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The Literacy & Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (SIG) of the International Reading Association seeks to study, understand, and advocate for high-quality programs that integrate: community service, participatory citizenship, social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, environmental stewardship, character education, and/or caring behavior into the development of literacy across the curriculum.

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Literacy and Social Responsibility Ejournal

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Message from the Editor   *Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell*

Welcome readers, to the 2011 issue of the ejournal, *Literacy and Social Responsibility*, volume 4, number 1. This provocative issue provides readers with various opportunities for exploring what it means to be socially responsible within a literacy framework. The articles in this issue inform and inspire, educate and intrigue. Take some time to peruse these pages and enjoy!

The lead article and delightful cover photo comes from Martha Jane Buell, M. Susan Burns, Renée Casbergue, and Angela Love who advocate that schools and teachers have a social responsibility to support the success of all children. Through their research, the team examines adult-child literacy interactions with dual language pre-schoolers. This piece is a fascinating exploration into how authentic writing is both appropriate for pre-schoolers, can facilitate cognitive and language growth, and promote Theory of Mind. This piece also offers a glimpse of family-situated language development among one of the United States' fastest growing population segments. It is a lesson for all of us.

Kristine Lynn Still and Mary K. Gove recommend to readers the Teach-Reflect-Teach (TRT) Process with their insightful piece that highlights