay (2001), as discussed previously, referenced these as processing systems. Wells (1999) identified these as instrumental, procedural, and substantive knowledge. In child development, Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, and Moll's (2005) model of intentional action and Piaget's (1985) constructivist theories of cognitive development describe how the behaviors initially observed by children during their interactions with important others become internalized mental representations which guide their subsequent learning. Therefore, the behaviors these young children first observe and then take up lay the mental infrastructure upon which subsequent experiences are interpreted and evaluated. These early acquisitions are also significant because they are borne from interactions young children have with their early caregivers and are stimulated from their need to be like and with those who care for them (see Dooley & Matthews, 2009 and Dooley, Matthews, Matthews, & Nesbitt, 2009) for a discussion of how these theories relate to early literacy development).

Given the significance of children's first five years, we wonder about the long-term impact on children when they enter school to find that their ways of being, acquired in the laps and by the sides of those closest to them, are viewed as barriers, or worse, detriments to their literacy development. Is it possible that some are evident in the descriptions of the struggling readers that follow? The presentation of these continues with our discussion of struggling readers in the elementary grades in the next section.

Elementary Grades

Continuing with a lifespan model of literacy development, this section focuses on students who are developing multiple literacy skills and strategies as readers and writers in the early grades and through the upper elementary grades. Students are engaged in making connections between their interests, cultural knowledge, and life experiences with novel content in texts. While still in the acclimation phase of learning how to be strategic readers, according to Alexander's (2005/2006) model, they are developing competence as strategic and reflective

readers. We describe further how readers may have difficulties achieving competence, with some of these difficulties resulting from the instruction they receive.

How Are Struggling Readers Characterized at the Elementary Grade Levels?

Multiple perspectives are taken when describing perceived reading problems of students in the elementary grades (approximately ages 6 to 11). What follows is a brief accounting of five perspectives intended to represent some of the public discourse associated with struggling readers. These examples come from our conversations with a reading teacher and an elementary-aged student, from government reports, and from writings of literacy researchers.

First, there is the description offered by a reading teacher assigned to the third grade students in an elementary school. She described a student who worried her as "a sloppy reader." The reading teacher elaborated on this description by explaining that the student omits words, such as "said John," and drops endings or parts of words. When asked about the student's comprehension, this teacher indicated that the student's changes to the text didn't affect her comprehension but a comparison of scores from the end of second grade to the end of third grade on the fluency subtest test of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) revealed that the student made *no progress*. As the teacher went on to explain, this student's oral reading was not accurate and the fluency score [on this one high-stakes assessment] was low. Unfortunately, this school relied solely on this one test as the indicator of annual "progress" in reading and for placement for special reading instruction.

A second perspective comes from students who have "learned" from their teachers, peers, or parents that they have a "reading problem." Often, these students draw their own conclusions about their reading ability when they compare their reading performance with others they observe: those who may read quickly, who seem to know all the words, or who say they are good readers. As we have learned, these students are easy to spot during classroom observations. They are the ones who often avoid taking risks by refusing to read aloud or by avoiding the activity altogether. For example, students who say "I am not a good reader" might stop while reading to seek help and indicate "I don't know that word," or "I can't think today." At times, these students have requests such as "May I leave the room?" as they are eager to escape the embarrassment associated with reading to others. These students seem to have well-honed avoidance strategies, but not the strategies that would be most helpful for their reading progress. Thus, labels they use to define themselves or those they associate with labels from teachers, such as "always asking for help with words," "looking up in the air to figure out unknown words," or "becoming easily defeated" begin to shape their identities. It is this association that worries literacy researchers such as Ken Goodman (1986), who concluded,

> There are lots of ineffective and troubled readers and writers….They mistrust their own language strategies and become dependent on the teachers to tell them what to do. They are reluctant to take risks, with the result that their reading and writing looks far less competent than it actually is. They don't recognize their own strengths. (p. 55-56)

And for a third example, we share the case of Raymond, Isaac, and Jim, or *the techno trio*, the description they used to refer to themselves while students in Mr. Walters' sixth-grade classroom (Finders & Hynds, 2002). These boys were frequently seen as "huddled together over a notebook, impatiently waiting for their turn at the computer." They shared an interest in monsters, computers, and a "strong dislike for girls." They "avidly devoured comic books and were, in fact, the proud authors of a comic book series, Monster Mad. They read, wrote, and

drew monsters and super monsters. Notebook after notebook was filled with storyboards for future episodes in the never-ending story of the arch monster rivals, Monster Mad and Dr. Dead" (Finders & Hynds, 2002, pp. 48-49). Avid readers, it seems, yet all three were failing in Mr. Walters' language arts classroom. Further, he indicated that they were not involved in the class activities: They did not contribute to the class discussions about the assigned readings in the literature texts; they did not write in their journals; they did not complete their daily work; and "they thought *The Old Man and the Sea* was 'dull' and 'deadly' and 'to be avoided.'"

Fourth, national statistics embedded in government reports describe English Language Learners as having reading problems and often these reading problems are associated with descriptions of students' "inadequate proficiency" with the English language. Yet researchers such as McCarty and Romero-Little (2005) argue that it is the instruction that may be at fault when identifying reasons for "reading problems." They observed firsthand the demise of scores for Native American students in a school where a bilingual, bicultural program was replaced (under NCLB requirements) with phonics instruction that was scripted and followed a direct instruction model. With the new program in place, McCarty and Romero-Little found that comprehension scores on the Stanford 9 reading comprehension subtest for English Language Learners students were higher in 1999 than they were in 2003. And for all students, sixth graders' normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores on total reading dropped from 53 to 29 during this period. Similarly, Jaeger (2006), Pease-Alvarez (2006), and Cummins (2007) assert that students of poverty often receive different instruction than those living in more affluent circumstances. For example, they observed high dependence on isolated skill instruction and less access to trade books and the students' cultural and first language knowledge, which was just the reverse of what they observed in schools in affluent neighborhoods. These findings suggest that instruction must be monitored closely, especially when there is a pedagogical divide that discriminates by social class (Pease-Alvarez, 2006), to determine what makes sense for students in ways that capture their strengths, their interests, and their linguistic and cultural histories.

And fifth, too many teachers and policy makers hold on to misconceptions about the reading process and believe that "not all children can become literate with their peers" or that "reading is a hierarchy of increasingly complex skills" [that must be taught separately and sequentially, especially to students with reading problems] (Allington, 1995). The first view argues against holding high expectations for students' progress and both views restrict alternate pathways for insuring students' success.

The above characterizations are troubling and lead us to many questions. For example, how can we explain that a student has made "no progress" after a year's instruction? And who is at fault? The student? The teacher? The test? The system that describes progress on the basis of one test? What constitutes progress? Additionally, we might ask why the "techno trio" is failing language arts when their passions and fascinations are so focused on multiple reading and writing practices to represent meaning? These are just a few questions that align with our hope for alternative ways to characterize and support developing readers. We acknowledge, however, that our visions may be in conflict with tightly held beliefs and assumptions about readers and the reading process.

What Assumptions Underlie These Characterizations?

Multiple assumptions underlie the ways that students are characterized in terms of their reading development. Some of these assumptions may align with more narrow instructional

pathways for students; others are more hopeful for broadening what is possible. For example, the previous description of the student as a "sloppy reader" aligns with a componential view of the reading process, which is influenced by cognitive and/or positivist viewpoints that guide many descriptions of other struggling readers, often with an underlying belief in predictable trajectories of assemblage and automatic use of component skills. For example, lists of skills, such as alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, word learning skills, and others have been identified as discrete and sequential components of the reading process that must be acquired for successful reading accomplishment. Paris (2005) cautions us as literacy educators and researchers to consider alternative conceptual and developmental trajectories of skill and strategy development; neglecting these can skew expectations and interpretations of students' performance.

Alternatively, we draw on assumptions associated with the construct of struggling readers through a transactional lens (Clay, 2001). In such a view, reading difficulties are situational, rather than characteristic of the reader, and as such require instruction that builds on students' knowledge, interests, skills, and strategies as well as teacher mediation that is responsive to students' abilities and needs. With this lens, educators can draw on a belief that all (developing) readers have multiple language and strategic resources they can draw on to predict and confirm words and meanings associated with texts. Yet educators also learn through observations and empirical reports that along the way to developing as a reader some have learned behaviors of helplessness (Johnston & Winograd, 1985). These children have a plan for self-regulation, and that plan is avoidance; an "emotional or affective response" prevails (Lyons, 2003), and such a response can be quite effective. Thus, instruction needs to be responsive to emotional responses as well as instructional involvement.

When viewed from a critical theory perspective (e.g., New London Group, 1996), reading difficulties are not due to students' inabilities but rather to school curricula that fail to access students' knowledge and strengths. Informed by this perspective, we believe that literacy instruction which provides access to life experiences—such as instruction that connects students' passions with schools' standards for measuring literacy—can transform "struggling" readers and writers. Certain approaches for literacy instruction seem promising, such as Kamler and Comber's (2005) "turn around pedagogies," which are based on expanded definitions of literacy including the use of multiple new (e.g., digital) literacies and modalities (e.g., sketches) for representing meanings that are rooted in the students' worldviews.

Pease-Alvarez (2006) and Cummins (2007) are other researchers who recommend instruction that incorporates these worldviews along with students' cultural and linguistic histories. According to their "pedagogical divide perspective," educators will continue to fail students (rather than students failing for educators) unless educators teach to students' strengths by taking advantage of children's passions, interests, and social capital (i.e., the understandings students use in everyday life and that they bring with them to the classroom door).

What Are the Responses and/or Implications?

We believe that teaching to students' strengths is an attainable goal. Yet achieving this goal is challenging and requires "Teachers…to develop the attitude that all students have talents and strengths upon which to build their learning….Building on students' strengths means, first, acknowledging that students have significant experiences, insights, and talents to bring to their learning, and second, finding ways to use them in the classroom" (Nieto, 1999). Further, the

dilemmas we face with labels such as *struggling readers* propel us to consider alternative ways to think about students' literacy development and acknowledge different pathways that can be successful. Educators can examine policies of attributing labels to students, especially those who have traditionally been under-served in schools, and ask who benefits from such policies and what the consequences are (McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 2006). Labels, policies, and the nature of instruction continue as concerns as we describe the nature of adolescent struggling readers.

Adolescence

Adolescents have long been the target of misdirected reading practices. Their experiences and interests have often been neglected in classroom instruction, instead replaced by fixed programmatic materials that do little to further their curiosity or their willingness to actively engage in reading. Denigrating labels have been assigned to "struggling" students who have been classified and assigned to programs and practices that promote disinterest in the curriculum. This section describes some of these practices imposed on adolescents who are perceived as not having the literacy abilities of their peers who are succeeding academically. Suggestions are made for considering alternative views of students and schools.

How Are Struggling Readers Characterized in Adolescent Years?

Adolescents' literacy abilities are often measured against an arbitrary standard of achievement imposed by a school district, state, or national policy; many of these policies result in false indicators that impact educational practices deemed "best" instead of what could be "worst." Einstein wrote, "Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned in school" in opposition to the notion that a school has to teach specialized knowledge that students will use in their later lives.[1] In his mind, the school was a place to develop the ability for students to "think and work independently," not to be focused on "acquiring detailed knowledge." He went so far as to condemn such restrictive practices as "treat[ing] the individual like a dead tool." Too often, educators tend to treat students whom some perceive as having a reading problem as a "dead tool." As Dennison (1969) has written, a reading problem is not a fact of life, but a fact of school administration. It does not describe these students, but describes the action performed by the school (that is, the action of ignoring everything about these students except their responses to print). This holistic perspective is also held by anthropologists such as Varenne (2007) who study the students' own transformative processes from their viewpoint rather than from one imposed by others with or without authority.

Administrative mandates, such as expected scores on a test, occurring in formal school settings serve to classify and restrict learning opportunities for adolescents by reminding them that what they bring in terms of life experiences, cultural mores, and linguistic variations is less than valued. The subtext of this reminder is particularly poignant for those adolescents labeled as *struggling readers* who encounter reading programs and policies that avoid daily their cultural and linguistic milieu.

Adolescents who are perceived as having reading problems often view themselves from a deficit model by the words they hear to describe them. Terms that are used to classify them,

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[1] Unknown source quoted by Albert Einstein in a speech given at Albany, New York, October 15, 1936. From Albert Einstein. *Ideas and Opinions* (New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks), 1982, p. 63.

including *lacking* or *having a deficiency*, are usually depreciative. And since *they* have *a reading problem*, students realize that they pose a barrier for the school in achieving well on state and national-mandated tests. Once labeled, students may not believe they have what it takes to succeed. Early in their formal years, many learn that "right" answers to low-level questions are valued over question-asking. Yet, at home and with friends, question-asking is normal conversational practice in situational contexts. This discrepancy between their interactions with parents and peers is contrary to the classroom (Hall, 1987). In essence, their identities as people in a societal setting and as students in formal school environments are conflicted.

What Assumptions Underlie this Conflicted Identity?

Several decades ago, Adler and Van Doren (1940), McCullough, Strang, and Traxler (1946), and others stated that reading is a lifelong process. However, some schooling practices may not present reading as such. Early in their schooling, many people begin to learn that reading is something that should be accomplished by a given time table and, when not achieved, they feel less than successful as learners. Therefore, reading is not viewed as a lifelong process, but as something that happens either before a certain age or at a given grade of school. For example, policy makers expect that students should be able to read by a certain grade, time, or age. Another misdirected belief is the premise that students achieve uniformity in their educational attainments as they advance through the grades. Instead, students become more diverse in interests, abilities, and curiosity. Efforts to "standardize the standards" encourage restrictive thinking and lead to further instilling within students the denial of their own curiosity in the learning process.

What Are the Responses and/or Implications?

First, all students need to be assured that a school is a place where learning, understanding, and knowing how to apply new knowledge is based on what the individual brings to the educational atmosphere. They need to know that imaginative and creative thinking are not just words, but realities that are facilitated by and under the direction of the teacher. Negative terms used to describe those adolescents who do not measure up to school, state, and national expectations need to be abandoned.

Second, the image of lassoing the student needs to be dispelled. Too often adolescents who have less-than-requisite proficiency as determined by a diagnostic assessment are lassoed into categories for remedial instruction. For example, students scoring below a given measure in spelling, or grammar, or syntax, or writing skills, or comprehension, or phonemic awareness, are grouped respectively. These groupings are accompanied by labels such as *having reading problems*, *learning disabilities*, *ADHD*, *behavior disorders*, or *struggling* and *striving*. In many cases these students are lassoed, classified, and then bundled into groups and given programmatic instructional packages dispensed like a medicinal treatment that will cure their reading illness. These practices include high levels of literal questions, narrative text that has the familiar beginning, middle, and end sequence, and little opportunity to learn to read expository texts that many find difficult in their content classes.

Third, practices that can be considered detrimental to an enriching educational environment for both "struggling" adolescents and their teachers include pacing guides intended to keep them on track hoping for eventual successful product outcomes. These kinds of

structured guides defy cognitive development theorists (e.g., Havighurst, 1953; Piaget, 1952), to say nothing of sound pedagogical practices that are contrary to these kinds of guides. In other words, the train keeps moving, while these students wave from the station platform. Mandated reading programs and published teaching lessons and materials that override those by the teacher and that rely on procedural outcomes deepen the school problem and entrench students into less-than-optimal educational learning environments.

Other educational practices that can be false indicators of reading achievement include the number of books read, the use of scripted teacher's books, and limiting students to excerpts or abridged versions of novels due to time constraints in preparing for state examinations. The expected quantity of reading a number of books for a school year to indicate a rigorous curriculum has a tendency to center on analysis of the structural elements of a given work (theme, plot, setting, and characters) similar to those provided in student guides such as *Cliff's Notes*. Drawing inferences between and among works that are afforded by an author's writing style, settings, characters, plot structure, and themes are often not fully studied. Reliance on reading excerpts from a novel so that students can be versed in a general work, often with the primary purpose of knowing it for a test, can stultify reading as a growth process. Likewise, scripted teacher edition textbooks do little to activate a teacher's prior content knowledge when planning meaningful lessons, and even less to actively stimulate a teacher to learn more about his/her content area.

Educators need opportunities to allow these adolescent learners to show what they can do. For those students perceived as having reading problems, educators need to provide opportunities to read books, including self-selected books on a computer screen, that inform and are meaningful; further, educators need to provide lessons that serve a self-directed purpose so learners can thread together literacy experiences that they themselves are responsible for mending. Students perceived as having reading problems may need to be given the support to learn how to learn. The challenge is to address what educators can do for learners to change their meaning of experience. The lasso effect needs to be relinquished for both students and teachers in favor of pedagogical principles and practices that permit knowledgeable and dedicated teachers to use their professional judgment in the learning process.

As we progress through our lifespan journey of struggling readers, a pattern appears to be forming. Each subsequent group of struggling readers retains the challenges of previous groups, such as being viewed as deficient, or such as experiencing narrowly focused instructional responses, yet the challenges continue to increase for readers at each level. As will be discussed in the next section, in the case of college students identified as struggling readers, an additional challenge they face is successful passage through courses that in effect are gatekeepers to their continuation in college.

Postsecondary

It might be assumed that those who choose higher education beyond their secondary education experiences are equipped for college-level literacy expectations. However, recent reports indicate that, specific to reading, this is true for only about half of incoming students (ACT, 2006; Associated Press, 2006). As Alexander (2005/2006) acknowledges, "A lifespan developmental perspective would not stop in the early years or attend only to those who have yet to acquire the most basic skills or processes" (p. 415). Indeed, even at the postsecondary level, learners continue their development as readers, in part, in response to a wide range of reading

contexts, situations, purposes, and texts. In the section that follows, we explore the concept of struggling readers at the postsecondary level.

How Are Struggling Readers Characterized at the Postsecondary Level?

At the college level, students considered to be struggling readers are so-labeled, usually, as a result of their placement into developmental reading courses. Generally speaking, such courses are considered pre-college level, and are therefore non-credit bearing. Students are often placed into these courses as a result of an institutional placement assessment, scores on a college entrance exam, or high school GPAs (or, more often, a combination of these factors). At most institutions, students placed into these courses are required to complete them before transitioning into their general education course requirements.

In practice and in the literature related to the field of postsecondary developmental literacy, students participating in postsecondary developmental reading courses are often characterized by such labels as *remedial, at-risk, under-prepared, mis-prepared,* or *developmental* (see Higbee, 2009, for a discussion of these labels). Indeed, these are all fairly well-accepted and oft-used terms; however, these terms are laden with connotations— connotations that present significant problems for the accuracy of these labels as well the misconceptions they perpetuate.

What Assumptions Underlie These Characteristics?

Students enrolled in developmental reading courses include first-generation college students, students coming to college with low high school GPAs, students with low scores on college entrance exams or institutional placement assessments, non-traditional students who are returning to school after some time away, and non-native English speakers. In these same classes, however, are students who come from well-educated families, students who attended well-regarded high schools, students who were in honors classes in high school, students who typically score highly on standardized examinations, and students who are of 'traditional' college age.

Scholars within the field (e.g., Boylan, 1999; Higbee, 2009) have provided demographic overviews of this population that illustrate just how wide-ranging the backgrounds are of students enrolled in these courses. Such overviews have also highlighted how difficult it is to characterize this group of students as a population. Beyond the obvious—that they are typically first-year college students—another characteristic that provides some insight into the diversity of this population is that they enter college with academic backgrounds that differ widely from what many traditionally admitted first-year college students have, especially regarding their experiences with text. Indeed, there is a whole host of social, cultural, and linguistic factors that may have impacted their academic success before college.

What Are the Responses and/or Implications?

Attempts to label such a diverse group with a single label are problematic on multiple levels. First, none of these terms adequately or accurately describes the reader, but rather the educational context (Armstrong & Paulson, 2008). There is, for example, a trend to refer to students as being developmental or remedial; however, just because a student is taking a

developmental reading course does not mean that student is taking all developmental courses. Indeed, it is not entirely uncommon for a student to take a developmental reading course, but also be enrolled in traditional first-year English and math courses.

Additionally, given that 28% of all incoming first-year students take at least one developmental class (ACT, 2005), whether as a result of an institutional writing placement test, a college entrance exam, or high school transcripts, it is difficult to apply the characterization of struggling reader across the board. For example, is it appropriate—or accurate—to consider nearly thirty percent of college students to be 'struggling'? This term is especially problematic when we consider that most students enrolled in developmental reading courses simply have not had the kinds of textual experiences that they will encounter in college.

These labels—and the characterization of these students as struggling readers—are not only inaccurate, but also perpetuate conceptualizations that lead to very real actions. This notion of the interactivity of language and thought has been well-established (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Peirce, 1932; Vygotsky, 1986), yet in practice and in the literature, negative terms like some of those listed above persist. In most cases, use of these terms is indicative of particular conceptions of teaching in developmental education contexts. For example, terms like *remedial* suggest a deficit approach that focuses on weaknesses rather than strengths, and assumes that students have failed to 'get' something that was previously 'given.' Such labels may invoke a medical model of teaching where students are in need of 'fixing' (Casazza, 1999; Higbee, 2009; Paulson, 2006), a model which too often leads to a basic-skills, skill-drill approach to instruction. Similarly, terms like *under-* or *mis-prepared* imply that there is some blame to be assigned—to the students, to parents, and to teachers.

The language used to describe students does matter; it reflects and shapes educators' conceptions of students, of literacy-learning, and of teaching. A precise terminology that accurately reflects college readers' needs, experiences, and goals is needed. It may be more appropriate to talk about beginning college students as being in a literacy transition, a transition that involves learning to navigate new modes of communicating about and with texts (Armstrong, 2007). Whether coming directly from high school or returning to education after spending some time in the workforce, the passage from any context to a postsecondary institution can present some significant changes for newcomers. Beyond the obvious necessary adjustments—living arrangements, time management, new levels of independence, and so on—most first-year college students will also face some form of literacy transition (Armstrong, 2007; Curry, 2003; Shaughnessy, 1977). For many of these students, this literacy transition is an enculturation process that involves discovering—and then adopting—the appropriate conventions of multiple academic disciplines, or what many researchers refer to as *discourse communities* (Jolliffe & Brier, 1988; Rafoth, 1988).

To be successful in higher education, students must learn to recognize the various literacy conventions appropriate across disciplines in different discourse-community contexts. In this way, as Bartholomae (1985) has argued, students are forced to "invent the university"—to "learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community" (p. 589). Part of this literacy transition—and this invention process—involves learning to read across disciplines, with all new text genres and types, and for a wide variety of purposes.

A discussion of adults who are identified as struggling readers completes our examination. In this group, the pattern continues. Adult struggling readers carry the challenges of their predecessors while assuming others unique to their group. As adults, the additions represent

increased responsibility for themselves as well as others. Although most adults assume similar responsibilities, those labeled as struggling readers must fulfill them while being viewed as lacking reading and writing abilities that are believed to be essential to function in society.

Adult

Based on Alexander's model (2005/2006), we might expect adults to have reached the proficiency/expertise stage wherein the individual has rich knowledge, effective and efficient strategies, and personal investment in learning. Or, we might expect that adults would at least have reached the competence stage wherein readers have interconnected domain knowledge and apply deep-processing strategies. Many adults, however, do not reach these stages. Some adults stall at the acclimation stage wherein they struggle to decode, develop literal comprehension, and use surface-level strategies. In the following section, we focus on adults who have been identified as struggling readers.

How Are Struggling Readers Characterized in Adulthood?

Adult literacy involves the use of "printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007, p. 2). Unfortunately, many adults are not able to use literacy as a tool for their own goals and purposes as outlined by Kutner et al. (2007). While most adults are able to develop coping skills and support networks to help them navigate the literacy demands of their daily lives, those who struggle with reading often report being unable to secure or retain employment, to advance in the workplace, or to help their children succeed in school (Fingeret & Drennon, 1997). Furthermore, because universal education is not available to adults, access to education is limited which translates to fewer opportunities and support for building literacy skills during adulthood.

According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy [NAAL 2003] (U.S. Department of Education, 2007), many adults struggle to complete simple literacy tasks associated with daily life, such as reading a newspaper article, reading documents and forms, reading quantitative documents, and following directions from health texts. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (DOE, 2007) concluded that 43% of adults read prose texts such as newspaper stories at the basic level or below, which means that they were only able to identify the main idea but not to understand important details. In addition, 34% read documents such as forms at the basic level or below, which translates to difficulty filling out forms, job applications, and other documents correctly. In addition, 55% read quantitative texts such as bank statements at the basic level or lower, which indicates that they were unable to understand fully the content of such texts. Furthermore, 36% of adults read health texts such as medication labels at the basic level or below, which suggests that they may not comprehend instructions or warnings fully. The results of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy indicate that many adults in the United States are not able to read and write at the levels needed to function effectively in the workplace, in their personal lives, or in their communities.

What Assumptions Underlie These Characterizations?

Approximately 2.5 million adults are enrolled in adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a second language (ESL) programs in the United States (Institute of Education Sciences, 2005). Adults of color are more likely to struggle with reading than Caucasian adults, and adults over the age of 65 tend to struggle with reading more than younger adults (Kutner, et al., 2007). The adults enrolled in literacy programs are often termed adult struggling readers, adult beginning readers, or adults with low literacy skills. Adult struggling readers tend to have low socioeconomic status and limited employment options, both of which are closely correlated with their literacy levels (Chisman, 2002). In addition, adults who struggle with reading are more likely to have serious health issues, limited community involvement, and family challenges including both social and economic matters (Elish-Piper, 2007). Furthermore, adults who struggle with reading tend to be marginalized, isolated, and oppressed in relation to mainstream society (Elish-Piper, 2007; Freire, 2000). In short, adults who struggle with literacy are likely to be confronted by multiple serious issues that challenge them, their families, and their communities.

Why do so many adults struggle with literacy? Such adults likely attended ineffective schools, mainly in urban and rural areas, did not receive effective literacy instruction as children or adolescents, and as adults they have not had the opportunity to develop their literacy further. In addition, due to economic, social, and family issues, many adults dropped out of school prior to reaching a sufficient level of literacy to function fully as adults in literate society (Elish-Piper, 2007). An increasing number of adults who struggle with literacy are English Language Learners who are acquiring literacy in a new language. Furthermore, many adult struggling readers have undiagnosed learning disabilities, chronic illnesses, and other conditions that impede literacy development (Chisman, 2002).

Many adult struggling readers are also confronted with shame and blame as they harbor feelings of inadequacy, embarrassment, anger, and frustration associated with their literacy struggles. Adults, and society at large, tend to define literacy as a measure of personal worth, creating a negative cycle wherein adults who struggle with reading may believe they are not capable or deserving of literacy growth, development, or success (Fingeret & Drennon, 1997). This type of viewpoint is typically termed a "deficit perspective" because adults are viewed as having some type of personal deficiency that has led to their struggles with literacy (Demetrion, 2005; Gallo, 2004).

The type of instruction typically offered to adult struggling readers has tended to view literacy as a set of components or skills that could be added together in an incremental manner. Using workbooks and sequenced curricula, the assumption was that adults would be able to build their literacy through individualized work (Demetrion, 2005). Unfortunately, this approach was what failed many adults during their early schooling experiences, and as adults, this approach typically does not produce positive outcomes for most adult learners (Demetrion, 2005; Elish-Piper, 2002).

What Are the Responses and/or Implications?

The notion of adult struggling readers implies a deficit perspective and limits possibilities. We propose the conceptualization of *Next Chapter Readers* for adults who are ready to embark on the next steps in their journey toward literacy development. Bill, Glenda, and Marisol provide three examples of Next Chapter Readers. Bill dropped out of school at age 16 after being chronically truant due to his involvement in drugs and gangs. Shortly thereafter, he

was arrested for dealing drugs and for weapons charges, and he was incarcerated for two years. He started literacy classes while he was in prison, and upon his release, he was ready for a new chapter. As part of his parole, he attended GED classes four days per week and he hopes to earn his GED within a year. Glenda attended only two years of school as a child growing up in the rural south. As the oldest daughter in a family with eleven children, Glenda was needed to stay at home and care for her younger siblings, cook, clean, and take care of the house so her parents could work in the fields. Now that her own sons have graduated from high school, Glenda is ready to start her next chapter and attend adult literacy classes. Each evening, after working as a housekeeper in a motel, Glenda attends literacy classes, works with a tutor, and studies. Glenda's main goals for her literacy development are to be able to write letters and emails to family members and to read the Bible. Marisol attended several years of school in Mexico, but she does not read or write well in Spanish or in English. She recently had her second child, and she is committed to learning English well enough to help her children in school. She is ready for her next chapter as she has enrolled in a family literacy program that includes adult ESL classes for her and early childhood education classes for her two young children.

As Bill, Glenda, and Marisol begin their next chapters, it is our hope that they have found adult programs that will support them in their literacy efforts. Namely, we advocate for adult programs that operate from a social-contextual approach wherein the strengths, needs, and goals that adults bring to their education are honored and become the focus of curriculum and instruction (Auerbach, 1989). We argue for adult literacy programs wherein real-life issues and meaningful applications of literacy (McShane, 2005) undergird instruction so that adults can simultaneously build their literacy skills and become more engaged in their communities and the decisions that affect their daily lives (Auerbach, 1990; Demetrion, 2005). In short, we advocate for adult literacy programming that allows adults to begin the next chapter in their learning.

Cross-Group Patterns and Alternatives

We began our examination with a question: "What image emerges when you hear the phrase *struggling reader*?" Our interest in this question stimulated an examination of the discourse surrounding struggling readers from birth through adult. A cross-group look at the characterizations, assumptions, and responses reveals similarities. Here, we provide summary statements of similarities we noted across the groups. Each has been expanded on throughout our paper.

>   *Luck of the draw*. The consistency of the demographics of struggling readers across groups creates the impression that there is something inherent in being poor, non-white, and a non-English speaker that causes one to struggle to learn to read.

>   *Blame the victim*. At each level, struggling readers carry the blame and bear the consequences of ineffective, deleterious, and detrimental actions performed by others.

>   *Snowball effect*. Each group of struggling readers not only assumes the challenges of its predecessors, but adds challenges unique to their group.

Fix what's broken. At each level, students labeled as *struggling readers* are likely to encounter deficit models, including the medical model, that emphasize 'fixing' or 'curing' in instruction or programming.

Concluding Thoughts

Terms like *struggling readers* are often loosely used and inadequately defined, yet they have broad implications for policy makers, classroom teachers, and community leaders and more personal implications for those labeled as such. Attention to conceptions of struggling readers across a lifespan are central, for such conceptions set policy, determine how interventions are realized, and, even if unintentionally, limit consideration of other factors that might reveal more valid influences. Ultimately, we argue there is a need to transform the rhetoric which too often portrays this population as deficient, damaged, or worse, doomed to continued failure.

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Three Models for Approaching Literatures of Trauma

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This paper presents three models for analyzing and teaching literatures of trauma. The author applies the work of Carol Christ (1986), Judith Lewis Herman (1992), and Joy Erlichman Miller (2000) to three contemporary trauma-centered texts in order to establish a method for reading literature in which trauma experiences are prevalent. Students can often become overwhelmed by the upsetting nature of trauma literature, thus missing the effective literary analysis of the reading. However, trauma literatures can be tremendously validating for student readers who have experienced trauma and can provide readers with models for addressing their own trauma.

When reading literatures of trauma, students can be so overwhelmed by the details of the text that they are unable to engage in literary analysis or find meaning in the work. They may, in fact, find such texts difficult to enter because of the extent of pain, violence, and loss that can be central to literatures of trauma. However, these literatures can be tremendously validating for the student reader who has experienced trauma and can provide readers with models for coping with and healing from their own traumas. It is therefore essential to provide students with an approach to reading that guides them in extracting the tools and meanings present in the works and potentially helps them to come to terms with trauma that they have faced. What follows are three models for approaching and analyzing literatures of trauma that can provide a method for teachers of such literature to engage in and guide their students through this difficult work. These models rely upon close literary analysis of the trauma stories as well as an understanding of typical trauma responses and strategies toward healing.

Reading *The Color Purple* in the Context of Carol Christ

The first model of literary analysis of trauma literatures is provided by Carol Christ. In her book *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest*, Carol Christ (1986) identifies four stages to track the journey toward self-identity and wholeness of female characters in fiction and poetry authored by women. These stages, nothingness, awakening, insight, new naming, enable the reader to compartmentalize stages of a character's suffering and growth in order to track her process and understand the tools she employs to move through these traumatic periods in her life as she moves to a place of wholeness. Because each of Christ's stages includes a growing level of awareness on the part the character, the reader will identify what enabled the character to move through the traumatic experiences toward a place of healing, thus finding

patterns to trace in the literatures and models for moving forward from the emptiness of the nothingness stage. Christ not only offers this model for tracking a character's survival, but she argues for the necessity of trauma stories for the female reader, in particular, in order to understand the reader's own life experiences. Christ (1986) writes, "Women need a literature that names their pain and allows them to use the emptiness in their lives as an occasion for insight rather than as one more indicator of their wholeness" (p. 17). She asserts that literature that reflects a reader's own experience of trauma can contribute to lifting that reader up out of a victimized place to a place of fullness and "wholeness." Her model, then, is a useful tool for reading trauma literature.

Using Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) as a trauma text, we can apply Christ's four stages of character growth to see how the main character, Celie, survives and even grows in the face of ongoing traumas. As a child, Celie was repeatedly raped by her stepfather, impregnated twice, and gave birth to children who were taken from her. As a very young adult, she was handed over in marriage to a man who beat her frequently and who forced her to serve him and raise his unruly children. Celie's story in the novel opens with overwhelming trauma which the reader can easily identify as a stage of "nothingness." Christ (1986) defines this stage as a time when "women experience emptiness in their own lives – in self-hatred, in self-negation, and in being a victim" (p. 13). In this stage of nothingness, women reject conventional solutions, question life's meaning and open selves "to the revelation of deeper sources of power and value" (Christ, 1986, p. 13). Certainly, this stage of nothingness is familiar to many women and men who have experienced trauma. Christ's words make concrete the experiences of desperation, self-loathing, self-blame, and powerlessness that trauma victims experience.

Significantly, Christ does not stop with the nothingness that is so familiar to the traumatized. She offers next the experiences of awakening and insight. Christ (1986) describes awakening as being "similar to a conversion experience, in which the powers of being are revealed, [which] grounds [the woman] in a new sense of self and a new orientation in the world" (p. 13). Through this awakening, "women overcome self-negation and self-hatred and refuse to be victims" (p.13). For Celie, as for so many who have experienced trauma, the great powers are not represented by traditional images of a deity who is omnipotent. Rather, her new orientation comes from the power of sisterhood, of finding and proclaiming her voice, and standing up to her offender and becoming independent of him. The process toward this independence begins when she develops a deep and lasting friendship and love affair with Shug Avery who teaches her of her worth purely by loving her and helping her to see life situations that she does not need to tolerate. Once Celie learns to love Shug, she is able to grow to love herself. Through a series of discoveries made with Shug, Celie is also able to hold out hope that her beloved sister Nettie is still living. As her self-love grows, so does her strength in self, and she is able to stand up to her husband who drove Nettie away from her. The great powers with which Celie becomes acquainted ultimately come from within herself which must be the case in order to no longer live from within the trauma story that encompasses her life.

From this awakening comes insight into a survivor's experiences, made possible by having distanced him or herself from the victim status. Finally, a new naming of self and of one's reality that articulates the new orientation to self and work is achieved. New naming is a period of no longer internalizing the voices of a survivor's oppression and instead orienting to the world as a whole, powerful human being, and not someone's victim. Celie's new naming occurs when she has made a new home for herself, is independently employed and self-sufficient. She has a voice in her daily life and has separated herself from anyone who might hurt

her. Because so much trauma occurs in Celie's life, it is useful to breakdown her story to see how she copes, survives and eventually overcomes. Christ's stages enable us to compartmentalize and then draw upon Celie's various trauma stories in the context of her healing. Walker's readers have a way to approach a novel in which trauma begins on the first page and continues to compound throughout the novel, but ultimately, a novel in which character growth and healing supersede the trauma.

Teachers of *The Color Purple* can ask students to first read Christ's four stages and develop an understanding of each, independent of any body of literature. Because Celie's life in the novel travels on a parallel path with Christ's stages, the novel can be divided into sections so that students can see the depths of Celie's experiences of each stage. This approach challenges readers to more closely examine each stage to see what leads the characters into the stage, what it means to live in that stage of woundedness, and what is required to climb out of it. If one goal of the reading is for students to see the character's journey toward healing, and if it is important to recognize those tools of healing, then presenting the novel in segments that parallel Christ's four stages may be an effective way to facilitate appropriate literary analysis.

Reading *The Bluest Eye* in the Context of Judith Lewis Herman

A second model for approaching and analyzing literature of trauma is found in the writings of Judith Lewis Herman. In her work with victims of sexual violence, Judith Lewis Herman (1992) has identified three stages of healing for victims of sexual abuse. These stages are useful in reading literatures of trauma, including, but not limited to, stories of sexual abuse. Herman identifies as stage one the establishment of safety in one's life. This can include both physical safety and a sense of safety. This sense of safety includes a belief in the possibility of safety rather than living in a constant state of fear. Herman's second stage of healing from violence is a stage of remembering and mourning. Central to this stage is that the survivor tells the story of the violence. In a clinical setting, the survivor will provide as many details of the trauma as possible. By doing this, the survivor "transforms the traumatic memory, so that it can be integrated into the survivor's life story" (Herman, 1992, p.175). Herman's third stage of healing is a reconnection to everyday life. The survivor mourns the losses as a result of the trauma and begins to construct a new life with self and with others. While Herman's work is especially useful when reading literature that depicts sexual victimization, her stages can be applied to other kinds of violence as well. Readers can use these stages to break down and track the process of survival of characters who have suffered traumas and also the process of succumbing to trauma for characters who are not able to move forward in life.

One of the most poignant pieces of trauma literature of our time, I believe, is an early work of Toni Morrison's, *The Bluest Eye* (1970). Over my career I have had the privilege of teaching Morrison's novel numerous times. What I observe over and over is that students are challenged by the many layers of trauma experienced by Pecola and her complete helplessness in the face of her trauma. Herman gives us a way to understand Pecola and Claudia's stories by focusing on what both characters need to survive and thrive. The survival tools that are missing for Pecola are present for Claudia. While Pecola survives physically, few would argue that she has suffered spiritual and psychic deaths at the hands of her father who raped her, her shaming and neglectful mother, and perhaps most poignant for the reader, her community members who turn their backs on Pecola's suffering while also using her lowly place among them as a stepping stool to advance their own meager existences.

Claudia's story runs parallel to Pecola's as the girls grow up together, and as Claudia witnesses Pecola's life. Claudia, however, lives, as Herman would describe, with a sense of safety in the world. Whereas Pecola's parents are her primary offenders, Claudia's parents protect her and her sister and provide safety when potential harm comes into their lives. Unlike Pecola who is under constant attack from home, classmates, and adults in the community, Claudia always has a safe place to return to; her world allows her a level of safety. From this place of safety, Claudia is able to tell this most tragic story of her year with Pecola, when nothing that was planted grew, and Pecola's spirit died. Finally, as the narrator of this story, Claudia has a connection to all that surrounds her. She is a part of a family and a community that remain, for her, in tact. In giving us a narrator who has these tools that Herman identifies for healing and survival, Morrison offers us the contrast between Pecola and Claudia so we can understand why Pecola can't survive. And as we see in Claudia a possibility for survival, the reader is able to make a way through this most devastating and important story.

When teaching *The Bluest Eye*, Herman provides a useful tool when exploring why one character is able to survive while others are not. In pairing Walker and Morrison's novels, students can trace Celie's ability to achieve each of Herman's stages of healing whereas Pecola does not. This approach would enable students to see how much is dependent a voice and a community, two key elements of safety, and how powerless a victim becomes when they are unavailable. It is difficult to imagine a student reader studying *The Bluest Eye* in this light and not finding him or herself more compassionate toward the end.

Reading *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* in the context of Joy Erlichman Miller

Finally, in *Love Carried Me Home: Women Surviving Auschwitz*, Joy Erlichman Miller's (2000) identifies coping mechanisms used by women who survived imprisonment at the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II. From studying testimonies of and conducting interviews with survivors, Miller identifies "problem-focused coping" and "emotion focused coping" (p. xxii) employed by survivors of Auschwitz. Through reflection and analysis, Miller identifies specific methods for each strategy. Students of Holocaust literature have found Miller's analysis tremendously useful in making sense of the way one continues to persist in the face of absolute horror. Such analysis can be used as well when examining other types of traumas and survival and especially in understanding the ways that characters have continued to move forward against tremendous odds.

Miller specifies numerous strategies for problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Simply put, problem-focused coping is "action-centered" and is used when "something concrete can be accomplished" such as stealing blankets or extra rations of food (Miller, 2000, p. xxii). Emotion focused is more of a "thinking strategy." When a tangible goal is not attainable, techniques such as "numbing," "fantasy," "relationship with others," and "humor" are all options for protecting oneself from the impact of the trauma even when not preventing the trauma from occurring. Milller points out that for many imprisoned in Auschwitz, emotion focused coping was the only strategy available since there was often little one could do to impact one's physical environment. Although her work was developed through interviews with women survivors and the focus of her study is on women's stories, her work can certainly be applied to many trauma texts. She offers, for example, a fine context through which to read the often studied *Night* by Elie Wiesel (1960). Another powerful Holocaust text, *Rena's Promise* (Gelissen 1995), tells the

story of Rena Kornreich who was imprisoned for an exceptionally long time. Because of the detailed chronicling of Rena's suffering, Rena's Promise can quickly overwhelm readers. Using Miller's tools, a reader can contextualize Rena's story in the context of coping strategies and develop a method for reading the terrible horror of her years in Auschwitz.

Outside of Holocaust studies, Miller's strategies continue to work as a tool for analysis. In Jacobo Timmerman's autobiography, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number* (1988), Timmerman writes of his two year imprisonment by the Argentine government in an Argentine prison. All of his time imprisoned is spent in solitary confinement with human contact only when he is being interrogated and tortured. Because there is virtually nothing he can do to impact his physical environment, Timerman relies primarily on emotion-focused coping strategies for his survival. He spends countless hours in his cell fantasizing about a bookstore he will develop, including such specifics as "the size of the main room, the name, the typography of the letters printed on the windows, [and] the types of books" to be sold (1988, p. 37). His fantasy world provides him a break from life in solitary confinement; it is safe, passes time, and is under his control.

Timerman also uses affiliation when he discovers, through the peephole in his cell door into the peephole of the cell across the hall, another prisoner. This contact with another is unusual in the prison, and Timerman responds directly when he notices that there is an eye looking at him through the hole. He creates a history to go with this unknown person, a personality, a physique. The two begin to communicate with one another through eye and eyebrow movement, and the affiliation lifts him tremendously, giving him hope and a sense of humanity amidst the torture he has experienced. Timerman writes, "that night we conquered death . . . we were immortal" (p. 6). When later Timerman is told that the person across the way has died, he refuses to believe the news and relies on his increased strength and faith in humanity to maintain hope for his own survival. Miller's description of how one can cope with trauma enables readers to more fully appreciate what Timerman did to contribute to his own survival. In what appeared to be a completely helpless situation, he managed to take back some level of power, and Miller gives us an model for reading that helps us to understand how Timerman has done this.

Miller is especially useful when studying the kind of group trauma that is reflected in literatures of the holocaust and current day genocides. By using Miller's "problem-focused coping" and "emotion-focused coping" as a general lens through which the reader can understand the plight and activities of the characters, Holocaust and other trauma literatures become not only more accessible but also less overwhelming to student readers.

Conclusion

The works of Christ (1986), Herman (1992), and Miller (2000) provide important strategies for analysis for teachers and students who study literature of trauma. Readers who have experienced trauma themselves can take a step further the models for survival delineated by these three writers. Each of them gives language for understanding the impact of trauma upon the traumatized as well as strategies for overcoming and healing from the trauma. The models acknowledge when the trauma occurs, validate the impact of the trauma upon the traumatized, and mark the stages of healing. Readers are able to focus their reading on the journey to survival and wholeness and potentially identify their own places on that same journey.

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Reading the Script: How Students and Teachers Understand Reading in the Context of a Scripted Intervention Class

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Previous research has suggested that teachers' conceptions of reading and the tools they use for instruction have an impact on their students' beliefs about reading; accordingly, scripted reading programs may also influence students' beliefs about reading. Building upon previous findings about students' conceptions of reading, this article provides data from two separate ethnographic studies set in middle and secondary schools wherein scripted reading interventions were the basis of the curriculum. Data from the first study were gathered through four months of classroom observations and interviews with four ninth-grade students and two teachers participating in a scripted reading class. Data from the second study were gathered over a separate four-month period. Four teachers participated in individual interviews and 15 students in grades 9-12 participated in both focus group discussions and individual interviews. Findings indicate that generally the students described and defined reading in ways consistent with the events and activities given priority in the scripted reading classes. Teachers in both studies described reading as a transactional event for themselves, but a transmission event for their students. Instruction in the classes generally reflected the transmission model, with little opportunity for advanced reading processes or authentic student transaction with text.

Current national educational policies mandate accountability for student achievement, and accountability is frequently defined in relation to scores on state-level standardized tests. As a result, instructional practices in many content areas have been heavily influenced by the topics and structure of the mandated examinations. The reading field is no exception to this current instructional phenomenon. In recent years, textbook manufacturers and program publishers have answered the call for aid in improving student reading achievement by providing a variety of pre-packaged, and often explicitly scripted, intervention programs to educators. With a multitude of programs offering to be comprehensive solutions and virtual panaceas for what are viewed as student reading ills, a question for researchers in the educational community becomes, *what is the impact on students' conceptions of reading when scripted programs are used?* Educators need to know what is gained and what is potentially lost through the use of a pre-packaged instructional program, and how use of the program may impact their students' conceptions of reading and learning in general.

Research on Programmatic Reading Interventions

While scripted reading interventions have been available for many years, increased national attention to struggling adolescent readers since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) has led to an influx of programmatic, often scripted, reading intervention programs being marketed toward students who read below expected levels at the middle and secondary levels. For example, in 2007, Deshler, Palinscar, Biancarosa, and Nair published a guide to over 40 programmatic interventions (including scripted programs) for adolescents who struggle with reading. However, most available research on scripted reading interventions has tended to focus on elementary-aged readers, and on quantifiable skills-based assessments (e.g., Jones, Staats, Bowling, Bikel, Cunningham, & Cadle, 2004; Munoz & Dossett, 2004; Pikulski, 1994; Ross & Smith, 1994).

Research on the impact of programmatic reading interventions for older students has begun to emerge recently, albeit in smaller quantities (e.g., Bradford, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins, & Flores, 2006; Hasselbring & Goin, 2004; Topping & Paul, 1999; Tunmer, Chapman, Greaney & Prochnow, 2002), but, again, the focus has been on the acquisition of reading skills. In addition, much of the research on programmatic reading interventions available for older readers is often evaluative, commissioned by the program publishers, or published in organizational reports (Slavin, Chung, Groff & Lake, 2008). While a few studies on scripted interventions have included surveys of student, teacher, and parent attitudes (Munoz & Dossett, 2004; Ross & Smith, 1994), examinations of scripted interventions from a sociocultural perspective to determine if or how the use of these tools impacts the ways participants view learning or content are even more difficult to find.

Scripted Interventions

From a constructivist perspective (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998), our knowledge of the world shapes and is shaped by our interactions with others and with the tools we use. Scripted reading interventions are instructional tools, defined here as pre-packaged, publisher-designed curricula that provide explicit instructions for teacher and student behaviors and responses. Additionally, scripting implies that the program follows a specifically-paced, externally-monitored format (P.D. Pearson, personal communication, May 21, 2007) that allows for little, if any, modification or deviation by classroom teachers outside the pre-set parameters of the program design. All curricular materials—including passages for reading, discussion topics, questions and expected responses, and assessments—are provided by the publishers, and the teachers are given guides, often with explicit scripts to read during instruction, that indicate which lessons are taught and how to assess student progress through the program. It is important to note that not all pre-packaged programs fit this definition for scripted. For example, Accelerated Reader (Renaissance Learning) is a pre-packaged program present in many school districts; however, as it does not use a program pacing guide, nor are there explicit guides for instruction, it would not be included in a list of scripted interventions as defined in this article.

Programs fitting the definition of "scripted" come in a variety of formats, targeting different skills. Some, like, Corrective Reading (SRA McGraw-Hill) advertise themselves as scripted, while others with designs meeting the scripted criteria, like Rewards Plus (Sopris West) and Read 180 (Scholastic), do not. Corrective Reading, Rewards Plus, and Read 180 are the three scripted reading intervention programs that were used in the classrooms in the studies

described below. Read 180 is a comprehensive program that provides texts and opportunities for independent reading, small- and large-group discussion, workbooks and videos, and individualized, computer-based instruction. Skills taught include word work, decoding, vocabulary acquisition, spelling, and comprehension. Corrective Reading offers multiple workbooks for classroom use, depending on student tested reading levels, focusing on decoding and comprehension skills (Englemann, Hanner, & Johnson, 1999). Rewards Plus is the second component of a program that begins with structural analysis of multi-syllabic words and then shifts to more in-depth comprehension, writing, and text analysis lessons. Rewards Plus is a supplemental program that builds on a previously learned method for structural analysis of multisyllabic words, integrating this process with content-based texts and activities.

Reading, Readers, and Instruction

Students who understand reading as a meaning-making process (Johns, 1974), are more likely to be effective readers, and students who see themselves as effective readers are more likely to read, thus improving their skills (Allington, 2006). Additionally, Schraw and Bruning (1996) found that readers who approach texts from a transactional (Rosenblatt, 1994) perspective, meaning that they actively connect with the text to make meaning, tend to read more efficiently, both in terms of comprehension as well as engagement.

Based on the understanding that reading is making meaning from text, a guiding premise for any reading intervention program should be to help students improve their ability to construct meaning and to metacognitively monitor their own reading processes (see Baker & Brown, 1984). In order for this goal to be accomplished, each of the instructional strategies used in that program must reflect this metacognitive, meaning-making perspective. Isolated instruction in any specific skill that is recognized as a component part of reading may lead to improved production of that skill, but, without an integrated approach to reading as a transactional (Rosenblatt, 1994), social, psychological, and linguistic process (Goodman, 1994), at best, instruction will only result in improved ability for a student to reproduce an isolated skill.

Citing Stanovich's (1986) Matthew effect, Allington (2006) suggested that the more students read, the more effective they become as readers. The less they read, the less effective they become. Attitude, motivation, and self-perception all contribute to how much time students spend reading. Unfortunately, students' attitudes toward reading tend to decrease over time (Brown & Wigfield, 1999; McKenna, Kear, & Elsworth, 1995; Sperling & Head, 2002), which may be influenced by their perceptions of themselves as readers (Conlon, Zimmer-Gembeck, Creed, & Tucker, 2006; Pflaum & Bishop, 2004). The result of less time spent reading, for some students, means that the gap between them and their peers widens. Encouragingly, research has shown that student self-perceptions as readers and their motivation to read can be positively influenced by effective teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999) and engaging classroom instructional practices (Conlon et al., 2006; Cosgrove, 2003; Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998). Reflexively, the teachers' own conceptions of instruction can be influenced by the tools they use in their classrooms (Richards, 2001; Valencia, Place, Martin, & Grossman, 2006).

Research Questions

Several of the findings from the studies cited above influenced the research described in this article. The most salient is that research has established a direct link between students'

conceptions of reading, how students see themselves as readers, and reading performance. Teachers' perceptions of reading and of their students as readers are shown to be important factors in how students think about reading and how they view themselves as readers; these teachers' perceptions of students and instruction may be influenced by the tools they use in the classroom. As a result, teacher perceptions are, in part, shaped by the instructional tools they use; students' conceptions are, in part, shaped by their teachers' perceptions; and student reading performance is impacted by all three. Thus, the goal of the two studies described in the following sections was to uncover how students and teachers in scripted reading intervention classes understood reading, and to determine if there was any correspondence between the activities emphasized in the scripted interventions and the conceptions about reading that were held by the participants. Specifically, research questions driving both of these studies were as follows:

1. How was reading understood by the students and teachers who used scripted reading interventions in secondary classes?
2. Did the reading events in a scripted reading intervention class align with the conceptions of reading held by the participants?

Methods

The data and findings in this article are combined from two different ethnographic studies conducted in six secondary scripted reading intervention classrooms in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city between 2006 and 2008. Students in both studies were placed in the reading intervention classes following standardized assessments that identified them as reading two or more years below grade level.

Context for Study One

Site and Participants. Study One was undertaken over a period of four months during the spring of 2007, in a single ninth-grade classroom using the scripted intervention program Read 180 (Scholastic, Inc.). The school was a large suburban high school within a major metropolitan area in the Midwest. Students enrolled in the Read 180 class were typically freshmen, though occasionally sophomores were also registered, who read below grade level and who had positive behavior records. Students who were seen as behavior problems, called "thugs and slugs" were not permitted to enroll, due to the expensive computer equipment and classroom furnishings required by the program publishers for optimal impact. Students who had an excessive number of behavior referrals, determined by the school administration, were enrolled in a separate English/Language Arts class, that followed a more traditional secondary reading and writing curriculum. Four female ninth-grade students and both of the two teachers assigned to the class agreed to participate in the study. As with all of the students enrolled in the Read 180 classes at this site, the participants each read at least two years below grade level. Read 180 served as the only English/Language Arts course for the students for the duration of the school year.

Read 180. Read 180 is a comprehensive reading intervention program that is designed for 90-minute blocks of time. Within each block of time, the whole class meets for the first ten minutes, then for the next hour students rotate in small groups through three different 20-minute stations. One station is designed for small group instruction with the classroom teacher wherein the program workbook is used. The workbook consists of different types of short texts (e.g., expository, narrative, poetry) organized thematically, with sections for word work,

implementation of specific reading strategies (eg. looking back in the text, making predictions), and comprehension questions.

At a second station, students self-select tradebooks within their reading level to read independently. After students complete a text, they are able to take a computerized test for comprehension, and to complete a project (e.g., poster) on the book prior to beginning a new one. The third station is for individualized, computer-based instruction wherein the students have the option to work on vocabulary knowledge, spelling, comprehension, or fluency. As students show progress in the programs, the computer adjusts the difficulty level, though teachers have the ability to override this feature. The final 10 minutes of the class are dedicated to whole-group wrap up. The program meets the definition of *scripted* because of the explicit pacing required both during each individual class session as well as per unit. Additionally, the program workbook provides an explicit script to the instructors for wording used during instruction and student responses. Almost all materials, including supplemental materials, are provided by the publisher, and, as the teachers both indicated during interviews, they were discouraged from going "off model" by both program publishers and the school administration. As one teacher put it "We are following a script."

Instruction for in the Read 180 class was shared by two teachers who were each in their fourth year of teaching at the time of the study. One teacher was certified in English/Language Arts with a background in humanities. The other teacher was certified in Special Education. The teachers alternated leading the class each day. The leader initiated both the whole-class and small-group discussions, while the other circled the room working with students independently, completed reports, graded papers, and/or modeled reading in the independent reading section of the classroom. The classroom furnishings and organization were arranged according to the program publisher's specifications. Independent reading was completed in a back-corner section of the room with multiple soft-seated chairs to facilitate comfort. A bank of computer stations lined the wall opposite the reading corner, and a U-shaped table for small group work was at the front of the room. Traditional desk/chair combinations for whole-class discussion were in the center.

In addition to the Read 180 course observed in Study One, a second team of teachers (not observed in this research) offered a second section of the class. The four Read 180 teachers divided planning for both sections by month, with each teacher planning for one week, then following the plans established by the other teachers for the remaining three. The teachers in the observed classes occasionally made significant deviations from the program script by incorporating longer in-class writing assignments or by watching a video not supplied by the publisher. However, during the observation year, it was noted that student reading levels did not improve as much as the reading levels of the students in the previous year. The teachers indicated that the students who took the course during the second year of implementation started with higher levels of reading than their peers in the previous year, but the smaller increase in scores the second year was attributed to the writing modifications developed by the teachers. As a result, the teachers were considering removing the extended writing assignments during the third year. Data in this study were only gathered during the second year of implementation.

Data Collection for Study One. Field notes and classroom artifacts were gathered during 27 days of observation in the Read 180 class over a period of three months in the spring of the 2006-2007 school year. Participants took part in individual, semi-structured interviews after the conclusion of the observation period. Semi-structured interview questions were derived from

Spradley's (1980) grand-tour and mini-tour question format, with preliminary analysis of the observation data guiding the initial question development (see Appendix for sample questions).

Context for Study Two

Site and Participants. Data from Study Two were gathered over a four-month period in the spring of 2008, at a single, small, combined junior high/ high school, also in the suburbs of a major metropolitan area in the Midwest. Observations were conducted in four classrooms. Two used the Corrective Reading Program (SRA/McGraw Hill) and were generally for students in grades 7-9 who were reading at least three years below grade level; however, one research participant from this group was in Grade 10. The remaining two classes used Rewards Plus (Sopris West) and were designed for students in grades 9-12, reading at least three years below level. Descriptions of the teachers and students participating in the study are provided in the sections that follow.

Corrective Reading Program. The Corrective Reading Program contains multiple levels that are geared toward decoding, fluency, and comprehension. It was designed for students in grades 3-12, and the version that was used in the two classes in Study Two focused on explicit word-level decoding and phonics-based activities, with some activities designed to build comprehension and fluency. Classroom practices consisted of the teacher reading a list of phonetically-related, single-syllable words from the workbook individually, with students repeating the words after the teacher. When students miscued on a word, the class started the list from the beginning until every word was pronounced correctly. The excerpt from the field notes below provides an example of a typical word work exercise in the program, wherein the teacher and students read a list of words that are working on the /a/ sound.

> Teacher: What word?
> Students: Began.
> Teacher: What word?
> Students: Happened.
> Teacher: What word?
> Students: Very.
> Teacher: What word?
> Students: Sandy.
> [Teacher has students read the list again.]
> Teacher: What word?
> Students: Began.
> [Some students miscue. Teacher has students read the list again.]
> Teacher: What word?
> Students: Began.
> Teacher [to student who is reading more quickly than others]: Wait for them. I want you
> to say it, but I want you to wait…you're going to be their parrot.

Other activities included the teacher reading passages from the text, stopping to ask the provided comprehension questions periodically, round-robin reading from the students, timed reading, and word work. Of the three programs in the study, Corrective Reading was the most scripted, as the teachers were given explicit directions and supplied with both language and gestures to use during instruction. The publishers and school administrators expected the classes to complete

one lesson each day and then move on to the next on the following day, regardless of whether all of the activities in the initial lesson had been completed.

The Corrective Reading classes were relatively small with fewer than 10 students participating in each section. Student reading levels ranged from third through sixth grade, and the classes were generally available for students in grades 7-9, though one of the teachers indicated that older students also participated in the class if their reading abilities were in the grade 3-6 range. One of the Corrective Reading teachers had taught for over 30 years, mostly in special education, and the other, who was the English department chair, held a communications certification, and had taught in the district for about eight years. Planning for the course followed the program design, and each day a new lesson was implemented. Deviations from the script were minimal, mainly in the form of teacher modifications of the actual words indicated in the script. For example, when asked about modifications to the program, the department chair indicated that she changed from saying *Next word?* as directed in the script to saying *Next?* instead when cueing students to read from supplied word lists. She said she did this in the interest of time.

Rewards Plus Program. Unlike Corrective Reading or Read 180, the Rewards Plus program was not designed as a comprehensive program, but as a supplemental tool, used in this setting as a break from more traditional novel study activities. During a five-week session in the fall students learned a basic strategy for decoding multisyllabic words using the Rewards program.. Throughout the rest of the term, students read and discussed novels that were not part of the scripted intervention. Four months later, during the spring semester, students revisited the strategy in a second component of the Rewards program, called Rewards Plus. In Rewards Plus, students applied the structural analysis strategy to different passages related to science content. Class sessions included organizing text-based readings using graphic organizers, word work, assessments of orthographic knowledge based on word families, timed reading, and responses to comprehension questions.

While the Rewards Plus program also provided opportunities for students to write extended responses to texts read, these activities were omitted during implementation at the request of the administration. The department chair, also a teacher participating in the study, said that the junior high/senior high was given the Rewards Plus program after the elementary schools, which had previously used it, moved on to a new program. She explained "The research, I don't actually have the research, or know the research, but, when [it was originally selected, the research] supported that it needs to be done 20 lessons, back-to-back." As a result, lessons that too much time to complete were omitted.

Students enrolled in the Rewards Plus Program classes ranged from grades 9-12, and had tested reading levels between two and three years below grade level. One of the teachers using the program had spent over 30 years in education or education related fields including school administration, and the other was new to the combined junior high/high school, though she was in her 28th year of teaching. Prior to joining the junior high/high school staff, she was the intervention specialist at an elementary school in the same district. Deviations from the Rewards Plus program in both classes varied by teacher, though most deviations were minimal, and were generally based on linguistic choices made by the teacher as she read from the textbook script.

Data Collection for Study Two. Observations were conducted in Corrective Reading Class 1 (CRC1) for five days, Corrective Reading Class 2 (CRC2) for eight days, Rewards Plus Class 1 (RPC 1) for seven days, and Rewards Plus Class 2 (RPC 2) for four days. Combined, the Corrective Reading classes were observed for a total of 13 days, and the Rewards Plus classes

were observed for 11, for a total of 24 observation days at the site. Fifteen students (seven from the Corrective Reading classes and eight from the Rewards Plus classes) and all four of the classroom teachers agreed to participate in individual structured interviews. Additionally, each student participating in the second study also participated in one of four focus group discussions. Focus groups were made up of students who were using the same program, though not necessarily enrolled in the same course, based on their availability during the focus group session times offered. The interviews for Study Two followed the same format for Study One, and the questions asked were derived from preliminary analysis of the observation data, as well as findings from Study One. The focus group sessions, used only in Study Two, also used themes from preliminary analysis for question generation (See appendix for examples).

Data Analysis

Data from Study One and Study Two were analyzed using Spradley's (1980) thematic analysis procedures. Data were initially coded by emergent themes that were then collapsed into larger domains. The codes present in each thematic domain underwent a taxonomic analysis in order to better understand relationships between the concepts and ideas represented. In the examples provided below, all names are pseudonyms.

Sample Analysis from Study One. During her interview, Xena, a ninth-grade student in the Read 180 class, described her reading ability:

I think that I'm a good reader, like, as far as you telling me to read
something. I'm pretty good at reading, like big words and stuff. . . We
may be reading, like, in the book or something and some kids, they'll say
they can't, like, say a word that I look at and I'm like 'that's easy' . . .It's
pretty easy for me to just read . . .I don't think I'm a bad reader at all,
'cause I am a good reader.

Xena's description of reading was coded as *decoding*, as the most significant aspect of reading that she mentions in the quote is pronouncing "big words." This conception of reading became an important feature to note, as later in the interview Xena explained that the reason she was in the intervention class was because she had a "comprehension skills problem" but she maintained she was a "good reader" because she could pronounce large words.

Codes such as this one indicating student definitions of reading, were collapsed into the domain of *student reading conceptions*. The data in this domain were then examined in relation to the data in the domain *teacher reading conceptions* to determine correspondence and/or connections between student and teacher conceptions of reading. Data in these domains were also examined in relation to a series of codes included in the *classroom events* domain to determine if patterns could be found between activities in the class and themes relating to student/teacher conceptions of reading.

In the following example that was coded both as *small group activity* and *teacher directs student writing* under the *classroom events* domain, students were completing word work in small groups with the teacher:

Teacher: What's the target word?
Student 1: Demonstration.
Teacher: Demonstration. Write that down. Anyone not heard that word before?
[A student makes a connection to science class. The teacher explains what a scientific
demonstration is.]

Teacher: In this context, what does demonstration mean? It's an act or protest or a march. [A student repeats this definition.]

Teacher: Write this down

Data from the classroom events domain were then examined for patterns among and between events, for example, how and in what ways reading strategies were modeled and practiced for students, and then compared to student and teacher conceptualizations of reading as coded through the process shown with the sample from Xena, above.

Sample Analysis from Study Two. In Study Two, data were again coded based on emergent themes, as well as themes determined during the analysis of the data from Study One. Because the attributes of the students in Study Two varied more than the students in Study Two, (for example, the student participants did not all have the same teacher, use the same program, or attend the same grade), data from Study Two were analyzed as a whole (in other words, how all the students individually defined reading) and also organized and analyzed based on participant attributes (for example, how the students in the Corrective Reading Class One defined reading versus how students in Corrective Reading Class Two defined reading) in order to determine if there were patterns of response based on participant role.

To demonstrate how coding and analysis were done, the following statements from participants in Study Two were coded as *Student descriptions of effective readers*:

Boots: "You gotta know how to sound out the sounds, and how to read anything. Know how to comprehend anything you read."

Maria: "[Effective readers] will stop. Like my cousin. She read fast. . .When she get stuck on a word she'll write down on a piece of paper and split it up into syllables, and then she'll sound the first one out and then keep going, and then put them all together and she'll get the word. . .[Effective readers] don't miss none of the words."

Bob: "Learn all the basic words in certain things you read [to be effective]."

Derrick: "I think it takes a little bit of knowledge, you know. Sometimes, to be an effective reader, you gotta really be dedicated to it. . . Everybody say they wanna read, but you really gotta dig down and read through to be an effective reader. You gotta understand your words. You gotta know how to break it down. You gotta know what it mean. You gotta know how to break it down. You gotta know what it mean."

Amy: "What I think is easy for a reader to understand something is for you to imagine it while you go along. Like imagine the person if they have curly hair. Imagine the sceneries, stuff like that."

Jimmerton: "[My dad] just knows, like, a lot of words and stuff like that. Like, I'll ask him how to spell a word and he'll tell me, or, like, what it means."

In addition to coding the student statements above as *student descriptions of effective readers*, the statements by Boots and Bob were coded as both *comprehension* and *decoding*. Derrick's, and Jimmerton's statements were coded as *decoding*, while Maria's was coded under *fluency*. Amy's was coded as *visualization*. Student conceptions of reading were then compared to the teachers' conceptions of reading and data from classroom observations to determine if there were connections or patterns in a process similar to the analysis used for Study One.

Because the participants in Study Two were enrolled in four different classes using two different programs, an additional level of analysis was necessary. For example, Boots and Maria were in separate Corrective Reading classes, while Amy, Bob, and Derrick were in one section of Rewards Plus and Jimmerton was in the other. Analysis of the data needed to examine if and

how conceptions and events crossed these classes, or if the student and teacher conceptions were limited based on the section and or course in which they were enrolled.

As a result, once the thematic codes and domains were determined, taxonomic and hierarchical analyses were conducted to examine types of events and conceptions based on students and teachers as whole groups and disaggregated based on similar traits relevant to the research questions and data collection procedures. Event codes and domains were extracted and examined based on each specific scripted program. For example, conceptions of reading were grouped based on program, grade level, and specific section to look for patterns across and within specific groupings. Coded statements from each of the participants were also examined in relation to the data collection process to look for consistency. For example, data from Derrick coded as *comprehension* were grouped based on when the statements were made – during individual interviews, as data from field notes from classroom discussions, or during the focus group session to see if the setting during which the data were collected may have influenced his responses.

Limitations

Several limitations to these studies and this report are important to note. The first is that the data were collected during two separate studies. While similar in design and methodology, in some cases different data collection and analysis methods were used, making an across the board comparison difficult. For example, Study Two was informed by the findings of Study One. As a result of what was learned in the initial study, adjustments were made in the design of the second, including participation of more students and the use of focus groups in addition to the individual interviews. Had focus groups been used in Study One, additional data would have been available for analysis that may have impacted the ultimate findings. Another limitation of the study was the time spent in observing the classes in Study Two. Due to the school schedule, all four of the classes were offered at the same time each day, so with a single researcher observing, the classes, it was not possible to be in more than one class at a time. Additionally, Study Two was originally designed to only investigate the Corrective Reading classes, however, once on site, the possibility of also observing the Rewards Plus classes became available. As Rewards plus was only taught for a period of 5 weeks, it was only possible to observe a week of class sessions for each section before the instruction ended. More time in each of the classes may, again, have yielded more data to support or counter the findings presented here.

Findings

The common research questions in each of the two studies sought to determine what conceptions students and teachers participating in scripted reading intervention courses held, and if the practices in the classes were consistent with those conceptions. Analysis of the data indicated that students from both studies generally held conceptions of reading that were consistent with the skills and events given priority in the scripted intervention programs. In other words, in classes that used programs that emphasized basic-level skills over meaning-making activities, most often the students defined reading in relation to the same basic skills emphasized in class, rather than meaning-making. This cannot imply causality, as neither the purpose nor the design of the study was to determine cause/effect relationships. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the students' conceptions, despite undertaking classes dedicated toward improving

reading abilities, were reflective of the definitions held by ineffective readers in Johns' (1974) classic study. In Johns' research, students who were ineffective readers (identified as reading at a year or more below grade level) defined reading through the basic skills required, with making meaning largely absent from their descriptions, while the majority of his participants who read a year or more above grade-level described reading as meaning-making process.

Teachers in the study were found to make a distinction between their own, personal reading practices and their conceptions of reading for their students. Whereas the teachers described reading for themselves as escapist, pleasurable, and/or knowledge-seeking activity, for their students they conceptualized reading in relation to basic skills that needed to be mastered. Events given priority in the classes were reflective of this distinction, with the bulk of the activities in the scripted programs focusing on basic skills.

Student conceptions of reading: Corrective Reading. Students in both Corrective Reading classes tended to limit their descriptions of reading to basic-level skills. For example, Maria, a 7th grader in Corrective Reading explained that good readers "don't miss none of the words," and Lee, a 9th grader in the same class, confused decoding with vocabulary acquisition, indicating "if you can figure out [a] word, then, later on, you know what that word means." When their descriptions were coded and compared to events given priority in the Corrective Reading classes, a connection between activities and perceptions was seen. As implemented at the site, the program focused most heavily on phonics work and fluency, and students often described reading as being able to decode with speed and accuracy.

The Corrective Reading students' conceptions of reading tended to reflect their teachers' views when it came to their goals for reading instruction. For example, Maria's Corrective Reading teacher explained that in order to teach students to read, first they must to learn to decode. For her, the program provided the opportunity to do this. "Corrective Reading is just getting them to the point where they can read the material. . .I'm not, at this point as concerned about comprehension," she explained. Analysis of the data coded for events reflected these priorities in the Corrective Reading classes.

Student conceptions of reading: Read 180. For the students in Read 180, reading was defined more broadly, often in relation to four of five key areas for reading instruction, as determined by the National Reading Panel report (NCHID, 2000): phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and, to a lesser extent, comprehension, and highlighted in the program itself. While able to describe several of the basic skills associated with reading, however, the students in the Read 180 study did not describe reading as an integrated process with meaning-making at the core of the purpose for reading. Rather, they seemed to describe the basic skills, including comprehension, as equal facets. In other words, decoding and vocabulary acquisition were not necessary for comprehension, but that decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension were separate and distinct skills to be learned, as indicated by Xena's example in the section above.

Xena was labeled as a struggling reader and had been placed in the intervention course because her reading was below grade level; however, like the students in John's (1974) classic study, she failed to see that "comprehension" was the purpose of reading and that it is impossible to be an effective reader without making meaning from the text.

Like Xena, Keisha, another student in the Read 180 class, also believed that being a "good" reader meant knowing how to decode "big words." Consequently, Keisha believed she was an effective reader when she could sound out long words, even when she didn't understand the texts. Similarly, another student in the Read 180 class, Hippo, believed that she was an effective reader because she read "fast." Hippo equated speed with strong reading, and, though

again she had difficulty comprehending texts, she became frustrated with the class and the program because her conceptualization of reading was based on a loose interpretation of fluency, and not making meaning.

These skills-based conceptions of reading coincided with the events given priority in the implementation of the program at this school site. As shown in the analysis section, frequently throughout the study the Read 180 classroom teachers asked students questions and then either provided them with the answer, or affirmed or disconfirmed their answers and continued with the lesson, without further discussion. While the program was designed to include questions for critical thought and connections to the text, the pacing of the program itself, and the expected student responses as provided in the teacher's edition of the text, limited thoughtful discussions or the social construction of ideas. The result was an emphasis on decoding words, reading fluency (determined through speed of reading), and comprehension as determined through students' ability to supply answers to text-based questions matching responses provided in the teacher's edition. When students were asked to respond to a more critical or thought-provoking question, little to no conversation or discussion followed. Metacognitive discussions about making personal connections to texts, monitoring for comprehension, other advanced reading processes, or specific reading strategies were also limited.

Student conceptions of reading: Rewards Plus. During interviews, the students enrolled in the Rewards Plus program seemed to see reading as a meaning-making activity on a broader level than those enrolled in Corrective Reading or Read 180 classes. Boots was the only student in the Corrective Reading classes to discuss reading as meaning-making process beyond the word level, and there were no students from Read 180 who did so. Of the Rewards Plus students, the data show that each one provided some form of meaning-making as part of his/her understanding of reading at some point during either the individual or focus group interviews. Notably, however, the students seemed to have different conceptions of the term 'comprehension' itself, and these seemed to correspond to the events given priority in the class and by their teachers.

For example, in the sample data above, Bob's description of effective readers' strategies was based on knowledge at the word level, however Derrick discussed both word and world knowledge as part of comprehension throughout his interview. Their Rewards Plus teacher discussed meaning making as the purpose for reading during formal and informal interviews. "What's the point of decoding the words if you don't know what they mean?" In the final analysis, the student conceptions of reading each showed various aspects of the activities either recorded during observations, or shared by the teacher during her interview.

A second Rewards Plus teacher explained that her goal for students in the class was for them to "be able to pick up a book and enjoy it because they have become better readers, stronger readers. . . This way they don't have to spend quite so much time and effort sounding out these words," however the emphasis, as observed, in class was more on decoding skills, and meaning at the word level. For her, effective reading was a linear process that began with understanding the words and moved toward comprehension at the passage and personal level. Jimmerton, a member this Rewards Plus class, consistently described reading as knowledge at the word level, again reflective of both activities in his section of the class and his teachers' perspective on student reading. Amy, a transfer student, however, was an outlier here. Her conception of reading was by far the most reflective of Rosenblatt's (1994) transaction with text. Amy talked frequently about personal connections with the text, making predictions, and other advanced reading processes, as well as being able to be "lost in the book," an experience several

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of her peers indicated they wished they could have, but felt like they didn't know how to achieve. Though the Rewards Plus program itself did provide opportunities for practice with higher-order reading strategies, including analysis, summarization, and evaluation (see Fountas & Pinnell, 2001), many of these lessons were not implemented at the study site due to time-constraints and departmental directives.

Unlike the other two programs observed, Rewards Plus did not mandate the entire course. For the students in the Rewards Plus classes, the scripted intervention was only part of a larger curriculum wherein the teacher selected tradebooks for the students to read and discuss during 30 of the 40 weeks of the school year. This is an important differentiation to note between this class and the other two discussed in this article. Aside from the two five-week periods when Rewards Plus, and its precursor, Rewards, were implemented, the remainder of instruction was based on reading, discussing, and writing about young adult novels using teacher-designed curricula and lessons; thus student conceptualizations of reading in the Rewards Plus classes may still have aligned with the content of the course, however only the scripted intervention portion of the course was observed for this study, so correspondence between the novel studies instruction and student conceptions of reading can only be speculated based on findings of previous research relating to literature-based classroom and student conceptions of reading (Allington, 2006; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Cosgrove, 2003; Pflaum & Bishop, 2004; Pitcher, Albright, DeLaney, Walker, Seunarinesingh, Mogge, et al., 2007; Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998)

Another indicator of a distinction between literature-based instruction and the scripted intervention in the Rewards Plus classes may be found in that the student participants seemed to make a clear distinction between self-selected reading, often in the form of novels, but also magazines and online texts, and reading as instructed in school. When defining reading in relation to the scripted intervention program, six of the eight students enrolled in the Rewards Plus classes described reading as pronouncing and being able to break down words, understanding them at the word level. However, each of these students, when talking about their own reading experiences, also included descriptions of transacting with the text; for example, Chantée reported she was able to get "lost" in a book. Amy articulated the constructive meaning-making involved in reading by saying, "Many people get different stuff about the things you read, but not everybody gets the same thing," and for Derrick, reading was a social obligation, saying "What would the world come to if people don't read? . . . We would be running around like cave men . . . Reading is, like, to get us smarter, wiser, and to, like set us up for the future."

Based on their global descriptions of reading, these students in the Rewards Plus classes came much closer to seeing reading as a meaning-making activity than their counterparts in the Corrective Reading and Read 180 classes. Several of them expressed an interest in learning to transact with texts more fully, yet the instruction provided to them through the scripted reading intervention did not explicitly help them learn to do so. This finding is significant because the students' interest in learning to construct more personal meaning from text was similar to the teachers' conceptions of reading for themselves (discussed below), but not reflective of what the teachers believed their students needed to learn.

Teacher conceptions of reading. Essentially, the teachers in both sites viewed the students' interest in reading and goals as different from their own. For the teachers, reading was often described as an escape from everyday life, or a way to connect with new knowledge and ideas. However, when they spoke about reading in relation to instruction and their students, they talked about basic skills and a linear approach to acquisition of those skills. For example, one of the Corrective Reading teachers initially defined reading using terms from the National Reading

Panel report (NICHD, 2000): "The ability to add the sounds of letters together to make a word. . .I think you definitely have to understand what you're reading . . .you have to read it at a fluent pace . . .Decoding. Fluency. I can use all the words: decoding, fluency, comprehension. . ." Indeed, these skills were the ones most emphasized during observations of the scripted intervention classrooms. When describing reading for herself, however, she had a different perspective: "[Reading] relaxes me. It makes me escape."

While several of the teachers involved in the studies expressed a desire for the students to experience reading transactionally, in the way they themselves did, their instructional practices did not reflect this goal. As the department chair from Study Two said, "As long as you provide the structure for them to get started and learn all the sounds then you provide the structure for them to get the practice. . . They're only going to get better at it. They can't get worse." Inherent in this statement is the assumption that after students can decode words, they will be able to make meaning from the text.

Implications

The analysis of the data from the two studies shows that student conceptions of reading in each of the classes observed were consistent with the strategies and skills given priority in the classes. Almost all of the students in both studies described reading in terms of decoding or fluency, but with few exceptions, only those who were in the Rewards Plus program, which was implemented as a break-out curriculum within the context of a year-long novel studies class, shared conceptions of reading that included meaning-making as a purpose for reading.

Because readers who have conceptions of reading that include meaning-making are more likely to be more effective readers (Johns, 1974), and because readers who approach text with a transactional perspective are able to recall more (Schraw & Bruning, 1996), it would seem that instruction for struggling readers should focus on meaning-making and transaction, in addition to shoring up any basic skills necessary. While the design of two of the programs, Read 180 and Rewards Plus, did allow for some constructive exploration, the perception held by teachers and administrators that there was a lack of time to implement these activities fully led them to limit instruction to basic-level skills reflective of their own perspectives on the reading needs of their students.

The teachers involved in the programs saw their students' needs for reading as different and distinct from their own, and believed that by following the program their students would acquire the necessary skills to eventually be able to transact with texts. However, instruction in such meaning-making transactions was absent from the curricula as designed and implemented.

Finally, the use of the scripted programs in the classrooms seemed to impact the professional involvement of the teachers. Roles traditionally undertaken by the classroom teacher ranging from instructional design and assessment to differentiation of instruction and management of classroom conversations were deferred to the guidelines and parameters set by the programs used. Teachers in the classes were removed from the day-to-day decision-making as they followed plans and used assessments that were not designed based on their individual students' needs, but on the expectations of a pre-packaged program. Time and perceptions of external reviewers monitoring program fidelity directed which lessons were taught and when, not necessarily the needs or interest of the students.

Conclusion

The pressure to demonstrate performance on state-mandated tests has resulted in significant changes to school curricula. One result of the accountability movement has been the implementation of scripted reading interventions in secondary classrooms, though research on the impact and use of scripted interventions on older readers is largely missing from peer-reviewed literature in the field. This analysis of the data from two ethnographic studies of scripted reading interventions suggests that students who participated in scripted reading intervention classes held conceptions of reading that mirrored the activities and skills given priority in those classes. Moreover, the studies indicated that the teachers viewed their own experiences with reading as distinctly different from their students'; their classroom practices reflected this distinction.

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Appendix
Sample Interview Questions

Student Questions

Warm up questions:
1. What grade are you in?
2. What do you like about school?
3. Do you enjoy reading?
4. Are you reading anything currently that you can tell me about?

Grand Tour questions:
1. Explain to me, in your own words, the purpose of this class?
2. How is the class set up?
3. What is a typical class period like?
4. Describe a typical student who takes this class.
5. What is reading?

Mini Tour questions:
1. Why are you taking this class?
2. How are the things you do in this class like or unlike other reading/English classes you have taken?
3. Do you know any effective readers?
   a. What does s/he do that makes him/her good at reading?
4. How would you describe yourself as a reader?
5. Can you think of any specific ways this class has affected your reading?
6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about this class?
7. Please fill in the blank to the following:
   a. Reading is like _____(Please explain)
   b. This class is like _____(Please explain)
   c. The reading program is like _____(Please explain)

Teacher Questions

Warm up questions:
1. Provide me a little bit of your background as a teacher. How long have you been teaching?
2. What area(s) is/are you certified in?
3. What is your favorite part about teaching?

Grand Tour questions:
1. What is reading?
2. What is a scripted reading intervention program?
3. Describe the program that is being used in this class.
4. How are students chosen to be in the program?

Mini Tour questions:
1. As the instructor, what is your role in the program?

2. How do you prepare for a lesson in this class?
3. In what ways do you deviate from the program? (or do you deviate?)
4. How does training for the program work?
5. Please fill in the blanks to the following:
   a. Reading is like _____ (Please explain)
   b. Reading for me is like _____(Please explain)
   c. This class is like _____(Please explain)
   d. The reading program is like _____(Please explain)
   e. Teaching in this class is like _____(Please explain)

Focus Group Discussion Guide
   1. Tell me about the program. What do you do in the class?
   2. Do you find yourselves using the strategies in other classes, in other reading?
   3. What does the program title mean?
   4. Do you know anybody who's a good reader?
       a. What are some of the things that they do that make them good readers?
   5. What does it mean to read?
   6. Do you enjoy reading?
   7. What are your goals for yourselves as readers?
   8. Please fill in the following:
       a. Reading is like: _____ (Please explain)
       b. The class is like: _____(Please explain)

A "Book Club Girl" Becomes a "Leader"

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Adolescence is a time when many young people explore their identities. Book clubs, along with other social literacy experiences, can provide a place for adolescents to contemplate and "try on" their future selves. In this case study, a researcher recounts how an adolescent reader used an after school book club to try on the identity of "leader" and ultimately transformed her conception of herself as a reader. Her holistic exploration of this aspect of her identity was in direct contrast to the other adolescent females in the study who "spiraled" through various identity domains over course of the study. This case study provides a foundation for further research on how adolescents use book clubs as they explore identities.

Three years ago, I stepped into the book club research arena as I conducted a study on two, adolescent girls' after-school book clubs. I met Ashanti, a quiet eighth-grader who pulled me into the world of a reader whose school had labeled her "at risk". I watched in awe as she showed me the transformation that can occur from passive participant to "leader" when an adolescent uses a book club to explore identities.

Conceptions of Book Clubs

In preparation for this study, I researched book clubs in schools and compared them with my former women's book club. Raphael, Kehus, and Damphousse (2001) offer one notion of book clubs when they provide the following general description in their book, *Book Clubs for Middle School*:

> In the book club reading context, students meet with their book clubs (a group of their peers) to read the book they are currently discussing or related texts. The teacher's (or facilitator's) role is minimal most of the time; occasionally you might work directly to support struggling readers, but rarely would you teach a formal lesson or model during this time. In the same way the teacher read-aloud supports students' understanding of their reading, students' reading in pairs or with a group of people can help them reach a greater understanding of texts. Students might alternate reading silently with reading chapters aloud to one another. Some might even enjoy a chance to perform portions of a book for their peers. Another option is to allow readers to listen together to a professional reading of a text. This context asks students as a group to take more responsibility for their own reading comprehension and for the comprehension of their peers. (pp. 14-15)

This Book Club program has become a model used in its original form and modified by practitioners across the country.

My participation in an adult, female book club also influenced my conception. Our ritual of breaking bread and relishing the social time with one another made its way into the after school book clubs. I made sure to have after school snacks for the girls and planned special social events such as watching the movie version of the *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants.*

Dodson (1997), author of *The Mother Daughter Book Club: How Ten Busy Mothers and Daughters Came Together to Talk, Laugh, and Learn Through Their Love of Reading*, provides similar descriptions of meaningful book clubs. In Dodson's club, mothers and daughters attend as a team, and the first minutes are spent socializing in two groups as the daughters and mothers chat separately. Dodson did not plan this separation, but it evolved because the girls needed time to play and connect with each other before they widened their circle to connect with the mothers.

For the purposes of this case study, my definition of a book club contains significant aspects from my own book club experience, the classroom model, and the mother/daughter concept. The adolescent girls' book club in this study honors the variety of activities and educational purpose of the classroom book club by encouraging the girls to ask critical questions, challenge the authors, keep a journal to record connections to their reading, and by promoting young adult literature. In addition, the club recognized the social and community aspects of my own book club; time was provided for the girls to wind down from school as they shared food and conversation. Finally, in order to honor the evolving nature of the mother daughter club, we did not adhere to a strict schedule. In combining these three conceptions, I expanded any limited notions of book clubs held by the adolescent girls and introduced new possibilities for engagement and participation.

Theoretical Framework

This case study is situated within the realm of identity construction and identity exploration. Although all but one scholar in this review focused on the process of "constructing" identities, I was most concerned with how adolescents "explore" aspects of their identities. In this section, I will briefly highlight the important contributions of several leading theorists. Erickson (1963, 1968) proposed that over the course of our lives we go through eight stages. In each stage, we focus on a critical developmental task and build on the tasks of the previous stages. During adolescence, an individual leaves a childhood identity behind, explores different ways of being, and constructs an adult identity. An important concept for this stage is the idea of an ego identity. Erickson described this as "the aspect of who we are that has continuity over time." There is no question that individuals expand themselves over time, but at the completion of the identity development stage, adolescents must feel continuity between their childhood personas and who they anticipate they will be in the future.

Erickson (1968) provides us with definitions for two other dimensions of identity: the personal and social dimensions. The personal dimension of identity consists of a person's ideology (religion), sexuality, nationality, gender, and ethnicity (These are also referred to as domains by Erickson and other theorists). The social dimension is comprised of the roles an individual plays, such as the leader of a sports group or chair of a committee. Each time adolescents join a new group, it changes the way they think about themselves, and eventually they incorporate these new ways of thinking into their unique identities. Although it is optimal for individuals to develop an adult personal identity prior to entering adulthood, some young

people enter this phase confused about their roles and place in the world. This state is referred to as identity confusion. It is also possible that some adolescents may have a personal identity, yet be uncertain about aspects of their social identity. In other words, there are different degrees of identity resolution.

Erickson (1968) stressed that achieving a meaningful adult identity requires exploring and experimenting with a variety of roles. Adolescents need time to acquire the experiences, perspectives, and motivation necessary to identify long-term goals and commit to them. This exploration also helps them to avoid committing to career or life goals prematurely, possibly due to pressure from parents or peers.

Marcia (1966) built on Erickson's theories to create the Identity Status model. First, he developed an interview protocol to study how adolescents construct a personal identity. In accordance with the protocol, the interviewer probes the adolescent about significant life decisions, the process by which they were made, and the level of commitment concerning those decisions. Based on those research interviews, Marcia classified (1993) the ways adolescents resolved the identity/identity confusion conflict into four categories based on the levels of commitment or exploration involved in each. They are: identity diffusion, identity foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement.

Within this theory, individuals may situate themselves in multiple identity categories across different domains. For example, an adolescent may be in diffusion with respect to her career goals and be in foreclosure regarding sexuality. Marcia (1993) found that many adolescents felt pressure to commit in the career and academic domains, often because institutions do not support experimentation in these areas.

Erickson and Marcia's work have stood the test of time, but theorists like Archer (1992) criticized them for slanting their philosophy toward high school and college males, and leaving other aspects of context (age, gender, culture, ethnic group) out of their analysis. Archer, in particular, challenged the notion adolescents can be "squeezed" into the four categories. In contrast, she proposed that each adolescent constructs an adult identity in his or her own way. She suggested there is a "story" behind the adolescents' identity status and that story is more valuable than the category itself.

Another critic, Josselson (1987), adopted a narrative approach to the study of identity. In the interviews she conducted together with Carol Gilligan and others, she expanded the number of domains included in the interviews from the three traditional domains of vocation, ideology and family and added religious beliefs, politics, sexuality, values, friendship, parenting, and others. This provided support for the idea that there are patterns of identity formation that cannot be expressed by a simple category.

Gilligan (1982) opposed Erickson and Marcia's concepts of individuation and separation on the basis that this conception is particularly problematic for females for whom relationships are especially significant. She argued that female adolescents seek identity through their relationships, symbolically embodying the tradition of married women taking on their husband's last name. Oyserman, Gant, and Ager (1995) also evaluated Erickson and Marcia's ideas, and found two problematic points: the notion that identity is created by the individual and an ignorance of the social context that is critical to identity construction. They argue, instead, that as adolescents have personal relationships and interpersonal encounters, those experiences enable them to define themselves in relation to others and the larger society, and provide yet another framework for their emerging identities.

Grotevant (1987) focused his attention on the question of how one achieves identity rather than distinguishing the specific identity status categories. He developed a process model of identity formation and included a variety of individual and contextual factors. Grotevant argued that whether an individual begins the process of identity exploration depends on the following:

(1) Personality factors such as flexibility, self esteem, tendency to monitor one's behavior, and openness to experience.
(2) Cognitive competence to consider possibilities,draw appropriate inferences, and coordinate multiple perspectives.
(3) Characteristics of one's social context such as cultural support for making personal choices, family ties, and exposure to multiple options and viewpoints.
(4) The individual's general orientation, at a given point in his or her life, to engage in or avoid identity exploration and commitment.

As an individual explores her or his identity, Grotevant (1987) maintains there are five processes that govern engagement and achievement in the domains: expectations and beliefs, exploration, investment, competing forces, and interim evaluation. A person on the brink of identity exploration brings *expectations and beliefs* about possible choices and potential for success in a particular domain (i.e., sexuality or ethnicity). If, on the outset, individuals perceive the process with limitations or negativity, it could impede their desire to begin a course of action. In this context, Grotevant (1987) uses the term *exploration* to refer to the depth and scope of the information gathering and hypothesis testing behavior. How many different ways a domain is explored and how many different possibilities the person considers are standards for this process. As a person invests time, energy, and emotion into a particular course of action, it is more likely that person will want to continue until they receive a return on that *investment*. At times, *competing* forces may be more attractive to the identity explorer. For example, lack of funds may prohibit a particular path, or exploration goals may interfere with a marriage. Along the way, individuals will also *evaluate* their progress, and make decisions based on their level of satisfaction and evolution. They may continue exploring the same path, carve a new path or cease exploration entirely.

Finally, Grotevant (1987) pointed out the importance of the context in which the identity formation occurs. In his model, he explained how identity formation occurs within at least four social contexts: culture and society; family; school and work; and peer environments. Although he did not conduct empirical research, Grotevant suspected that peers have a significant influence over career and value directions. In his model, he also allowed for the ways school and work environments shape evolving adolescent identities. In these settings, young people investigate career opportunities and clarify values about sexuality and politics. In addition, these venues provide opportunities for those who find themselves discontented in their life choices.

I used Grotevant's model in my study to situate the participants' identity exploration processes during the book club sessions. In accordance with his theory, the girls moved back and forth among the various aspects of exploration.

Literature Review

There are several studies that support the idea that book club conversations are an appropriate literacy activity to foster identity exploration. I present three data-based studies and one theoretical paper from scholars who observed students engaged in adolescent book clubs or comparable social literacy activities and documented examples of identity construction or

exploration. The data-based studies I found were conducted with students of Mexican, Latin American or African American descent. Within these studies, all except one participant were female. In addition, the students' schools had identified them as performing below grade level and as reluctant readers and writers.

In an example that closely mirrors the constructs of my study, Broughton (2002) researched four sixth-grade girls as they read a novel and participated in book club discussions. She used observations, interviews, journals, and discussions to trace the girls' conversations about themselves. Broughton concluded that interactions with others and texts influenced the girls' ongoing constructions of self. She identified several ways that the book groups were particularly effective in engaging the middle school girls in the construction of identity.

First, the engaged contributors often acted as agents. The girls argued their point of view and negotiated collective meanings with the other participants. These, Broughton argued, are valuable skills that tend to be limited in typical classrooms because of the didactic role teachers often play when they facilitate discussions. Another unique role the girls adopted in their book groups was that of spectator. In this position, they evaluated and assessed the events in a book. Instead of being passive observers, the students acted more like movie critics or a focus group and offered their perspectives on the text. The girls also reconstructed ideas about themselves. Hearing the opinions and values of other students led a girl to reexamine her own. As the girls reflected on the lives of characters and the experiences of real life people, they often saw themselves in a new way.

A final benefit of the book groups was to discover ways to interact with others. The girls practiced speaking and listening skills, developed the ability to persuade others, and worked on tolerance of a variety of viewpoints. They occasionally realized that their interpretations of motives and actions were different from one another. In these instances, the girls gained practice in resolving the conflicts (by allowing all viewpoints to be heard), and they became more aware of their own personal values. Overall, the book club experience appeared to influence the girls' identity construction.

Broughton and Fairbanks (2003) continued with this line of research, and confirmed the importance of considering the students' lives and developing identities in their ethnographic study of four sixth-grade girls in the "middle of the middle." Over a two-year period of time, the researchers observed the girls twice per week in their 90-minute language arts classes and focused their interpretation on how identity construction takes place within school learning experiences. They paid particular attention to the way these girls managed "their social, cultural and academic" commitments while their view of themselves and others were in fluctuation. The curriculum at the girl's school gave them few occasions to choose books, to write extensively, or to work in groups, and these students reported they had "little opportunity in their daily school lives to participate in literacy activities that were personally meaningful or engaging" (p. 432). Thus, they had limited opportunities to use use their literacy experiences in school to explore their identity. In their conclusion, the researchers advised classroom teachers to be conversational rather than interrogational and "really listen to girls." They suggested that teachers provide social learning activities in the curriculum and "ample opportunities for self-expression and self-exploration through reading, writing and inquiry." Finally, they recommended a balance of texts with respect to protagonists (male, female, multiethnic).

Alvermann (2001) assumed a more specific approach to identity and literacy in her case study of a high school boy named Grady who was reading at a fifth-grade level. Alvermann began with an exploration of three approaches to thinking about culture and the struggling

reader: the deprivation approach, the difference approach, and the culture-as-disability approach, and concludes that both struggling readers and good readers are "bound up in the cultural contexts they inhabit" (p. 683). In addition, she speculated that as long as our society continues to promote the idea that "literacy is hard to acquire" and that in-school literacy is more important than out-of-school literacies, struggling readers will fail to attain competence in reading.

Continuing with her investigation, Alvermann (2001) presented Grady as a participant in a media club study. Over the course of fifteen weeks, she observed his participation in the club and corresponded with him by e-mail. She observed him engaged in reading activities built around video games, popular music and teen magazines. Then Alvermann considers the difficulties in current school contexts of accepting the possibility that the media club literacies would be considered "more suitable for Grady's development as a reader than were the end-of-chapter questions in his social studies chapter" (p. 687). Finally, based on her approach with Grady, Alvermann (2001) offered a suggestion for teachers working with struggling adolescent readers. She communicated to Grady that he already was a "reader," and coached him to "intervene" in how he perceived himself, and was perceived by others, so he could begin to learn how to change the things he didn't like about that perception. She encouraged other teachers to engage in similar dialogue with their students.

Curious about the kinds of discussion prompts that require students to look at identity issues, Bean and Moni (2003) reviewed the studies related to teaching literature and identity construction and demonstrated (through classroom composites) how the theories could be applied to the discussion of a young adult novel. In their model, they used Morgan's (1998) discussion prompt categories to promote critical literacy. In their words, using these prompts changes how we talk about and discuss literature because the new format "shifts the boundaries of discussion between teacher and students, changes relationships, and generates substantive conversations about texts" (p. 648). Given that they are not explicit, the categories provide a framework for developing discussion questions to elicit responses that reflect the identity exploration of the individual. Here is an example of a prompt from each of Bean and Moni's categories:

1. Structural prompts: Where does the novel come from (its historical and cultural origin)?
2. Subject and reader positioning: Who is the ideal reader for this novel?
3. Gaps and Silences: Who gets to speak and have a voice in the novel and who doesn't?
4. Classroom transformations: How might we rewrite this novel to deal with gaps and silences? (Figure 1, p. 645)

As you may conclude from the sparse literature in this section, researchers and practitioners are just beginning the conversation about using book clubs to promote identity exploration in adolescents. Further research is necessary to define book clubs, identify various features of book clubs, and collect data about the ways the features of book clubs motivate middle school and high school girls to explore their identities.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to collect data to address this question: In what ways do the features of after school book clubs contribute to adolescent girls' identity explorations? In this manuscript, I present an overview of the larger study and then focus specifically on one girl who used the book club in a holistic manner to explore her identity as a leader.

Method

I conducted this study with a student from Joy Middle School, a public secondary school in Virginia. Joy Middle School serves students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades and is part of a county school district. In that district, 79 % of the students were Caucasian, 13 % are African American and 8 % are Asian, Hispanic, and Native American. The JMS book club was part of the after school offerings which included the Boys and Girls clubs, YWLP (Young Women's Leadership Program), and other extracurricular clubs. The sessions were held in a classroom inside Joy Middle School.

Participants

The YWLP Directors invited ten girls to be part of the book club at each school. Invitations were extended based on prior participation in the YWLP mentoring program. Because several of the former YWLP members chose not to participate in the book club, I invited other girls who had been recommended by the after-school coordinator. This resulted in one book club member that had not previously participated in the YWLP program as a seventh-grader. The after-school coordinator identified this adolescent girl because she was enrolled in the after-school program, she possessed leadership and academic potential, and she was not receiving support from other mentoring programs.

The eighth-grade group consisted of four girls named Ashanti, Baby Phat, Cierra, and Butterfly (all student-selected pseudonyms). Ashanti was at first glance, shy and self-conscious, but she introduced herself as "pretty" and "talented" with long (black) hair and glasses (Book Club Transcript, 9/20/05). She was the only girl in the study without siblings. In her free time, she enjoyed cheerleading and step dancing at the YMCA. She admitted that she was a slow reader, and she often located the tapes for the books she read "cause if you have big words in there and then if you go buy the tape, maybe you can understand it mo' better" (Ashanti, Interview, 2/09/06).

Data Collection

In this project, transcripts and observations of the book club discussions, organizational meetings, and individual interviews with the book club members were used as data sources for the study. Participant journals, surveys, and the researcher journal were additional sources of data.

Transcriptions of Book Club Discussions and Interviews. The book club discussions and interviews were recorded using a micro-cassette recorder and handwritten field notes. Prior to each book club discussion, I compiled a list of themes and questions. At the beginning of the project, these questions were used to prompt discussion and to provide examples of divergent questions. After the girls began to design their own questions and facilitate the book club discussions without prompting, my questions were only used to augment the girls' questions and themes. The goal was to engage the adolescent girls in informal conversation as much as possible and remove the sense of hierarchy and formality found in school discussions of literature.

To augment the book club discussion data, I interviewed the group members individually to provide an opportunity for the girls to discuss any concerns they might have away from the

other participants and to confirm my perceptions of their comments and behaviors during the project. I took field notes and recorded the sessions with a micro-cassette recorder. A protocol was constructed for the interviews, but it was used solely as a guide (see Appendix A).

Journals. The book club members kept a journal of their questions, comments and suggestions during the book club project. I provided journals for the girls and asked them to write for several minutes prior to each book club discussion. I designated the writing time to provide the girls with an opportunity to express their thoughts in a semi-private manner. The participants were advised that the journals would be collected at the end of the study and that they should be used for notes about the book.

Survey. A survey of the book club members was conducted at the beginning of the project. The book club members were surveyed before the project commenced to provide background information on the girls. I asked the girls to rank their preferred free-time activities, identify a favorite book, select the reading materials they gravitate toward, and list the people who recommend books to them.

Researcher Journal. Throughout the course of the study, I kept a researcher journal to record thoughts about the study, log conversations about the project, and explore questions and feelings associated with the data collection and analysis phases of the project.

Data Analysis

I followed Erickson's (1986) guidelines for data analysis including the critical processes of journaling (examining my assumptions), memoing, reflexivity between data collection and analysis, relating the data to a larger social structure, and constructing assertions.

As I analyzed the girls' identity exploration, I considered Grotevant's Model of Identity Formation (1987), which focuses on the processes by which one constructs and attains an identity. My evidence situated the girls as they "spiraled" (the process is not linear) through the five processes (expectations and beliefs, exploration, investment, competing forces, and interim evaluation) mentioned in the identity exploration phase of this theory.

Drawing on the identity literature, I looked for behaviors that demonstrated the girls' willingness to explore their identities, examples of when they were in the process of this exploration (Grotevant, 1987), and situations when they explored their identity through their relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). These behaviors included leadership and nurturing roles during the book discussions; sharing potential career, academic and personal paths; and reflecting on where they fit in relationship to their families, peers, and society (in addition to facilitation, resistance, connection with characters, and connections with the facilitator and other club members). I also monitored the feature or features of the book club (context) in which the behaviors occurred. Using a separate analytical lens, I attempted to reconstruct the stories behind the girls identity exploration processes (Archer, 1992).

In the course of the data analysis phase, it was advantageous to have descriptors for comments beyond identity coding. In her commentary, "From Engagement to Celebration: A Framework for Passionate Teaching," Thomas (2000) provided such a framework. She says our reading experiences consist of five phases: engagement, exploration, collaboration, and individual celebration.

Engagement, according to Thomas, requires that students connect literature to their lives. *Exploration* calls for students to leave their comfort zone, even if it simply means looking at a new genre of reading. Literature circles (or book clubs in our study) provide a vehicle for

collaboration because "each book we encounter will have a different meaning to each student who reads it." She adds, "Reading is not a passive experience. Readers are making the novel a part of themselves by creating their own version as they read" (p. 21). In the case of her sixth-grade class, *celebration* involved hosting a poetry café to celebrate their reading and writing experience.

Drawing from Thomas's categories of reading experiences and Grotevant's model of identity formation, I created initial codes, reread each of the book club transcripts several times (with days in between readings), and revised the codes when appropriate. At the completion of a fairly stable set of codes, I identified a set of preliminary categories, and began constructing a set of working assertions. From that point, I examined the data with a focus on triangulation of the various data sources, seeking confirming and disconfirming evidence.

Criteria for Trustworthiness. To represent the multiple realities of Ashanti's experience and to establish validity, I used several measures to establish trustworthiness. I triangulated several data sources, including book club transcripts and observations, interviews, a focus group, written documents such as journals, and informal conversations. I demonstrated reflexivity by the use of a journal and informal conversations with my classmates and professors. Peer debriefing with a colleague commenced early in the data analysis process and continued throughout the project with increased attention as I developed working assertions. This experience proved to be a valuable avenue for seeing the data through another lens.

In summary, this methodology allowed me to highlight Ashanti's journey from "member" to "leader." Using analytical induction methods, I reconstructed the identity explorations of the girls in the book clubs and developed assertions about their individual journeys. The following narrative is Ashanti's story.

Findings

Ashanti used the book club experience as a vehicle to explore her book club identity. Over the course of the study, the book club features supported her as she moved through Grotevant's (1987) five processes of identity exploration, and as she expanded her identity to include the notion of "book club leader." This section is the story of how Ashanti engaged in those five processes and became a leader in the eighth-grade book club.

Ashanti's leadership development was difficult to foresee at our first meeting because she did not talk much. Like the other eighth grade girls, she seemed on guard, not wanting to reveal too much about herself. During introductions, she gave her name, stated that her favorite subject was math, and made a point to share with us that she did not have any brothers or sisters. This was a teasing jab aimed at Cierra and Butterfly (who have multiple siblings), and upon hearing that comment, they took the bait and dutifully called Ashanti "spoiled." Letting us in a little more, she declared with pride, "My sport is cheerleading" (book club discussion, 9/20/06).

Ashanti provided additional background information in her survey. In her free time, she enjoyed completing homework, doing volunteer work and listening to music. She read a variety of materials prior to the book club including news magazines, sports publications, novels, non-fiction books, and science magazines, and she estimated her out-of-school reading at about two hours per week. Unlike her peers (who chose young adult novels and historical fiction), Ashanti's favorite books were about popular culture teenage figures such as Mary-Kate and Ashley Olson and Raven Simone. When asked to name the people with whom she discusses books, she declared that if someone else hasn't read the book, "you keep to yourself" (Survey,

9/20/06). Her adherence to this rule may explain why she was initially soft spoken during the book club meetings.

At the second meeting, I still would not have predicted Ashanti's future as a leader. When she spoke, she provided one-word responses such as "Yep," "Evil," and "Nuh, uh" (book club transcript, 9/27/05). In addition, she watched the other three girls for cues, and held back her comments and opinions until she heard from the others.

I soon realized that my opinion of Ashanti was premature and only half right. While it is true Ashanti's number of contributions was far less than the other girls', she used the entire experience of the book club (including the comments from the other members and myself) in her identity exploration. The book club meeting during week number four was noteworthy for Ashanti. On that occasion, she accepted my offer to lead the group, used her journal to communicate how important it was that we selected her, and tried to facilitate the group despite the fact that it was challenging for her to design questions and elicit talk. The following excerpt is a transcript of Ashanti's first attempt:

Anita: Whew! Hit it Ashanti. Give us a question to talk about!
Ashanti: [reads directly from her journal, no eye contact] I like because, she, her name is Wendy, Winter [corrects herself], and she wanted to go out with Chad but he had told her that he already had a girlfriend, and he said he don't date black girls and I think that made him mad because [Winter] could've said well that he had a girlfriend and he couldn't date her. (Book Club Transcript, 10/11/05)

Reading her opinion about the characters did not prompt much discussion from the other girls, and even with my assistance, Ashanti was unable to formulate a question to elicit the other girls' comments. I soon observed, however, that Ashanti did not view the experience as a failure. In fact, she was so preoccupied in her leadership moment, that she did not even realize her facilitation was awkward (Field Notes, 10/11/05). The small steps she had taken left a mark for weeks to come, and changed the way Ashanti thought of herself in the group. As time passed, we saw her carve out an identity for herself as a leader in the book club.

As part of the study, I asked the girls in both book clubs to choose pseudonyms to represent themselves in my work. The girls enjoyed selecting new names for themselves, and the eighth-grade girls even wanted to use them to address each other in conversation. Although the novelty of the pseudonyms wore off after a few meetings, Ashanti maintained her name throughout the entire study. The pseudonyms were important to Ashanti, and they became a way for her to provide leadership. She addressed the other girls with their club names, and gently repeated the nicknames when I mixed them up. Here is an example of the importance of these pseudonyms from our October 18th meeting:

Cierra: You can be nice about it, Ashanti, my new nickname is Coco
Anita: Your new name is Coco, you don't want me to call you Cierra, anymore?
Ashanti: [mocking Cierra] Coco puff!
Anita: Coco?
Baby Phat: I should bring some of those
Anita: [looking through field notes] Let me make sure somebody wasn't Coco in the other group. [turns to Baby Phat] What, um, Butterfly?
Ashanti: [corrects Anita] Baby Phat!
Anita: [to Cierra] I don't think there is a Coco…
Baby Phat: my teacher says [inaudible]

Cierra: Ya'all can call me Coco.

Ashanti: I had a question about the book

Anita: [to Ashanti] write it down for now, [to Cierra] yes, I do have a Coco in the other group, so I can't let you be Coco.

Cierra: [whines] How can somebody be Coco? You have CC?

In this way, she reminded us of our new identities, and used them to build community among us. In fact, she convinced the other girls that even though it was not necessary, I should have a pseudonym for the purposes of the club. So, after innocently describing how I startled an opossum on my morning walk with my dog, I was christened with the unfortunate nickname "Possum" (Field notes, 9/20/05).

Ashanti enjoyed her pseudonym so much that when she began corresponding with me by e-mail, she addressed me as Possum and signed the e-mails as Ashanti. This consistent use of her name in the book club context reflected the depth of her exploration, and confirmed that the book club was a place where she could re-invent herself.

Ashanti's commitment to the book club went beyond herself and her reading. She was also dedicated to the principles of the group and the other book club members. For example, Ashanti was the only girl out of both clubs who reminded us about the confidentiality agreement. In the first meeting, several of the girls took off on a tangent and began talking about their classmates. Gently, she reminded the others, "We won't say names, this is a confidential group." At the end of the study, when she was asked to describe what happened in a typical book club meeting, she listed features and then added, "Oh, and [the members] don't tell anybody what's goin' on in the group"(Ashanti, interview, 2/9/06). Her attention to this item indicated that she needed this agreement to feel safe with the disclosure that was required from the members. Because she did not talk much during the first couple of meetings, it also revealed her apprehension about the terms of participation and whether the other girls would honor this arrangement.

As the eighth grade book club began meeting on a regular basis, Ashanti exposed her struggle with reading. At first, she appeared to be overwhelmed with school obligations, and as a result, she often tried to distract me when I asked her questions and directed probes at her. For example, in the second book club meeting she came in with an avoidance plan. Here was the first exchange:

Anita: So, tell me about "Don't Be Disrespectin' Me."

Ashanti: I don't know, I don't know, but I got to tell you about the other story!

(book club transcript, 10/04/05)

When I reminded the girls that we agreed to talk about a specific story for the meeting, she responded, "I read it, but let me check it out." At that point, I suspected that she hadn't read the story, but I continued the discussion anyway. Later, Ashanti confirmed my suspicions, and checked out of the discussion. When I asked her a direct question, she replied, "I don't know 'cause I'm not done with it."

She also wrote her excuses in her journal throughout the study. In this one, she writes:
I was so busy so I didn't get read it because I had like homework to do that why I did[n't] get to read and but I think it going and good book. Also, I want to see the movie after we finished reading it. (Ashanti, journal 11/01/05)

My suspicions about her reading ability were confirmed when Ashanti told me that she had ordered the third book on tape, and that is why she was behind in the reading. I asked if she had used that strategy before and she acknowledged that she also had the tape for the *Sisterhood*

of the Traveling Pants (Brasheres, 2001). When I probed even further, I discovered that she had also looked for the audiotapes of books for school. I was surprised to learn how adept she was at managing this coping strategy (Social Time Notes, 11/29/05).

Ultimately, Ashanti's participation in the book club fueled her will to continue despite her reading difficulties. In fact, she demonstrated her resolve and solidified her initial investment in the club through a feature that emerged at the end of the study—e-mail correspondence. Over a six-week hiatus (winter break), I wanted to continue to keep the book club on the minds of the members and set up times to complete formal interviews with the girls. In the ninth-grade group, I sent postcards and holiday greetings. In the eighth-grade group, I remembered the girls had also supplied their e-mail addresses, so I augmented the other greetings with a short note over the internet.

Two of the four girls answered those first e-mails with short perfunctory responses such as Baby Phat's first note, "i don't go to boys and girls club so can u email me back and tell me what a better time for u to interview me" (E-mail, 12/14/05). In the case of Ashanti, though, it was quite the opposite. She not only answered the e-mails, she sent longer, additional messages to me without prompting. In her first response, she says:

> hey possum
> hey what up i going to boys club today and might tomorrw and they not going to have boys girls on thursday because no school and winter break i might be hear wednesday if they have boys girls and how about tommorw e-mail me back today i will see ok well i have to go talk to you later bye have a great day
> you welcome about the christmas card bye
> holla back soon
>   as possible bye (E-mail, 12/19/05)

As soon as I read it, I thought about what researcher Margaret Finders (1997) learned in her study of two groups of adolescent girls, the Tough Cookies and the Social Queens, in *Just Girls: Hidden Literacies in Life and Junior High*. Specifically, she mentions how there are standards for note writing that are socially acceptable in a circle of teens. Furthermore, Finders points out that notes were only passed among social equals, and her informants were careful to include a common greeting, passages about social arrangements, and a common closing. In fact, this format acted almost like a secret password for the girls to gain entrance into the conversation.

In the case of Ashanti and I, five significant things occurred in the correspondence. First, Ashanti invited me into her circle by responding at length to my message. Second, she included all of the elements (mentioned by Finders) in her note to me—in essence, giving me access to the conversation. Third, she began to pick up on and mirror phrases that I used in my notes such as "good to hear from you" (E-mail 12/19/05). Next, she began to record her leadership initiatives, and document her sense of responsibility to me. In an e-mail on January 24, 2006, she writes:

> Hey possun
> whats up i can't to start book club up to next today will be great i will tell the members of the group to that you start it up again . i am sorry that know show that day of the pizza, movie , shirts, that was lots of stuff they miss out . i wish my densit appoiment won'nt on that day but i will have come to it i was really sorry that happed .
> also i will let you know if i have densit appoiment on tuesday but i will be there next tuesday well i have to go talk to you later
> bye

holla

Ashanti (E-mail, 1/24/06)

Finally, she began to acknowledge me as an individual not just as the book club facilitator. In one message, I told her that I had a job interview and was flying out of town. In the following e-mail she continued the previous themes of leadership and sense of responsibility to me, and wished me good luck on my job interview (an activity that defined me as separate from the book club):

hey

ok that fun i can wait too you in interview me . are going to still be reading sisterof the taveling pants . and how did your interview go about a job i hope you did a great job at your interview. and i will tell [Baby Phat] that you will interview her first on thursday . and where do i meet you at in the same room that we meet at . and if you finsh when [Baby Phat] interview i will be in libary ok i will check this again tommorw well i have to talk to you later.

can wait unitil thursday

ps i will see [Baby Phat] stay after school on thursday if i don'nt get back to you tommorw i will check it on thursday morning .

holla at [Ashanti] aka ashanti

to Anita aka possum (E-mail 2/2/06)

The above emails indicate that Ashanti's identity had become intertwined with her membership in the book club, and she used the e-mails to continue her identity exploration carried by the momentum of the investment process. Specifically, she put time and energy into her book club correspondence, she received a return on her investment—more attention and response, and that motivated her to continue to invest more time and energy in the book club.

At the end of the study, I interviewed Ashanti about her participation in the book club. In that conversation, she told me about her progress in the book club, and expressed that the book club experience had been a satisfying one for her. In the first excerpt, we conversed about her favorite feature of the club.

Anita: Which feature helps to bring out the real Ashanti?
Ashanti: The reading books
Anita: How so?
Ashanti: Cause I like reading now.
Anita: And you think that is part of the real you now?
Ashanti: Mmmm Hmmm

(Ashanti, Interview, 2/9/06)

Although Ashanti did not understand the concept of the features, she could readily identify the personal benefit she had gained from participating in the club. In these comments, she implies that, for her, reading became a more pleasurable pursuit than when we started and she had incorporated that into her identity.

Later in the interview, I asked Ashanti if she had any advice for me, and she replied:

Good Luck, and I wish I could be in the book club next year, but I can't cause this is my last year. And good luck with your new girls, and hopefully they'll be good during book club cause I think it's kind of fun. (Ashanti, Interview, 2/9/06)

Ashanti looked back on the experience wistfully. She expanded her notion of the book club experience, but not enough to see additional possibilities for participation beyond the eighth grade.

Despite the absence of the book club in her future plans, Ashanti continued to hold the eighth-grade book club together until the end of the program (April 25, 2006). In fact, there were two sessions when the other girls were absent, so Ashanti and I used the time to focus on building her independent reading skills. In April, right before the end of the book club program, she revisited her thoughts on book club one final time. In an e-mail to me, she reinforced her previous sentiments. She writes, "I am going to miss book club that was fun to learn about differt books" (E-mail, 4/07/06).

Discussion

Previous research on book clubs has often highlighted participants from homogeneous groups (e.g., Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999), frequently during classroom instruction (e.g., Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Boyd, 1997). In our book clubs, there was ethnic and SES variation among the eighth-grade girls, and the ninth grade club was held on the weekend at a non-school site. Other researchers have investigated grade-level readers (Galda & Beach, 2001), and voluntary samples (Broughton, 2002). In this study, Ashanti was also a volunteer who had been labeled "at risk" by her school due to a limited reading vocabulary and a slow fluency rate. Given that Ashanti began with and continued to have these obstacles, her initial interest and sustained enthusiasm for the book club was remarkable.

Regardless of her at-risk status, the book club offered a place where she felt she belonged and where the others valued her contributions. From the beginning, the book club members rejected a hierarchy based on reading skill. Instead, they considered each other as equals within the group. In a similar light, Alvermann (2002) found that reinforcing an at-risk reader's status as "reader" created opportunities for him to change his perception of himself and the perceptions of others with respect to his reading ability. The girls in the book club were providing that kind of reinforcement for each other by promoting participation from everyone.

I observed the same phenomenon as Broughton (2002) in relation to how the girls interacted with texts. After reflecting on the lives of the characters, and the experiences of real life people, the girls often saw themselves in a different way. When Ashanti realized that she was a leader in the eighth-grade group, her response was to use the book club to try out that new role. Ashanti demonstrated curiosity, discipline, leadership, commitment, and dedication to the group, and eventually, she incorporated "book club member" and all the identities that go with it (i.e., *reader, writer, leader*) into her notions of herself.

Implications

This study points to the potential of voluntary book clubs to support adolescents as they explore identities related to reading and writing. Unfortunately, oftentimes schools have failed to place a high priority on reading, writing, and learning for pleasure. According to Cunningham (2006)**,** there are a number of experiences we can provide students to aid their literacy development. "One of those experiences is the opportunity to increase their exposure to print and thus promote the cognitive consequences of literacy (e.g. growth in vocabulary and general knowledge) that in turn facilitate reading comprehension and ability." Placing this goal at the heart of a language arts curriculum might change classroom offerings to include activities like book clubs and ultimately change the way young people approach their required learning. As an alternative to book clubs in the curriculum, however, schools may include book clubs as part of their after school offerings. In either setting, it is important to remember that there is not one

prescription for creating a successful book club. The book clubs in this study met the need of the girls because they were involved in creating the rituals and features of the club, and we allowed the clubs to evolve without preconceived notions of where this journey would take us.

This case study is limited to what could be accomplished in a six-month study. It would be interesting to conduct longitudinal studies of students who participate in book clubs over the course of their adolescence (middle school and high school) to determine how that participation influences their motivation in required learning tasks, overall literacy, and the depth of their identity exploration. Studying book clubs of different ethnic and cultural compositions would enhance our understanding of how they work among diverse student populations. Researchers could investigate books, social rituals within the book club, and extension activities in order to provide additional insights for classroom teachers and after-school program coordinators. Finally, future studies can highlight the adult participant or facilitator. Learning about the important aspects of this role would facilitate the successful replication of the book clubs.

Final Thoughts

The success of the YWL Reads book clubs in this study offers hope for teachers and after school coordinators who are looking for approaches that engage urban adolescent girls in reading and support their identity explorations. Although girls of this age often overlook books in favor of other technology and entertainment, the social benefit of sharing books is a powerful enticement for these girls and many of their peers.

Ashanti wanted to be part of a group. She already enjoyed reading, and could see the value in such a club. She was an enthusiastic participant in the interview when I asked her to give advice and share her opinions. With some modeling from myself and the other adults, she was ready to take on the responsibilities of a book club member, and later, a leader. The book club was a good fit for where she was in her life, and an appropriate venue in which to explore who she could become.

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Appendix A
Individual Girl's Interview

Background

- Describe yourself
- How would your best friend describe you?
- How would someone you've just met describe you?
- Describe yourself as a reader and learner.
    - Picture yourself in a big, comfy chair. You're about to sit down and read something. What is it? How do you read it (speed, thoroughness)? What do you look like while your reading (do you show any emotion, read out loud)? Now picture yourself learning something new. Where are you? What is the reason for your learning? Are you enjoying it? Why?
- How has your reading changed since the book club started?

Identity

- In the book club, we have various spaces. Some people might consider them to be the social time, journal time, discussion time. Which part do you like the best? Why?
- Which feature helps to bring out the real you?
- Is there any other activity or space that we might add to book club to help bring out the real you (ex. Drama, kinesthetic expression, art)?
- How would the book club be different if we didn't have an adult leader? If it was just girls, organized by girls? Different girls in the group? Girls from your classes who you didn't know very well? Non YWLP girls?
- How would the club be different if I were the same race as your big sisters from the YWLP?
- How would it be different if we had boys in the club (the topics, level of comfort, activities)?
- How would it be different if the setting were changed? Where would we hold the meetings?

How the book club works

- Pretend that I am someone who doesn't know about the book club. How would you describe book club meeting to them?
- How should I decide on girls to be in the book club?
- Describe something about the book club that motivated you or encouraged you to read?
- What are the topics (not stories) that interested you?
- Of the stories we read, which was your favorite? Why?
- What are some of the reasons you would recommend this book?
- What are some of the reasons you disliked it?
- Who did you discuss the book with outside of book club?
- If we were going to continue, what kind of books would you pick? What kind of books do you think your classmates would like to read in a book group?

- Was there anything we read that made you think differently about your self or your life? About your plans for the future? About a decision you made or are in the process of making? If so, how?
- How should we go about choosing things to read for the meetings?

Studying Book Groups

- What do you think I could learn from studying girls in a book club for a whole semester?
- Do you have any advice for me?

Confronting the Trauma-Sensitive Writing of Students

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Without question, we have students in our schools who have been the victims of trauma. This article describes the ramifications of exposure to trauma and examines how it can manifest itself in students' writing from an early age on through college. It discusses the supportive role that literacy educators can play when exposed to students' trauma-sensitive writing. Specific writing samples from traumatized students are included to exemplify that the actual literate act of reading and writing may hold the key to helping students process any trauma that they have experienced. In particular, this paper addresses what literacy educators can do to support victims of trauma in two ways: (a) through describing an in-depth case study of one student over the course of 20 years; and (b) through describing a class of college freshmen who revealed examples of trauma in their writing.

Some people believe that without history our lives amount to nothing. Our history is what shapes us and guides us, and it resurfaces time after time. But what happens if that history includes a traumatic event? Trauma touches many people who experience it directly or who witness the experiences of others. Perhaps only a select few have been lucky enough to escape any exposure to trauma during their lifetimes. As trauma carries no boundaries, it is especially daunting for those who are least equipped to deal with it: the children in our schools. Equally daunting is the lack of training given to teachers who work with students who have been exposed to a variety of traumatic circumstances. Too numerous to list in entirety, these circumstances can include abject poverty; health issues; the death of a significant family member; ongoing substance, physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse; natural disasters; and/or family members sent to war (Wolpow & Askov, 1998). While these circumstances may have few lasting adverse effects on those who experience them, some cause trauma that, if left untreated, can potentially harm students (Perry, 2000). This article discusses the role literacy educators can play in supporting students who have been exposed to trauma.

Defining Victimization

According to Steele (2002), there are four possible ways to be exposed to trauma: first, as a surviving victim; second, as a witness to a trauma-inducing incident; third, being related to the victim; and fourth, verbal exposure to the details of a traumatic experience (Figley, 1995).

Regardless of the type of exposure, trauma is experienced as a sensory experience and can lead to difficulties in processing verbal information, following directions, and recalling information (Saigh & Bremmer, 1999; Steele, 2002). Those exposed to trauma may also develop a low self-esteem and sense of hopelessness (Yang & Clum, 2000). Yang and Clum (2000) suggested that trauma in the early years of life strongly influences cognitive development, especially when people repeatedly experience trauma through multiple incidents (Terr, 1990). Regardless of the trauma diagnosis, research has confirmed that "trauma can significantly interfere with a child's ability to learn, interact socially, problem solve, and function as a healthy, normal child or adolescent" (Eth, 1986, as cited in Jacobs, 2003, p. 3; see also Deblinger, Lipman & Steer, 1996).

The practical effects of exposure to trauma are notoriously difficult to predict. Each year in the United States over 2 million children are traumatized by physical or sexual abuse or by exposure to domestic or community violence (Steele, 2002). Many of these children's parents may be unavailable. Their abuse often leads to anger, acting out, breaking the law and/or other mechanisms (Alexander, 1999). Untreated exposure to trauma can lead to attention problems, drug and alcohol dependency, increased risk of dropping out of school, recurring physical and mental health problems, difficulty maintaining adult or peer relationships, and repeated delinquent behavior leading to adult criminal behavior (van Dalen, 2001). It is not surprising then, that schools are the logical witnesses of the pain of their students. Although it is not the legal responsibility of teachers to deal with that pain, they can help by showing acceptance, attention, loyalty, and support while adding a stabilizing factor for children who have been traumatized.

Evidence in the Classroom

It is not uncommon for teachers to frequently observe students who struggle academically, but they may not be aware that the students have been traumatized. Often victimization is played out with identifiable negative school behaviors that easily can be misunderstood. Evidence of trauma often takes an all too familiar route as students play out low academic performance, behavioral problems, and inept social skills (Kellner, 2007; Pynoos, Steinberg, & GoenjIan, 1996; Spinazzola et al., 2005). Within the classroom, traumatized students may find it difficult to respond appropriately when educators try to incorporate the integration of home and school in their literacy lessons. For students who have been victimized, this integration is not always fluid, and they may not connect with their teachers or the lesson at hand. As teachers become more adept at acknowledging the lack of fluidity, they can begin to recognize that there may be non-academic causes to explain students' lack of connections with others and with the content.

Sometimes teachers may stumble inadvertently upon an incidence of trauma as students reveal their victimization in their writing. When this happens, it is best to offer support to the student and refer the student to psychological services for additional help. However, because of the unnerving number of trauma cases today, teachers, too, need to support each other as they remain committed to teaching literacy (Wolpow & Askov, 1998). Literacy educators are especially vulnerable and can be exposed to sensory trauma just by hearing others' verbal stories (Figley, 1995; Mitchell & Everl, 1996). The very nature of teaching reading and writing often lends itself to a wide range of topics and discourses. Compounding this fact, educators

themselves may face some of these same issues and there becomes an additional need to examine ways that we might support one another.

Using Literacy Skills for Self Healing: Case One

For some individuals, the experience of trauma is so great that it overrides all other aspects of performance until it can be understood. Long and short-term intervention becomes a necessary tool to restore the sense of safety and power that is lost as well as to restore any cognitive, memory, or behavioral functions (Steele, 2002). When many students do not receive the help they need, they are left to deal with the effects of the trauma incident(s) on their own. Their own literacy skills, the actual act of reading and writing, may hold the key to understanding what has happened to them and may help them become self-motivated to write about the experience in the form of journaling.

One such case, a qualitative, longitudinal case study of one woman's life history, allowed an opportunity for a close analysis of journal entries and revealed the victim's own perspective of trauma (Kellner, 2007). This study examined the past experiences of one academically at-risk college freshman, based on pre-college academic records and experiences, to explore why academic success is so easy for some and so difficult for others. The subject of this study was a twenty-two year old American born Mexican American who volunteered to participate in this study after an open invitation was made to one college freshman class at a Midwestern university. She was the first to graduate from high school on her maternal side where the effects of alcoholism were documented. She attempted college, located two hours away from family, but found the obstacles too great and moved back home. Data sources included field notes taken during all interviews, audio and video taped interviews, personal handwritten journals, voice recorded journals, photographs and other artifacts from her lifetime of experiences.

This individual's narrative revealed more than any one person should have to experience. Her trauma included physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, impoverishment, violence, repetitive moving, the divorce of her parents, and witnessing alcohol and drug abuse. This victimization began to reveal itself to teachers as early as first grade when this child used journaling to expose her faltering self esteem and worries.
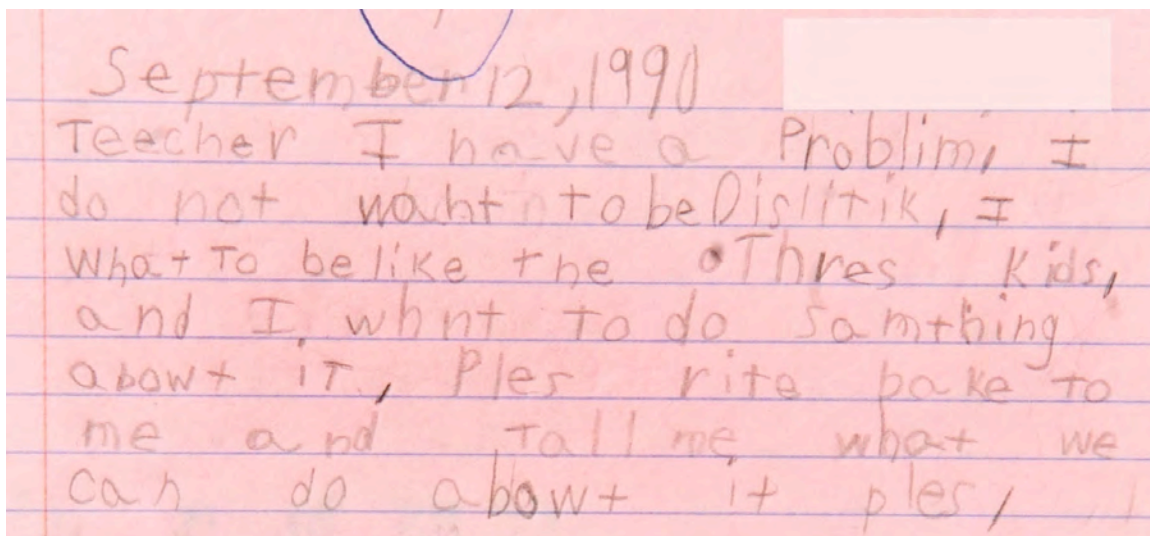

Figure 1: *First grade journal entry.*

Most likely, her classroom teacher was unaware of her exposure to trauma as there was no specific reference to it in her journal entry. She merely was expressing her need to be liked by someone and showed only self-doubt. Her teacher responded in writing: "You are a beautiful girl. Just be yourself and you will be liked." Nonetheless, her writing was evidence of self-doubt and a clue was provided to the teacher to remain vigilant regarding this child's future needs. The teacher's response showed that she was supportive and caring when the child continued to express her worries in other entries.

When her chaotic home life continued to inflict victimization, she chose the familiar practiced route of journaling that she learned in her early schooling years. She continued to document her concerns and by the time she reached middle school, her writing became trauma-specific and graphic as she detailed victimization in the form of sexual abuse.
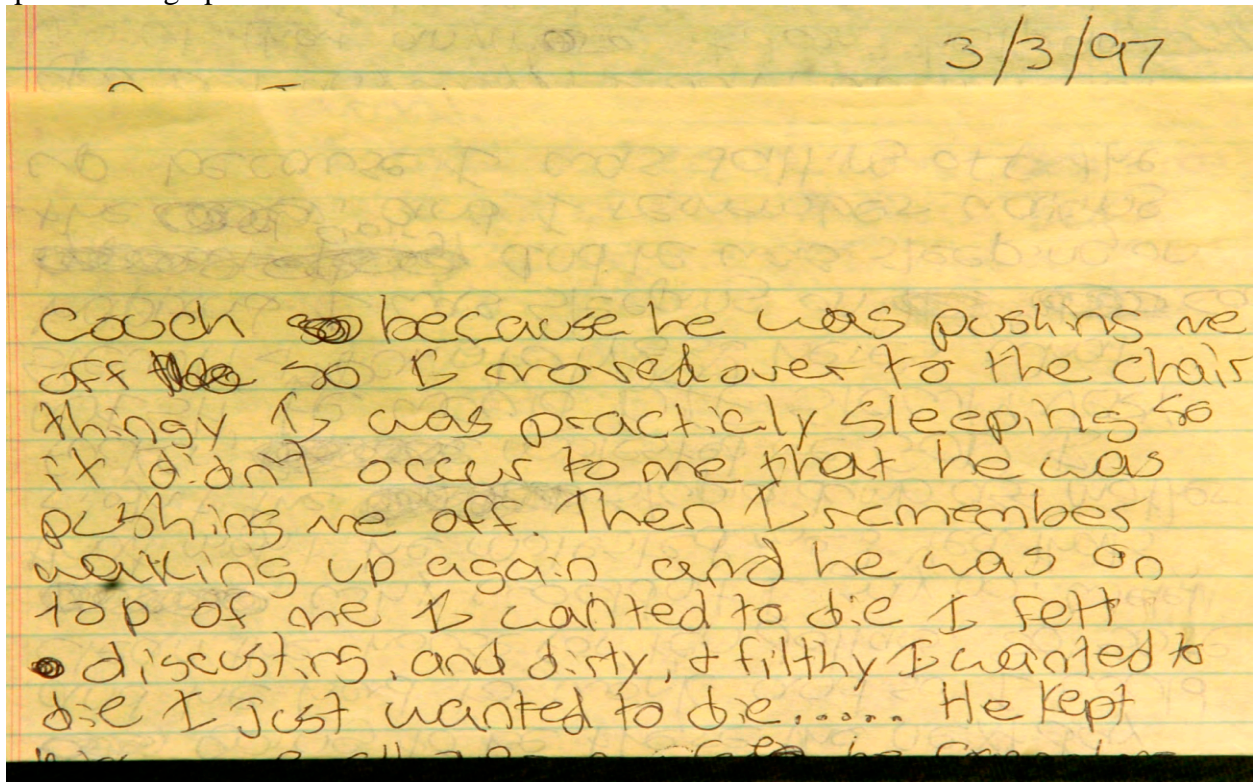

Figure 2: M*iddle school journal entry.*

At this age, the act of journaling was intense almost to the point of becoming obsessive. Her journal had become her friend and, as she put it, the only one she had to talk to. She wrote in it for hours at a time, frequently late at night, pouring out her private thoughts, while warning others who may be curious not to read it.
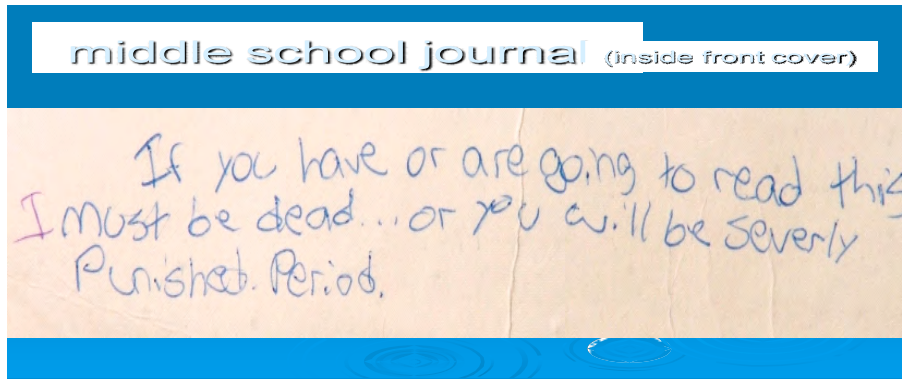
Figure 3: *Inside cover of middle school journal.*

As she continued this form of expression, the ramifications of her ongoing victimization revealed the same self doubt she exhibited in first grade. She reported that this uncertainty gnawed at her through the years and she felt disappointed in herself as she struggled to deal with the life she was living as she questioned her actions and the people in her troubling world.
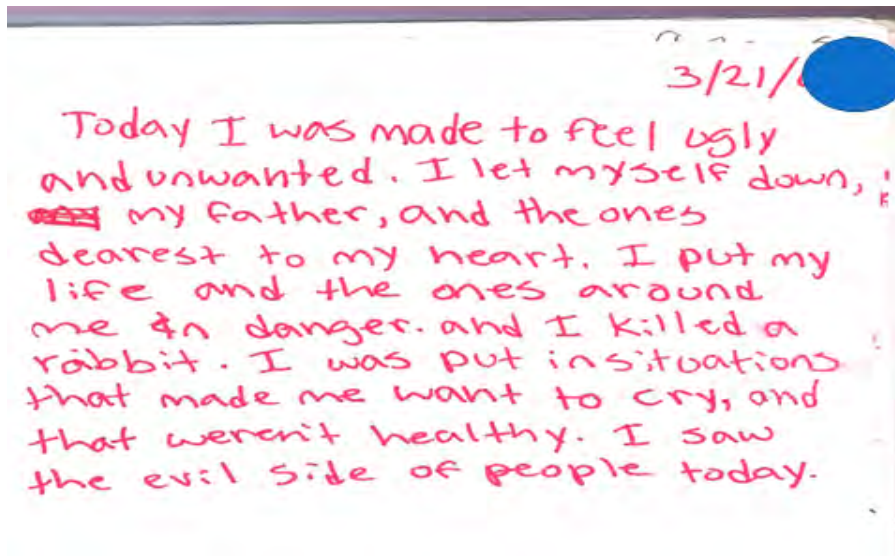

Figure 4: *High school journal entry.*

In high school, her writing became particularly poignant. She wanted other people to know her feelings and she considered running away. Ironically, she was able to recognize her own cynicism and need to think more positively about people. Here, it is important to note the emotion in these pieces because, for the traumatized individual, it appears that the literate act is frequently displayed as a feeling rather than a thing (le Doux, Romanski, & Xagorians, 1991).
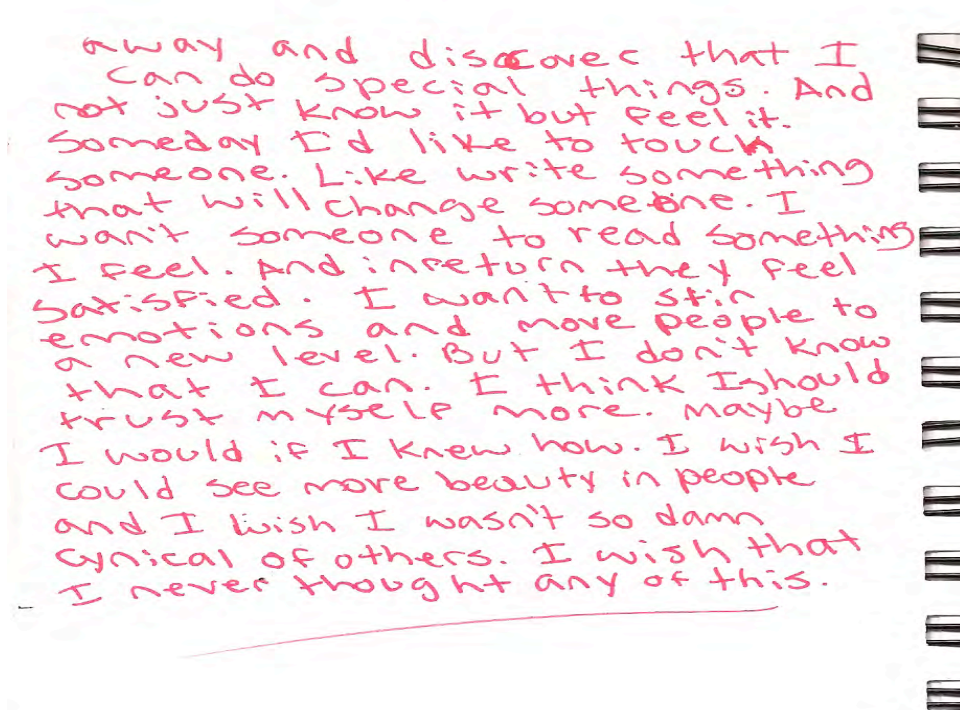
away and discover that I can do special things. And not just know it but feel it. Someday I'd like to touch someone. Like write something that will change someone. I want someone to read something I feel. And in return they feel satisfied. I want to stir emotions and move people to a new level. But I don't know that I can. I think I should trust myself more. Maybe I would if I knew how. I wish I could see more beauty in people and I wish I wasn't so damn cynical of others. I wish that I never thought any of this.

Figure 5. *High school journal entry.*

Spoken and Unspoken Issues in the College Classroom: Case Two

The following discussion is based on research taken from a class of college developmental freshman (underprepared readers and writers based on college admission standards) at a large Midwestern university. The fragility of some of these students who may have suffered some form of victimization becomes obvious as many choose to reveal their lives within the academic setting. It is not uncommon for freshmen to surreptitiously weave bits and pieces of their traumatic experiences into the classroom through their spoken and written words. When given an anonymous survey, their honest responses, laden with hurt, exposed their difficult experiences.

When asked the open ended question, "If I could change one thing in my life it would be," they responded: *to put my parents back together; not losing my mom; to bring back my best friend; to not care what people think of me; to go back to first grade and change everything.* When asked the open ended question, "The most difficult thing I have had to do," they responded: p*ut my dog to sleep; go to school with a baby; Grampa's funeral; live holy; tell mom I got into an accident; quit drinking; deal with mom's cancer; graduate.*

These particular students took advantage of an anonymous format to reveal parts of their histories, but some students feel comfortable using their identified voice to let their teacher know what experiences they have endured. The following are brief segments from academic assignments wherein various students chose to write about their issues in a poignant and telling way even though the writing prompt was very generic. These trauma-related issues were woven into various assignments and are all parts of larger pieces.

> Before I entered high school, I was depressed, suicidal, and saw no hopeful future for my life. Because I was sexually abused for more than half my life, I did not believe in myself or my future.
>
> As a child growing up, life was different for me than for many people. I had no fatherly figure and my mother was always at work. At home I was all alone and I had no one to talk to, so I stayed to myself and kept my head in the books. School was an outlet from home, reading was an outlet from life and writing poetry was an outlet for my feelings.
>
> On August 6, 2006 my best friend was shot and killed by her ex-boyfriend. This was the hardest thing I've ever had to deal with.
>
> I always said my prayers before I went to bed. I never went a night without saying them, "Dear God, thank you for today. I knew a new start was the best thing for me. You put me around new people, a new place, and I just feel new. I pray for an even better day tomorrow. And I pray for my dad. Amen." I never knew that during such a good day the worst that could happen would actually happen. I never knew that the thing that would hurt me my whole life would happen.

This last student, in her narrative assignment, continued on to detail a sexual assault that occurred during the middle of the night after saying her prayers.

For college teachers, it may be difficult to know how to respond to such writing in a supportive, caring way, particularly when this type of discourse is often not acknowledged in the college classroom. For students, it is perhaps the first time such an experience has been revealed. Even though some students may not have sought professional help, they instead used their own writing to begin to either make sense of what had happened to them or to let someone else know about their experiences. In these instances, it becomes critical that their voice is heard and their feelings validated. Moreover, students themselves may begin to see the value of writing journals, such as the student who reported:

> The experience within writing these journals helped me increase my writing skills and overall experience. Writing these journals made me actually want to start writing down my own daily thoughts in a journal each night; especially when I'm thinking about my mom. This whole experience while being stressful at times ended up being a positive motivation builder and a way to maybe express my feelings on paper in the future; something I have never even thought of before.

Trauma-Specific Reading and Writing

In both K-12 and college settings, some of this writing is assignment-driven and some is not, yet all reveal the authors' intent to let their story be told. When their story is told, it may encourage healing to begin. For the victim, healing can also begin when understanding someone else's trauma. Dailey (2006) described the healing that can take place from reading about the struggles of others. Students may find a connection in memoirs or pieces of fiction where they

can relate to the struggle to survive. They can also find strength, particularly if the experience proves surmountable.

Whether it be reading or writing, one thing is certain: Trauma can drive students writing. It is through the examination of one's writing that the chosen ordinary symbols in language and in occurrences are anything but ordinary. In truth, they are intimate symbols chronicling a life where certain places, certain people, certain behaviors, or certain things have meanings that only the individual knows. It is here then that literacy becomes a feeling rather than a thing. Without a feeling, it is merely a behavior that is acted out. When teachers closely observe what students are reading and writing about, they have many opportunities to be privy to these intimate symbols and unlock their mysteries. When teachers watch the unfolding of their students' lives, both teachers and students may experience a greater sense of equity. For students, it is perhaps the one opportunity to open up their souls and let someone know their innermost thoughts and feelings. For teachers, it can be a moving moment to witness these intimacies.

Teachers play a most significant role in supporting students who struggle with experiences related to their histories. Without a proper background in counseling and psychology, teachers may not know what to do or how to do it when faced with a traumatized student. Nonetheless, teachers who are empathetic have a healing power, and that empathy becomes a powerful tool as students are allowed to read and write about these difficulties (Wolpow & Askov, 1998). For teachers, the worrying questions are whether the victimization will ever stop, and whether they are equipped to deal with traumatized students (Figley, 1995). Neither question can easily be answered but one thing is certain: Teachers can and should work to recognize first, that the likelihood of exposure to trauma is high; second, that some students need to be allowed to read and write about their traumatic experiences; third, that if and when students indicate they have been traumatized, they are heard and referred to a competent professional to be validated; and lastly, that collaboration with other teachers is critical. Perhaps another student said it best in the epilogue of her 24-page autobiography:

> I feel that my life may be a reflection of my mom's life. It's like everything that happened to her while she was growing up it's happening to me. For example, my mom's father passed away when she was a year old. My father passed away about four months before I was born. My mother was raped when she was younger. She never told anyone until she was about twenty-seven. I was molested and never told anyone until today. It's like a cycle that's goin on in my family. If I don't break it and speak out then my children may be raped and/or molested; and their children may be raped and/or molested. Speaking out was not the easiest thing to do. But sometimes, the most difficult thing you have to do can make a life's difference.

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Preservice English Teachers and Special Educators: Opportunities and Barriers to Collaboration

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The purpose of this case study was to explore and describe the opportunities and challenges that student teachers and their cooperating teachers faced as they attempted to collaborate and co-teach. In traditional classroom designs, the knowledge and skills of special educators who are co-teaching in general education classrooms tend to be underutilized. Prospective general education and special education teachers were placed with co-teaching cooperating teachers to determine if they could effectively collaborate. Investigators used interviews, focus groups, and direct observation to assess collaborative skills. Categories and subcategories were determined and results indicated that the general educators tended to focus on content rather than students, and the special educators needed to negotiate their roles in a context where they lacked parity. The results suggested that simply placing teachers in the same room did not lead to effective co-teaching. As a result of this study, investigators concluded that the special education and general education programs required increased integration to prepare teachers to meet the diverse needs of students in today's classrooms.

In this article, we describe a case study in which two student teachers and their cooperating teachers attempted to co-teach in a high school English classroom. We also examine the implications of this case study for our teacher education programs and the promise of co-teaching to bring about change and greater integration.

Co-Teaching

While we eventually implemented co-teaching in the university classroom as a result of our collaborative work together, this article describes our antecedent secondary classroom experiences where preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers worked together. Murawski

and Dieker (2004) suggested that the use of co-teaching models can facilitate the requirement that secondary students with disabilities meet the same academic standards as their peers. Hines (2008) cited the importance of these successful co-teaching relationships in terms of student achievement. Yet, as Friend (2008) made clear in the title of a recent article, co-teaching is "a simple solution that isn't simple after all."

Although many approaches to co-teaching have been developed, they all involve jointly delivered substantive instruction to a diverse group of students in a single physical space (Cook & Friend, 1995; Walsh & Jones, 2004). Friend (2005) described a range of co-teaching arrangements, including *one teach, one observe; one teach, one assist* (i.e., one teacher takes the lead and the other observes and assists students); *station teaching* (i.e., the teachers divide the content and each is responsible for teaching a given part); *parallel teaching* (i.e., teachers plan jointly but each delivers instruction to only a portion of the class); *alternative teaching* (i.e., one teacher instructs the main group of students and the other works with small groups); and *team teaching* (i.e., teachers share instruction of students rather equally). Competence in using each of the models is important to support reciprocal partnerships and the needs of the students in the classroom (Dieker & Little, 2005).

Significant barriers need to be addressed when considering co-teaching arrangements. Time for common planning and training opportunities is described as one of the largest barriers to co-teaching (Gerber & Popp, 2000). Walsh and Jones (2004) asserted that other key components of effective co-teaching practices include a need for parity, classrooms that have heterogeneous groups of students, the use of a variety of instructional models, and assigned planning time. Evaluating 32 qualitative investigations of co-teaching in a meta-synthesis of the qualitative research, Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007) identified four themes of the literature that included benefits of co-teaching, expressed needs of co-teachers, roles of co-teachers, and delivery of instruction. Preparing for such shifts in preparation requires commitment and ownership of the process.

At the secondary level, inadequate implementation of co-teaching strategies have reduced the effectiveness of co-teaching and resulted in intervention specialists becoming instructional aides rather than instructional partners (Harbort, et al., 2007; Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2004; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Several researchers have substantiated the need for equity in teaching roles for effective co-teaching (Dieker, 2001; Friend & Cook, 2003; Rice & Zigmond, 2000; Wallace, Anderson, & Bartholomay, 2002). Murawski and Dieker (2004) contended that one of the major benefits of co-teaching is that teachers bring different areas of expertise. These diverse skills are helpful during the planning stage, as both educators can find ways to use their strengths to ensure that the lesson is appropriately differentiated for a heterogeneous class (p. 55).

In spite of a paucity of published research about the effects of co-teaching on student outcomes (Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Zigmond & Magiera, 2001), teachers continue to utilize it as a promising practice. Kloo and Zigmond (2008) noted several studies that illustrate gains for students at risk and students with identified disabilities, including improvement in reading comprehension, social competency, peer acceptance, and higher grades than students in pull-out programs (cf. Murawski & Swanson, 2001; Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, & Hughes, 1998; Zigmond, 2003). This available research suggests that co-teaching can act as a means to access to the general curriculum for students with diverse educational needs. Unfortunately, because of the discrete programs – academic silos – that exist in many teacher preparation programs, teachers in training have few opportunities to gain critical experience with collaboration in cross-disciplinary settings. If co-teaching is to have a place in the classroom, then teacher preparation

programs must begin to model and explicitly teach new teachers these skills and knowledge. In addition, cooperating teachers in the field will need professional development in order to adequately support and mentor new teachers entering the profession.

Discrete to Integrated Programs

To gain understanding about our university's teacher preparation programs' level of collaboration, we examined Blanton and Pugach's (2007) typology of dominant models. The authors assert that teacher preparation programs fall along a continuum with three general categories: discrete, integrated, and merged. *Discrete* programs refer to teacher education programs with little if any collaboration among faculty who prepare general and special education teachers. *Integrated* programs reveal intentional and coordinated program-level efforts to accomplish a significant degree of curricular overlap. *Merged* programs prepare general and special educators in a single curriculum, with a complete integration of courses and field experiences designed to address the needs of all students, including those identified with disabilities. The teacher preparation programs at our institution were in the discrete category, and faculty members in both the special education program and in the secondary education programs wanted and needed more collaboration.

There are multiple justifications for increasing collaboration among teacher education programs. Blanton and Pugach (2007) asserted that since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) in 1975 (first enacted as Public Law 94-142), there has been a growing expectation that students with identified disabilities can and will learn through the general education curriculum and classroom. They also reported a new urgency because our nation's schools continue to show significant achievement gaps among groups of children. The implication is that classrooms must be designed from the outset to be universally accessible for a wide range of students. Similarly, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), currently undergoing reauthorization as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), requires that teachers be highly qualified, thus raising the bar for teachers to gain the knowledge and skills to serve a broad range of students.

Our programs exhibited a lack of integration that we experienced as a silo effect (Beedle, 2001). Our knowledge bases, language, journals, professional conferences, lesson plans, field experiences, methods courses, observation devices, processes for selecting mentors, assessments, and portfolios were separate and isolated from one another. The teacher education programs at our institution lacked the collaboration required to successfully prepare our candidates for the moral imperative to teach all students. Middle childhood education, secondary education, and special education programs prepared general and special educators independently, with general education students having received a single course related to teaching diverse learners, and special educators rarely collaborating with their general education colleagues. Furthermore, Kluth and Straut (2003; cf. Barharach, Heck & Dahlberg, 2008) have argued for modeling of co-teaching at the university level where preservice teachers are trained. The implications of these studies suggest the importance of modeling collaborative teaching in the university setting.

This discrete program structure represented a point of departure. New models of collaboration, co-teaching, and mentoring, we reasoned, would be the flashpoint of a new effort to increase our own collaborative skills and knowledge about co-teaching and differentiated instruction, and simultaneously provide support for preservice teachers as they began student teaching in K-12 classrooms. We describe our initial efforts to support this emerging approach to

teacher preparation at our institution and in the field placements we used for teacher training. Transformational reflection and action is in order to make progress towards integration in all the major tasks of the profession, especially when preparing new teachers for co-teaching experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Sailor & Skrtic, 1996; Skrtic, Harris, & Shriner, 2005). The purpose of this case study was to explore and describe the opportunities and challenges that student teachers and their cooperating teachers faced as they attempted to collaborate and co-teach.

Methodology

Context of the Study

The research took place at Central High School (a pseudonym), a large suburban high school, and at a staff development center operated by a not-for-profit private school for students with language-based learning problems. Local school levies fund Ohio public schools. Although one of the largest public school districts in the state, the Central Local School District taxpayers have not consistently supported their local schools by passing levies. This lack of funding hit Central High School particularly hard during the summer prior to the study. With the lowest starting salary in the county, of the 129 faculty members in the school that academic year, 43 were new to the building. Many of the resignations that necessitated these new hires took place during the summer prior to the start of the new school year.

The researchers, with the support of the high school administrator, placed two special education student teachers, Rita and Julie, and two English student teachers, Kevin and Jessie, with two existing special education teachers, Freda and Emily, who were co-teaching with two English cooperating teachers, Clara and Dana, respectively (all names are pseudonyms). Both teaching teams were using a scripted reading program in ninth grade classrooms, one with the complement of computers, software, and a leveled library of paperbacks and audios, and one with only the core textbook. This case study examined the co-teaching arrangement in the setting using the full complement of scripted reading program resources, which included Kevin and Rita, the student teachers, and Clara and Freda, the cooperating teachers. For the purposes of this study we focused on Kevin, Rita, Clara and Freda, the two other student teachers, Jessie and Emily, were also placed at the school but weren't a part of this study.

Kevin had just finished his bachelor's degree in English Education and was completing his fifth-year internship. Rita was completing the final year in a Special Education masters program with licensure in Mild to Moderate and Moderate to Intense. Clara, with six years of teaching experience, was the cooperating English teacher. Freda, with five years of teaching experience, was the Special Education cooperating teacher.

It was within this high-stakes testing environment that our student teachers and their cooperating teachers were using a popular scripted reading program. Davis (2009) defined scripted reading programs as

> Pre-packaged instructional curricula provide explicit and specific instructions for teachers and students in reading. Scripted programs often are monitored and paced through outside sources, and contain instructions for responding to student responses and behaviors, as well as specific language and mannerisms for teachers to follow during lesson implementation. (p. 297)

The scripted reading program used by the teachers in this case study focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Marketed for older struggling readers, this program employed a 90-minute instructional model, beginning with teacher-led whole-group direct instruction followed by three 20-minute rotations (Scholastic, 2009). In the first 20-minute rotation, the teachers worked with a small group using software that analyzed, monitored, tracked, and reported on student fluency. In the second 20-minute rotation, students moved to an area where they read independently from a library of leveled, high-interest reading materials, including paperbacks and audio texts. In the final 20-minute rotation, the teachers pulled the whole group of students together for review.

As part of this study and throughout the autumn, these collaborative teams (student teachers and cooperating teachers) attended professional development sessions at the local not-for-profit private school for students with language-based learning problems. The professional development program was delivered over three days throughout the fall and early winter. During the first session, the participants gained knowledge about response to intervention (Hawkins, Kroeger, Musti-Rao, & Barnett, 2008) and universal design for learning (Rose, & Meyer, 2002). The second session focused on four strategic learning areas of attention, memory, language and ordering systems (Levine, 2001). The final session provided an opportunity for the teams to demonstrate evidence that the professional development content was integrated into lesson and unit plans and to prepare them to make presentations at their home schools later in the school year.

Data Collection and Analysis

Over a four-month period, we gathered data that included a single post-placement interview with the student teachers, a single post-placement focus group interview with the cooperating teachers, and field notes gathered across three professional development sessions that occurred concurrently with the student teaching placements. We also had access to the written records of three 90-minute direct observation sessions conducted by university-based supervisors that visited the student teachers' classrooms. University-based supervisors used traditional observation instruments to examine planning, implementation and reflection.

Using a case study design (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2001), we set out to determine how our research participants viewed the world around them. After transcribing all of the individual and focus group interviews, and reviewing our field and observation notes, we conducted a detailed line-by-line analysis to generate initial categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). As we read and reread transcriptions of our data, we wrote memos intended to capture the emerging categories. After we organized our data into discrete categories according to properties and dimensions, we wrote descriptions of those categories. An essential element of our methodology was looking for discrepancies, making comparisons and asking questions about these categories. A combination of open and axial coding was used to suggest relationships among the emerging categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The following example describes the coding process we used. From our microanalysis and open coding of twenty-one pages of text from the cooperating teacher focus group, the following concepts emerged: collaboration, planning, control, inexperience, stigma, diversity, English Language Learners, routine, and shutting down. One of the themes, "confusing roles," was a particular focus of the teachers in this study. There was a sense in the data that the cooperating teachers did not know what to do or how to handle two student teachers in the same

classroom at the same time. During our microanalysis of the teachers' focus group data, specific perceptions emerged in comments like "I don't know if I would ever accept having a student teacher that every block was in a classroom with another student teacher." Metaphors such as "the blind leading the blind," "lots of cooks in the kitchen," and "bumpy start" characterized the cooperating teachers' reflection on the experience. We uncovered phrases such as "we struggled," "kind of figuring it out," "confusing at times," "lot less defined," "real unclear what she was supposed to do," "very chaotic," "planning was random," and "should I be in the room or not?" These veteran teachers also described a lack of experience with co-teaching. For example, one teacher stated that "I've never had it [co-teaching] happen before until this time." As we triangulated these cooperating teacher focus group data with our student teacher interview and focus group data, confusing roles and questions about mentoring mechanics and shared instruction were reinforced.

These specific perceptions and metaphors helped us create axial codes relating "role confusion" with "a lack of co-teaching experience." Strauss and Corbin (1998) described axial coding as the conceptual process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed axial because coding occurs around the axis of a category. The two cross cutting categories were linked and helped us lay out the properties of these two categories, their dimensions, variety of conditions, actions, interactions, and consequences.

Findings

In our study three significant themes emerged: (a) the general educators, both the cooperating teachers and the student teachers, tended to focus on content rather than students; (b) the special educators, both the cooperating teachers and the student teachers, needed to negotiate their roles in a context where they lacked parity and (c) simply placing teachers in the same room did not lead to effective co-teaching. These three themes, or what Tripp called critical incidents (as cited in Orland-Barak, 2005), destabilized some of our assumptions, and challenged us to rethink our understanding of the discrete nature of our teacher preparation programs (special education, middle school, and secondary education).

Student Teachers: Rita and Kevin

Kevin expands his notion of who he is teaching. For Kevin, the general education student teacher, the notion of what it meant to be an English teacher began to shift from teaching content to an idealized group of students to focusing on the students who were actually in front of him. He recalled,

> My model in high school, the teacher I wanted to emulate through my entire teacher training experience, was my Honors English senior teacher. That's all I had known. Seeing myself around all of these struggling readers and writers has really broadened what it means to be an English teacher.

Like many new teachers, Kevin was becoming aware of the fact that he was responsible for teaching all students and these students, whom he identified as struggling, may be more typical of the students he will meet during his future career. What he previously perceived to be his role as a teacher was changing.

Students whose learning skills and background knowledge and experience did not match his preconceived notion of a classroom challenged Kevin's belief system and vision of himself.

What was changing for Kevin wasn't so much his content knowledge, but his understanding of what it meant to be a teacher, how he would deliver his English content in light of the characteristics and individual differences of the learners in his classroom. Kevin said,

> I've developed this weird place in my heart for some of these kids. You know, as poorly behaved as some of them are, it's really interesting to get this different perspective and see exactly what else is out there, you know, and how hard some of these kids try.

Kevin was beginning to see his students not so much as different, but as somehow the same as each other. Like Kevin himself, they wanted to learn. He mused, "It is really reassuring that, you know, even though these kids don't have the skills I had, it doesn't mean they don't want them." While Kevin was just beginning to understand the range of students' needs in his classroom, Rita was well aware of the wide range of performance levels of the students. Rita, on the other hand, was beginning to negotiate her role in the general education classroom and the lack of parity she faced.

> *Rita learns how to negotiate her role*. One of the barriers to collaboration was the student teachers' divergent approaches to classroom management. Rita, the special education student teacher, helped clarify the different method of classroom management to light.

> In this particular situation with the English teachers that we were working with, not that they weren't open to change or suggestions, but it's just way different ways of doing things. The special educators and English teachers didn't really go down the same path a lot of times. Just dealing with behaviors was the main thing. Whereas the special educators were taught more reinforcement rather than punishment, the English teachers kind of saw the punishment as the only way to get results and they didn't really open up to the reinforcement and suggestions until after the punishment techniques didn't work.

Rita pointed out differences in her training compared to her general education colleague. Continuing to focus on approaches classroom management, Rita stated,

> I think the precipitating factors were just dealing with the problem behaviors in the classes, how to extinguish them and redirect them, and things like that. If they [the English teachers] haven't had similar training, I think, it's more difficult for them because they haven't dealt with kids with learning disabilities, ADD, ADHD, you know, all that stuff.

Rita's comments emphasized differences in preparation. Our general education program focused on content delivery while excluding adequate attention to adaptation and modification of content and assessment. Rita continued,

> They [English teachers] are used to typical students, their honors classes, their whatever, and they do phenomenally with them. They are wonderful teachers, but as far as their expectations of the students from the lower mild to moderate range, it's kind of frustrating.

To add to this sense of frustration, Rita pointed to the failure of these general educators to appreciate the insights of the special educators. Rita complained,

> They're [general educators] like, 'Oh give us the suggestions' you know, whatever, and we do, but nothing is ever followed through with. I'm just kind of like, 'Oh, ok.' You know, in one ear and out the other, that's more frustrating.

Rita tended to allow the general educators to take the lead in suggestions, even though she would have gone about it differently. We asked why she took such a passive approach, why not say, for example, 'No, that's not really best practice, let's do this way.' Rita responded, "I was just trying to build rapport with the other colleague." By allowing the English teachers to use a more

punitive approach to classroom management, Rita hoped they would come to discover that proactive approaches would be more effective.

> I think it was a valuable learning experience for that English student teacher, 'Hey, this doesn't really always work…Okay, we tried it our way, now we're going to try your way,' you know, just to get a compromise because the old way clearly wasn't going to work.

Student teachers were learning and adapting. This was apparent in the way Kevin shifted his focus from content to student needs, and the way Rita negotiated her role in a context where special educators lacked parity with general educators. All this took place under the watch of cooperating teachers, who themselves were experiencing shifts in their ways of thinking about what it meant to be a cooperating teacher in this new co-teaching context.

Cooperating Teachers: Dana and Freda

Another overarching theme was that simply placing teachers in the same room did not lead to effective co-teaching. The cooperating teachers, one an English teacher, Dana, and the other a special education teacher, Freda, were ill-prepared to demonstrate effective co-teaching in a co-taught classroom. Co-teaching was rare for these teachers. In fact, the English cooperating teacher, Dana, recalled that she co-taught a class only one other time in her career, eight years earlier, and that the experience was an unplanned accident. The co-teaching experience represented new territory for these cooperating teachers. The focus group interview was replete with unsolicited metaphors describing this dilemma. The cooperating teachers referred to avoiding "chaos," and "struggling" to collaborate. All of the cooperating teachers felt that there were "too many cooks," and it was often a case of "the blind leading the blind." These metaphors were reflections of a worldview that guided and constrained their actions (Davis, 2009). They spoke of the "bumpy start" to their collaboration and how they were eventually able to get "back on track."

Nonetheless, in the cooperating teachers' focus group, Freda and Dana referred to this collaborative team of two teachers and two student teachers as a family. Evidence of being family was illustrated by both the cooperating teachers and student teachers when they articulated disagreements, especially when it came to classroom order and discipline. Freda, the special education cooperating teacher, stated that "we struggled in the beginning with the roles in the classroom." There was initial confusion about who was in "control" and the English student teacher turned to the cooperating teachers to "take care of fires." Freda, the special education cooperating teacher, and Rita, the special education student teacher, assumed somewhat acquiescent roles so that they would not always be "butting heads" with Dana, the English teacher and her student teacher, Kevin.

The cooperating teachers also experienced confusion over how often they should be present in the classroom. The secondary education program expected that cooperating teachers would gradually leave the student teachers alone as they taught, while the special education program expected that the cooperating teacher would be present at all times. Freda, the special education cooperating teacher explained how challenging these mixed expectation were for co-teaching:

> I have noticed that there are two different kinds of theories on how it should be. I think I could tell with the English teachers, they were more, like, 'Stand back because they [student teachers] need to be teaching and that us being in there hinders them to truly be

themselves.' Whereas in special education it seemed like it was more important to be in the classrooms. So I think that actually makes it [co-teaching] more challenging.

Dana, the English cooperating teacher, confirmed this conflicting directive:

It was unclear, so I asked my student teacher, 'Do you want me in the classroom or not?' and he says he doesn't care. But when I am in there sometimes he does come to me with questions, you know, and so I feel as if maybe I should be there to support him, but then at the same time, when he's an actual teacher, he won't have me, so that was kind of difficult.

There is evidence in this statement that the cooperating teachers wanted to be supportive, but they also wanted their student teachers to gain independence. Dana continued,

I guess with the co-teaching model my student teacher should be collaborating, but it's much less defined. My English student teacher was definitely taking the lead with the classroom lesson planning. What the special education student teacher was supposed to do was a lot less defined; it was real unclear as to what the special education student teacher was supposed to do.

The co-teaching roles were new and unknown; the path was uncharted in this setting. The idea of co-teaching was appealing, but neither the student teachers nor the cooperating teachers had targeted training related to prerequisite skills or required belief systems (Friend, 1995). The situation did not work out as expected. What the cooperating teachers and their student teachers reverted to were models that were more traditional, where the general educator is in charge and the special educator is the aide. Their rationale for returning to traditional roles was rooted in the notion that having clear roles was important not only for teachers but for students in the classroom as well. Dana noted,

They [the pupils] like to know what their [the teachers] defined role is. This is the English expert, this is the person doing this and, if I don't want to ask that person a question, and I am feeling like I might be ridiculed, this person over here [the special educator] is my safe person. This is the person that I can ask whatever.

The value of these traditional roles was reified when conflict subsided. Dana continued,

I think once we established roles in there, things have been going a lot more smoothly, but when we were trying to be all equal and all, you know, I really think that's when we were struggling.

The special education cooperating teacher and student teacher perceived parity as a problem and recognized that they were in a de facto hierarchy. On the other hand, the English teachers, not focused on a lack of parity, indicated that the collaboration with special educators "opened their eyes" to new ways of helping students with special needs. Because the high school students were taught by special education teachers and English teachers in the same classroom, these general education teachers felt that they were "growing." The cooperating teachers noted how this intensive attention helped to "lay the groundwork" for these students.

Discussion

Kevin, the general education student teacher, shifted his thinking about himself in light of who he was teaching. Whereas the "what" of his teaching, namely the English content, was preeminent, this more inclusive classroom experience created an opportunity for Kevin to see the importance of student needs. In the case of the special education student teacher, we saw that she struggled to find her place in the general education classroom without much explicit guidance.

We saw differences, at times conflicting differences, about classroom management. Such differences established conditions where Rita took steps to negotiate new classroom management strategies.

What we learned from the cooperating teachers was that simply asking teachers to do different things in the classroom may not be an effective way to support change. Each teacher's perception of his or her role must also shift. Kloo and Zigmond (2008) argued for clear expectations and procedures for the special educator's role in co-teaching, which requires mutual collaboration and the blending of instructional priorities. Teachers need to agree ahead of time on approaches to content presentation and grading procedures. They must co-construct a menu of assignments and learning strategies and provide a variety of agreed upon assessments. They must work together to create rubrics and share responsibility for grading papers and projects. In sum, the two teachers must recognize that meeting the needs of all students rests with collaborative approaches to solving problems (Jans & Leclerq, 1997).

These revelations about the cooperating teachers' and student teachers' role confusion, negotiating roles, and roles as a teacher, constituted critical incidences that motivated us to change the way we viewed our respective teacher preparation programs. Neither our student teachers nor our cooperating teachers were adequately prepared to collaborate in this new way. This lack of preparation in co-teaching was a kind of poverty that reflected the disconnect between our academic silos. The need for new knowledge and skills created a sense of urgency that we used to continue the transformation of our teacher preparation programs. We knew from this point on that we would need to change our teacher preparation programs and provide professional development on co-teaching for our cooperating teachers.

The university programs provided conflicting directions on the roles of the cooperating teachers. Although the researchers and the school principal asked this team of four to collaborate in planning and instruction, the university English supervisor urged the cooperating teacher to leave the room so that the English student teacher could become more independent. On the other hand, for legal reasons, the university special education supervisor stressed that the cooperating teacher always be present in the room. Moreover, the cooperating teachers received little guidance on how to work with two student teachers in the same room. From the research team, while participants learned about the neurodevelopmental foundations for learning, they received no explicit instruction on how to co-teach.

On the part of the teacher preparation faculty, if the integration of general education and special education programs was to move forward, we would need to consider the implications for our curricula. Our beliefs, our perceptions of what is most important, and our notions of ownership of instructional time and space, would all be placed on the table in order to develop a common understanding that respected the standards by which we were measured as well as by the students we taught. We had to recognize that neither program held privileged knowledge, but that only together, with our work to combine cross disciplinary knowledge and skills, would we succeed in honoring the moral imperative to teach all learners.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

In this study we explore and describe the opportunities and challenges that student teachers and their cooperating teachers faced as they attempt to collaborate and co-teach. In this section we will examine the implications of these challenges for teacher preparation programs.

Owing partially to a lack of professional development in co-teaching, the four individuals in our case study engaged in a less than effective attempt to collaborate. We assumed, given that the cooperating teachers were working together in the same space with the same students, that they had experience as co-teachers. However, the student teachers rarely saw examples of authentic co-teaching. In the midst of role confusion, the cooperating teachers and student teachers had to define their own roles or revert to traditional roles. As valuable as our professional development sessions were for these teachers and student teachers--allowing them time to meet outside of school, get to know each other and plan collaboratively--our sessions did not explicitly focus on co-teaching. We learned that we must prepare both student teachers and cooperating teachers in the dynamics of effective co-teaching.

Another implication for future practice is to examine long held and unexamined assumptions such as the tradition among general education teachers to leave student teachers alone in the classroom. It was clear from our data that this long held assumption runs counter to the emerging literature concerning co-teaching. We will examine these traditions. What does gradual release of instructional time look like for an integrated teacher preparation program?

This is just a beginning. We have only scratched the surface outlined in Pugach and Blanton's (2009) framework for developing integrated and merged teacher preparation programs. In order to engage a transformative process rather than simply tinker with our programs, we know we must dismantle the silos that exist. Acting on the results of this case study, during the following year, in addition to providing staff development opportunities, we also visited co-teaching sites in the schools. We used observation devices to determine whether special educators and the general educators jointly delivered substantive instruction to diverse groups of students in a single physical space (Cook & Friend, 1995). In addition, a number of special and general educators co-taught middle childhood and secondary education methods courses in order to walk and not just talk the language of collaboration and co-teaching.

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Shape Shifters: Using "New Literacies" to Re-Shape Teacher Education

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Reading and researching have become non-linear processes as students come to class comfortable and fluent at using technologies. This paper discusses some of the ways in which a team of teacher educators is responding to the challenges of new literacies in their classrooms and across their programs. A specific focus of this study was for each panelist to share a glimpse of her or his own practices, while building toward the programmatic changes necessary to provide pre-service teachers and graduate students with multiple ways to understand and apply new literacies in their professional work.

Technology has changed the face of education in ways we are only beginning to realize. Teachers will need to learn new ways to think about readers' needs and new instructional strategies to meet those needs. Readers today find that information is readily available in vast quantities; they need strategies to sort through layers of text to find needed information. Readers use a reading process that is no longer linear; they must know how to navigate the web while scanning and skimming to find and synthesize ideas. Knowing how to organize information takes on new urgency as readers gather information from multiple sources. Strategies to evaluate text

for accuracy, bias, and importance are crucial for all readers to develop. The concept of literacy is stretched in ways that raise new questions for teachers and teacher educators (Hunt, 2000) as technology brings possibilities and challenges of new literacies to classrooms.

Many students navigate the internet daily and come to class comfortable and adept at using technologies. State curriculum mandates set high expectations for the use of technologies in the K-12 system, yet teachers often have limited access and/or understanding of these new technologies and what they can offer for teaching and learning (Albon & Trinidad, 2002; Putnam & Burko, 2000). Graduate students in teacher education programs increasingly avoid spending evenings and weekends on campus in favor of online courses that provide flexibility in when and how one studies and demonstrates learning.

Technology has increased the ways in which students can share their ideas with authentic audiences, learn collaboratively with peers, and learn from multiple resources. The pace at which collaboration and multiple perspectives on an issue or topic can be introduced and demonstrated (Mott & Klomes, 2001; Ripley, 2002) has greatly accelerated. The constantly changing possibilities of technology demand that teacher educators, many of whom did not learn in these new ways during their education, reshape and redefine their work with pre-service and inservice teachers at a speed that sometimes leaves heads spinning. The shape of education is shifting.

Technology and new literacies are a part of everyday life as the internet connects people across the world and as it changes how we find information, purchase goods, and learn in schools. Yet how have new literacies and technologies changed the work of teacher educators and their students? How have new literacies and technologies changed the teacher education programs that prepare future teachers and provide professional development to current teachers? These questions framed the study that resulted in this panel presentation at the American Reading Forum Conference in 2008.

Six teacher educators at a small, regional state university began asking these questions of themselves and their colleagues. This group of six comprised nearly forty percent of the faculty in the School of Education at this university and included courses at various stages and across subject areas in the programs. Each of the teacher educators was tinkering with technology and new literacies in his/her own classes. Because the group represented such a significant portion of the entire faculty, they agreed their work offered an important look at what was changing within the programs in the department. Therefore, these teacher educators designed a year-long study of their individual practices in using new literacies with their teacher candidates. For the purposes of the study, the definition of new literacies was defined as 1) technological media (e.g., the Internet), 2) a genre (e.g., wiki-books and wiki-pages), and as 3) a skill (e.g., reading online text). Throughout the year, they discussed, compared, and reflected on how each of the individual pieces influenced the experiences their teacher education students were having with new literacies across the program. Each panelist narrowed his/her focus to one representative practice with new literacies for the purposes of this study and 2008 American Reading Forum Conference panel presentation. This paper presents a summary of the presentation and the findings of the panel from this study as well as sharing some future goals that resulted from the reflection on the panel presentation.

Summary of Panel Presentation

This panel session was framed around the challenges of teacher education in light of new literacy needs, habits, and demands of students in the information age. In addition to the changes

in student characteristics, there have been changes in the literacy demands both on the teachers and the students whom they teach. Leu, Leu, and Coiro (2004) suggest that instruction in new literacies for K-12 students must include "1) identifying important questions, 2) navigating information networks to locate relevant information, 3) critically evaluating information, 4) synthesizing information, and 5) communication of the solutions to others" (p. 21). Such characteristics of learning were already the foundation for learning in quality teacher education programs; however, technology changes have made it possible to expand the opportunities students have to perform them (Bomer, 2008).

A short movie based on one aspect of each panelist's use of new literacies was prepared before the conference (ARF 2008 Panel Presentation). The video was used to set the tone of the presentation in multiple ways. First, the panel was "hidden" in the audience so that the attendees did not see the panelists in the beginning of the presentation. The intent was to simulate one way new literacies occurred within the study when learning occurs without the influence of face-to-face contact between teacher and learner and/or among learners. Second, the movie provided a glimpse of the various ways each of the six panelists was using new literacies within his/her individual courses. Each panelist chose one practice to illustrate in the movie and the discussion that followed the movie was structured into small groups, each group based on one practice and led by that panelist. Third, the video modeled the non-linear aspect of new literacies by leaving the meaning open to interpretation, and asking the reader or viewer to gather, integrate, and synthesize ideas based on the title, the presentation summary from the conference program, and his/her own background experiences. Last, the movie illustrated the difficulties that technology-based teaching and learning present such as poor visual and/or audio presentations and equipment or software difficulties. Following the video the panelists revealed themselves and each gave a brief introduction to the topic within his/her small group. Participants chose a small group discussion that was of interest to them.

The panelists' individual projects in order of presentation in the movie were (a) using new literacies to engage students in authentic research, debate, organization, synthesis, and sharing of relevant information and concepts on educational issues within a foundations course; (b) using new literacies to create, reflect on, and share a video of an Academic Service Learning Project in which teacher education students led a schoolwide family read-in at a local elementary school; (c) offering teacher education students ways to document their professional experiences in an electronic teaching portfolio that included multimedia projects they created in methods courses; (d) considering the multiple ways the work life of teacher educators has changed as a result of teaching online rather than face-to-face courses; (e) having students use technologies such as videos and wiki-spaces to create and film case studies to be used for discussion of course concepts within special education courses; and (f) using new literacies to research local history topics through use of primary source documents and to record teaching events based on the research.

After the small group discussions ended, each panelist synthesized issues from her or his group for the broader audience. During this time several themes of using new literacies in teacher education were highlighted and consistent with the research literature, especially in three areas. First, panelists made connections to the *quality of their work lives* (Leu & Kinser, 2000). The work lives of teacher educators are changing in both positive and challenging ways that require constant learning and shifting of paradigms. For example, parameters of time, opportunities for feedback to and from students, information sharing between teacher and students and among students, student motivation and responsibility, and structures for

collaborative learning require revisiting and rethinking our work as new literacies become integral to learning in our courses.

Second, panelists made connections to the theme of *navigating information* (Bomer, 2008; Leu, Leu, & Coiro, 2004; Minkel, 2003; Snyder, 1999). New literacies expand opportunities for research and sharing information as learning becomes generative rather than reproductive. Teaching students ways to manage the wealth of information, focus on their questions and assignments, and organize what needs to be shared is critical to their success as they use new literacies to deepen their understandings of course concepts.

Finally, panelists made connections to the theme of *communication* with new literacies (Leu & Kinser, 2000; Leu, Leu, & Coiro, 2004). Technology offers strong opportunities for professors and students to document their learning and their work as they create movies, videos, wiki-spaces, graphic organizers, and programs. The immediate questions and feedback from the participants in the presentation was supportive, positive, and reflective of the theoretical framework used to organize the study. The panelists left the presentation with new questions, new perspectives on their individual and collective work, and new ideas to explore when they returned from the conference. Each panelist composed a brief reflection on the panel presentation and how it added to his/her own thinking about the uses of new literacies in teacher education which are shared below in this paper.

Panelists' Session Reflections

Following the conference, the panelists discussed their individual sessions and the collective learning of the group. Each of the panelists composed a brief reflection or take away that captured their experiences, questions, and learning throughout the course of the study, the preparation and planning for the ARF 2008 Conference, and in the small group sessions and the whole group synthesis as a part of the 2008 conference. As the reader will begin to understand from the following reflections, each panelist left the conference with new questions to pursue as we seek to better understand the power of new literacies in courses and programs for teacher educators.

Changing Contexts of Teaching and Learning (Suzanne)

I have been teaching graduate reading courses online for five years now. I entered the world of online teaching with much skepticism. I consider myself to be an interactive, engaging teacher, something confirmed in all my courses, undergraduate and graduate, through high student and peer evaluations. To me, something almost magical occurs in a classroom when learning is happening, students are engaged, and the instructor shares in the learning and the teaching. Could I replicate, and even improve, this "magic" in an online course? I doubted it.

I have been surprised in multiple ways. First, the context of my work changed dramatically. I found that I had no boundaries on my time due to the pressures to be available to students who study at their convenience, often late at night. I found myself teaching at 5:00 a.m. and at midnight. Putting personal boundaries on my time was a struggle. Second, the time involved in online learning was more demanding than I expected. Before a course began, I not only needed to have the syllabus, assignments, rubrics, and study groups organized, but I had to upload all of these on WebCT before day one of the course. Many students wanted to look over the whole class and the due dates before they began; they needed to "see" the whole course to

plan their own time. As the students worked through assignments, I had people asking for help with Module One and Module Five at the same time. It seemed as though I was sometimes a personal tutor for each student in the course. Obviously, "classroom" management became an issue for me to relearn in this new type of classroom; I sometimes felt like a beginning teacher despite my nearly 40 years as an educator.

Beyond these management issues, I struggled with where I fit into the course. Students worked with a small group of colleagues to discuss and study the readings. They had side conversations with each other about topics of interest that arose across the course. They questioned and gave feedback to each other. I was thrilled; small learning communities had formed within the class. But, I sometimes felt like the hostess who throws a party and spends the whole evening in the kitchen. I read and added my thoughts to group and individual postings and assignments, but I was not sure how important my voice was in the course. I continue to struggle with ways to offer the expertise I have acquired from forty years as an educator as well as my years of education and study. I am able to "listen" to student conversations and to synthesize and expand important points with postings of my own. Yet, I seldom know if the students return to that thread to read and contemplate my insertions. However, this uncertainty is not so different from face-to-face teaching in that we never truly know what students take away from what we present.

Cultural Shifts Change the Norms (Derek)

I simply had not realized the extent to which technology is embedded in the culture of our university. Though my colleagues and I met several times to work on our presentation for the 2008 ARF conference, it wasn't until I watched our presentation that my pride swelled. What's more, it wasn't until our discussion with the audience that I realized our university's pervasive technology usage is rather unique. For us, it is "just what we do."

Schein (2004) suggested that culture binds people together; shapes their behavior through routines, rules, and norms; provides meaning; and helps them to solve their problems. Or simply, "culture is the ways things get done around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 501). Often culture is tacit and unrecognized. Such was the case for technology at our university.

Having worked at only one university – one in which all students are given laptops on a campus with high-speed wireless internet reception throughout – I assumed we were just like any other university. I thought all teacher candidates used Flipcams to record and post fieldwork with K-12 students. I thought all teacher candidates embedded new literacy tools like wikis, blogs, and video clips into their lesson plans. Like the kid who realizes his family eats a dish named or created different from those of his peers, I learned that our use of technology was different from others in our audience.

It is important to note that I am not suggesting we are any better than universities without ubiquitous technology usage, just different. Each university has unique characteristics that help to define its values and provide a framework for improvement. Our university's new literacies culture binds us together, gives us identity, and helps us to socialize new members. For me, it took our ARF presentation to realize this.

Lack of Infrastructure in the Local Schools (Sue)

As technology evolves and new forms of literacy unfold I find it hard to keep abreast of the latest way to present or access information. Not so for my students, who often are my teachers when working with new technologies. While planning for the panel, I flashed back to seven years ago when I was just learning (with the help of my students) how to make the simplest of PowerPoints, to today where my students and I are displaying work on wiki-spaces. While I prepared for our presentation on new literacies, I could not help but observe the dust covered relics in the far corners of university classrooms. The little used overhead projector. I'm just waiting for the day when a student casually asks, "What is this used for?" while curiously observing the overhead.

The reality of embracing of new literacies at our university was affirmed when we arranged our fall semester to end with a four day field experience. Students were teaching in the local middle school and were faced with a few challenges, including their first experience working with seventh graders. The other challenge was no access to wireless networks or data projectors which made use of their laptops very limited. With computers being such an integral part of our laptop university's lifestyle, I watched my students experience a sort of withdrawal. Consequently, they were left with no choice for whole class presentations but the antiquated (in their eyes) overhead projector. I secretly smiled as I watched their inexperience with the overhead, fumbling with the controls trying desperately to adjust the distance and clarity. Using the overhead for my students was like asking me to go back to that old manual typewriter and use white out for my errors.

Choices and Change (Joe)

The creation of the video through Windows Movie Maker elicited an uneasy level of satisfaction as we moved closer to the presentation. I began to question the video's ability to capture the richness of the discussion to be based on semesters of work completed in six different graduate and undergraduate courses. I selfishly wondered if the audience would understand the tens of hours we put into editing the video so it was at a manageable length while still working to capture the themes of our panel discussion. I felt like the student who starts to ask how long the paper has to be to satisfy the instructor, or in this case the audience.

I was intrigued by the frequency of logistical questions pertaining to the development of our video piece of the presentation. In the breakout group I led, audience members were curious as to the amount of time the presentation took to develop. The audience members put the question of "video production" time up against the time lost for planning and reflection on our teaching and wondered if this is the same problem a student encounters as we ask them to use digital literacies to demonstrate their learning. I was able to respond to this question as it was foremost in my mind when co-developing assignments using digital technologies with teacher candidates for their K-12 students. Inherent in our planning has been the focus on content first. To achieve this focus I shared our use of old technologies such as paper/pencil, discussion models, use of chart paper, and teacher written and verbal critique of student work. All these techniques have been built into the lesson plan prior to the introduction of any digital literacy application. The panelists did the same to develop the American Reading Forum presentation for the 2008 conference.

I left the panel discussion with the notion that in order to use digital technologies well, I

had to attach it to something I already knew as familiar such as the writing process supported by my work with the National Writing Project. I couldn't help but wonder how my need to understand and control the reading and writing environment for my teacher candidates might be inhibiting or enhancing their ability to demonstrate their own learning through the use of digital technologies. Should I be so insistent on a process that takes away or hides the use of "new literacies" until I deem the time right for its use, or should I allow more choice on the front end for candidates and students to create, draft, and explore new literacies?

Accountability (Laura)

My personal goal was to get my students to be responsible for their learning by sharing their work on our wiki, making them accountable to one another as well as to me. The wiki also served as a place for others to turn for information once the course was over. In another class, students created a video for their group presentation, allowing them to embed examples that would have been impossible to share any other way. Surprisingly, I found that some students were engaged by simply using "new literacies" and for others, the goal was to complete the assignment and cross it off the syllabus. Perhaps the question should not be how we can use "new literacies" in our teaching; rather what do we have to do to help students want to engage in the content we are teaching. The question I continue to struggle with is what tools or framework can we provide the learner to encourage them to make connections between the content, their own learning, and their future. How can we encourage learners to revisit ideas and concepts over time?

Deep Learning (KC)

The session panelists and audience collectively decided that the electronic concept mapping was an actual literacy that my students learned and used to communicate with and about. The students' creation of concept maps was similar to creating web environments and the technology was simply a tool to enhance the discussion of the controversial issue.

Although I have yet to collect empirical evidence, I do believe that the use of the concept maps increased my students' engagement with educational psychology content. Further, the maps allowed for more descriptive debates where students even enhanced their ability to debate by including extra resources and websites within their electronic maps. Students seemed to jump back and forth between the auditory debate and the visual presentation of their own maps.

Panelists' Connections to Sessions Attended

As the panel debriefed following the conference to consider future goals for our work and in preparation for completing this paper, we saw immediate connections to our panel presentation and our own learning from other conference sessions we attended. We have not tried to make one-to-one connections with other sessions, but have tried to capture the gestalt of our learning in individual reflections. Based on the presentations from our colleagues at the 2008 ARF Conference we noted considerations we must make as we continue to develop learning in a high-tech environment and to explore how new literacies can be integral to teaching and learning in our work as teacher educators:

I learned a great deal about new literacies, particularly text on the internet. In addition to the foundational literacy skills, teachers need to get students to critically evaluate the information, synthesize a variety of information, and communicate the new information to others in various ways. (Derek)

The session that made the most impact on my thinking was titled, "At the Movies: Views of Reading in Contemporary Film" presented by Michael French, Lourdes College and Jennifer Fong, University of Michigan. The researchers used an open-ended question of "How is reading portrayed in contemporary film?" and then showed short video clips to document positive and negative cases of reading. Examples included the actors engaging with text as well as struggling readers. What really opened my thinking was how subtle a simple thing like how reading is portrayed in mass media can (and does) impact the general population. It almost is a form of manipulation or propaganda in that the "right actor / actress" can really "present" a "mission" to the general audience member. In short, reflecting on my experience, I'd say that the most important learning was for me to remember how powerful communication is. (KC)

Based on the reactions to all of the conference sessions I learned that although technology seems to permeate our universities, we are still infants when it comes to tapping into its abilities. (Joe)

I came to see that even though teacher educators are eager to know more about new literacies in the schools, we are still infants in our understandings of how our work is changing and must change to meet the needs of the future generations. We have learned so much; we have so much to learn. (Suzanne)

I've started thinking about the different ways that boys learn to read and we need to honor the unique needs of boys. It's also made me think about the number of boys in special education and how we can choose materials and assignments differently. I will be incorporating this into my methods for emotional impairment class this semester. I'm also reflecting on how to help students use the web differently as there is more information than they can consume. How do we help them identify "quality resources" rather than taking the first thing they come across? (Laura)

I learned more about the benefits of online education: more cost effective than a face-to-face; 2) accessibility (24 hours a day, 7 days a week); greater motivation for students learning though multimedia experiences; and ability to reach new audiences. I also learned from out presentation that our university is at the forefront when it comes to technology use for teaching and learning. (Sue)

In summary, both our presentation and the others we attended at the conference left us feeling affirmed about the changes we have made and challenged by the changes we have yet to make. We each found new questions and set new goals for our individual learning and our collective study. We left the conference feeling that we have laid the

foundations for program improvement through the use of new literacies and with a thirst to learn and explore more ways in which these literacies can improve our teaching and learning across the program. We left with the desire to move our learning forward and to answer our self-imposed questions.

Educational Significance

New literacies based on increasingly complex uses of technology will be a part of the world our teacher candidates must negotiate. Teacher education must programs prepare candidates who can consider, apply, and evaluate changes in literacy and technology on a daily basis as they teach their students the skills needed for life in a constantly changing global society (Holley & Haynes, 2003; Otero et al., 2005; Wepner et al., 2003, 2006). This panel presented some possibilities for changing and embracing the new literacies in teacher education courses and programs while being mindful of the rationale for and challenges of such changes. The research of the panelists and the input of the participants enabled this group of teacher educators to consider the power of using new literacies in teacher education and affirmed their commitment to do so.

The panel's post-conference debriefing showed an ongoing need for the teacher educators in our program to continue with structured purposeful reflection and modeling as it relates to the use of technology. Reflecting back to the theoretical frame laid out for the study it was clear to the panel that the possibilities for utilizing new literacies in our teaching are endless. However, our discomfort or anxiety with new literacies is still high when discussing how to best navigate networks to locate information, to create digital pieces that are of high quality in pedagogical content and methods (Leu, Leu, & Coiro, 2004), and to keep up with the ever changing possibilities new literacies bring (Minkel, 2003) as we enroll candidates in our program with an assumed inherent understanding of this medium.

The panel rationalized that the processes used to identify questions and to evaluate and synthesize inofrmation that have been incorporated into their everyday teaching since they began their careers remained high and was not greatly impacted through the use of new literacies. The panelists believe that technology neither enhanced nor took away from our ability to model quality questioning or synthesizing of information.

Of greatest significance to the panel was the realization that we cannot keep up with the "things" that are new literacies (Leu & Kisner, 2000). Hardware and software advancements will most likely make some of the technology new to us and used throughout our study and presentation obsolete by the time this article is published. It was evident to the panel that our discussion with program faculty and the content of our courses focus on the opportunities and processes for using and learning technology (Bomer, 2008) to allow teacher candidates rehearsal in the technological skills and dispositions necessary to develop their own teaching and learning throughout their careers.

Conclusion

The research study, panel presentation, and resulting paper led the group of six teacher educators involved in the study to some conclusions that enabled them to set future goals. The group found that their work as teacher educators had changed immensely as they individually and collectively embedded new literacies into their courses and across the program. However,

like the Native American "shape shifters" of legend, the shape is merely the outward manifestation of the heart. The heart of the panelists' teaching and their students' learning remained intact. We continue striving to develop readers who construct meaning in deep ways by synthesizing their experiences and ideas with ideas from peers and texts of all types. Our focus has remained on teaching students to use their knowledge to create new learning for themselves and the P – 12 students they will teach. We still provide authentic, reflective opportunities for students to examine teaching and learning from multiple perspectives.

As the shapes of our work and our students' needs shift, we must learn new and better ways to make new literacies integral to all we do. We continue developing new habits for ourselves and our students. We seek better procedures and assignments that enable students to apply the new literacies in their own learning and in their teaching. The shapes shift. The goals remain the same.

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Youth and Popular Culture: From Theory to Practice

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Perhaps more than ever before, elementary reading teachers are required to follow the National Reading Panel's recommendations to focus on specific elements of literacy instruction in their curricula. This paper presents suggestions for incorporating Peabody Award winning children's television programs into literacy instruction that is aligned with NRP recommendations. The suggestions offered in this paper are focused on creating engaging, rigorous lessons that will draw upon elements of popular culture and students' unique cultural contexts to help teachers craft lessons that will engage students in standards-based literacy instruction that is attentive to the diverse cultural contexts present in 21st century classrooms.

The influences of standards and mandated assessments have been so great over the last 25 years that we are likely to label this period in the history of education as the "standards period" (Marshall, 2009, p 113). A significant side effect of the standards period has been a narrowing of the curricula that can be found in many literacy classrooms (Applebee, 1996; Hillocks, 2002; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). Perhaps more than ever before, elementary reading teachers are feeling compelled to follow the National Reading Panel's (NRP, 2000) recommendation to focus on five areas of instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The challenge facing teachers is finding ways to make focusing on these areas of instruction engaging for their increasingly diverse student populations. We believe that teachers can draw upon elements of popular culture in children's television programming to incorporate the NRP recommendations in engaging classroom instruction.

Navigating Diverse Cultural Contexts through Popular Culture

It would be much easier to design classroom instruction based upon the recommendations of the National Reading Panel if every student arrived in the classroom with the exact same cultural contexts. However, this is simply not the case. The reality is that every social group creates a distinct language and cultural frame of reference (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 2008; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). The varied cultural frames of reference that students bring to

the classroom can complicate teaching. In order to communicate with students, teachers must be aware of the ways that their students' cultural experiences influence the way they understand language and the world around them. Bakhtin (1981) argued that outside of "the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet unqualified world with the first word," there is no escaping the influences of previous utterances (p. 279). Teachers who are able to recognize and build upon their students' cultural contexts and experiences are likely to engage their students in authentic learning.

The diverse student populations that exist in 21st century classrooms make teaching and learning a complex endeavor. As classroom populations continue to grow more diverse, teachers must learn to navigate the nuances in language and ways of viewing the world that students bring to the classroom. Finding ways to incorporate students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) in daily lessons can be challenging. Teachers cannot expect all students to come to the classroom with the same cultural knowledge, and teachers must consider how those variations in frames of reference influence teaching and learning. Gee (2008) argued that "meanings are ultimately rooted in negotiation between different social practices with different interests by people who share or seek to share some common ground" (p. 12). The tricky bit, then, is finding ways to negotiate common ground in the reading classroom.

One way to negotiate common ground may be to draw from students' shared popular cultural experiences. An increasing body of research (e.g., Heron-Hruby, Hagood, & Alvermann, 2008; Hunt & Hunt, 2004; Marsh, 2006) suggests including elements of popular culture in literacy instruction can be an effective means of making connections across cultural contexts. Millard (2003) described the development of a "literacy of fusion" that draws upon students' cultural interests to motivate them to write (p. 3). Millard's work, which seeks to combine students' home interests with school requirements, demonstrates how teachers can explore the similarities and differences between cultural contexts. To explore how a "literacy of fusion" could be applied to elementary reading classrooms, we investigated how literacy practices found in award winning television programs for children can help preservice and inservice teachers make connections between school literacies and popular culture.

Although some research-based curriculum mandates suggest that standard methods of instruction will work best for all students, teachers work in the real world—a world where individual differences must be addressed for instruction to be effective. With this concept in mind, we have explored twelve Peabody Award winning children's television programs (see Appendix A) in order to offer teachers some suggestions for considering how they might draw upon them to blend students' knowledge of popular culture with standards-based instructional practices, such as the NRP's recommendations to focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

Methods

This project was not designed to be a formal research study. Instead, we offer a theoretical piece based on our observations of these television programs to discuss how they might be used to draw upon popular culture to bridge the cultural divide that is present in many classrooms. We wondered if the winners of the Peabody Award could be used to facilitate teachers' efforts to draw upon elements of popular culture to create engaging lessons that were aligned with NRP recommendations. In order to facilitate our inquiry, we reviewed the list of Peabody Award winning televisions programs from the last 40 years and selected programs that

familiar to many elementary school students. In a sense, these televisions shows themselves are a part of popular culture. Television programs like *Dora the Explorer, Blue's Clues,* and *Sesame Street* are popular culture icons with which many children identify. These shows often make references to other elements of popular culture that teachers might use to connect with their students' cultural contexts. Therefore, we see much value in incorporating them into lessons, which are designed to draw upon students' cultural funds of knowledge.

As we each viewed twelve episodes from different children's programs, we completed viewing sheets (see Appendix B for an example) in order to note examples of references to popular culture and elements of the NRP's recommendations that teachers can use to facilitate literacy instruction. Both authors viewed and completed the same episodes while completing a viewing sheet for each program. After we had viewed all of the episodes, we compared our viewing sheets to note similarities and differences. Although our viewing sheets were similar as we identified the five domains of effective literacy instruction, we noted more discrepancies in the area of references to popular culture. We determined that these discrepancies were most likely related to generational differences, and we have provided a brief discussion of these differences later in the paper. We believe that the discrepancies highlight the importance of exploring cultural differences.

Context of the Study

The Peabody Awards are prestigious awards given annually to exceptional programs in television and radio. We viewed 12 award-winning episodes to ascertain how elements of culture and popular culture can be drawn upon to engage students in reading instruction that addresses the NRP's recommended areas of focus for reading instruction. In the following sections, we will discuss the opportunities we see for teachers to utilize children's television programs as tools for effective literacy instruction. First, we will discuss how these programs can be used to engage students in instruction that addresses the recommendations of the NRP. Second, we will highlight the importance of being attentive to multiple cultural frames of reference. Additionally, we will focus on how elements of popular culture found in these programs can be used to increase student engagement in daily instruction. It is our hope that this research project will be useful for teachers who are interested in learning more about drawing upon television and other forms of digital media to engage students in rigorous, engaging literacy instruction.

Highlighting NRP Recommendations

As we viewed each of the children's television programs, we noted occurrences of literacy practices aligned with the recommendations of the NRP (See Table 1). We noted that phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary were the most common literacy practices that occurred during these programs. While we did see elements of phonemic awareness and fluency in these programs, they appeared relatively infrequently. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on how teachers can utilize these programs to address phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Table 1

Literacy Practices in the 12 Peabody-Award Winning TV Episodes

Observer	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency
1	1	14	16	64	1
2	4	14	25	78	5
Average	2.5	14	20.5	71	3

Phonics Instruction in Sesame Street

Phonics instruction may often be a dry part of a reading lesson, and the very nature of focusing on the relationships between letters and sounds can lend itself to instruction that is lean on context. However, this type of instruction does not have to be dry or devoid of context. For example, an episode of *Sesame Street*, which won the Peabody Award in 1989, includes a segment that provides an excellent opportunity to focus on phonics instruction. As a choir sings, the letter M appears on the screen and then the words My Music come on the screen with the letter M underlined. This portion of the program offers teachers an opportunity to put letter-sound relationships in the context of a choir. Teachers could build upon this lesson by asking students to share their favorite music in a follow-up activity and identify common letter patterns in the written lyrics that accompanied this music. Doing so would facilitate the integration of students' knowledge of popular culture in literacy instruction. We believe that providing teachers with creative ways to engage students in literacy activities is more important than ever before, given the many forms of media that are competing for children's attention as we move further into the digital age. Students and teachers have increased opportunities to learn from one another when multiple forms of media are brought together to create a literacy of fusion, instead of remaining isolated from one another.

Vocabulary Instruction in Sesame Street

Creating engaging vocabulary lessons can often be a challenging task for teachers, but episodes from popular children's TV shows such as *Sesame Street* can be used to create engaging vocabulary lessons. For example, during one segment of the same 1989 episode, jaguars, leopards, and giraffes appeared on the screen while children called out the names for these animals. This segment provided an interactive way for young students to learn to connect these visual images to new vocabulary words. On the screen, perhaps more so than on a word wall, these images come alive. More complex words, such as parts of the respiratory system, were integrated into another segment of the program as they appeared on the screen while a character explained the breathing process. Both of these segments of the program functioned as opportunities for students to make connections to these vocabulary words. As Bakhtin (1981) argued, each word we use is influenced by the contexts in which it has been used in the past. If

students are not engaged in lessons that will help them build contexts for the new words they are asked to learn, they are unlikely to develop meaningful connections to those words. Teachers and students can build upon the visual images and the contexts provided by the program to discuss how these new vocabulary words can be connected to students' lives.

Comprehension Instruction in Blue's Clues

Many students come to the classroom well-versed in the literacy of watching television. Children The skills children develop to follow the action and plot of a television programs can be transferred to the act of reading texts if teachers can find ways to make these practices explicit. The 2001 episode of *Blue's Clues* serves as an excellent example of how teachers might do so. During this episode, Steve, who is the host, asks viewers to predict what gray clouds might mean for the weather on the hike that he and Blue hope to take that day. Steve is asking the viewers to draw upon visual clues to ask them to predict what might happen. Teachers who are viewing this episode with their students might take this opportunity to stop the program and talk with students about how they might draw upon clues in a text to predict what might happen next. In this way, teachers can draw upon the television literacy skills that students possess to help them make connections to the processes they need to be successful readers.

Highlighting Differences in Cultural Frames of Reference

Our experience of viewing these programs highlights the need to be attentive to differences in cultural frames of reference. We can, after all, learn much from exploring cultural dissonance. As we viewed the programs, we each began to notice different cultural elements in them. For example, *Mother Goose Rock and Rhyme*, which won the Peabody Award in 1990 includes an allusion to the 1954 Marlon Brando film *On the Waterfront*. We noticed that only Observer 1 picked up on this reference during our discussion of the viewing sheets we had created. Observer 2 had not known that this was a reference to Brando's famous line, "I could have been a contender." Generational differences may account for the discrepancy. What we began to realize as we went through the viewing sheets is that teachers must also consider generational difference in their daily lessons. If teachers can take the time to consider how their students' experiences differ from their own, they are more likely to find ways to begin to bridge generational gaps.

When teachers are looking for programs to use in their classrooms, they will need to be attentive to cultural differences. It is also important to realize that students will bring knowledge to the classroom that does not fit with teachers' frames of reference. We offer the following suggestions for navigating these different frames of reference present in the classroom:

1. Build students' background knowledge about cultural differences before viewing a program that includes cultural references that might be new to students.
2. Present students with opportunities to discuss their interests and take on the role of guide in the world of popular culture.
3. Ask students to create a list of cultural references they noticed while viewing the programs. Have students work in groups to compare their lists and ask the groups to share what they have found with the rest of the class. This activity would lend itself to discussions on how different people have different backgrounds to bring to discussions, and how students can all benefit when they learn from each other.

DJ, Bring the Hook: Popular Culture in Literacy Classrooms

Perhaps one of the most exiting things about bringing elements of popular culture into daily instruction is that it creates opportunities for students to become the experts who teach the teachers (Heron-Hruby, Hagood, & Alvermann, 2008). Students can be excellent sources of information about the dynamic world of popular culture—where references to popular music, TV shows, movies, and celebrity icons change almost daily. As students and teachers share aspects of their cultures through sharing their popular cultures, the literacy classroom can be a place where students' interests are piqued and where teachers and students build positive personal connections with each other.

Creating engaging lessons for diverse student populations is no mean feat. Teachers are being asked to work with students whose cultural frames of reference are becoming more diverse than ever before, and they are doing so amidst the pressures of high-stakes testing. However, it is possible to provide effective literacy instruction without allowing worksheets and scripted instructional materials to dominate instruction. Television programs, such as *Dora the Explorer or Blue's Clues* are significant elements of popular culture of many students. Using these programs can be an excellent way for teachers to incorporate the popular culture knowledge that many students bring to the classroom as they work to create instructional activities that are aligned with NRP recommendations. We hope that the suggestions we have offered can provide teachers with alternative solutions to the complicated problem of creating instruction that is tailored to meet the needs of students' diverse cultural contexts while remaining aligned with the recommendations of the NRP.

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Appendix A
List of Observed Programs

Lassie, 1956
Sesame Street, 1969
Big Blue Marble, 1975
The Muppets, 1978
321 Contact, 1988
Sesame Street, 1989
Mother Goose and Grimm, 1990
Carmen San Diego, 1992
Animaniacs, 1993
Wallace & Grommet, 1995
Blue's Clues, 2001
Dora the Explorer, 2003

Appendix B
Sample Viewing Sheet

Sesame Street, 1989		
References to Popular Culture	Literacy Practices Observed	Cultural Context
● Masterpiece Theatre with the Cookie Monster ● Grover says "Hard to dance to but I give it a six" I know that's a reference to some old show ● Popular 80's music style used for song about above and below. Don't know the song, but I know I heard the melody in a lot of movies. ● 80's and ballet dancing ● 80's song "Hip to be Square" is adapted for song about shapes	**Print** ● Signs in background ● B- letter on screen shown on both upper and lowercase- could also be seen as modeling for writing ● Signs in background in hospital and in restaurant ● "Amor" on screen as song plays with singer repeating world ● "Stop" appears on screen as kid say stop and dancers (80's guy and ballet girl) stop dancing. **Letter/sound relationships** ● M appears on screen as choir makes the sound of letter m ● Two words that start with M appear on screen "My Music" ● Letter M appears on screen and words that start with M appear on screen as they are read ● Letter be appears on screen and then images of words that start with B come on screen and the kids say the words that the images represent ● Alphabet song is sung as letter of alphabet appear on screen **Phonemic awareness** ● Syllables and sounds for word Ernie are repeated without print	● Having baby in hospital ● Racially diverse cast; also a deaf cast member ● Pay phone- something many kids today may not have seen or be used to seeing ● Walking on the beach ● Parents reading to children ● A topic for the show is "Why does everyone get so excited about a new baby?" ● *The Sound of Music* parody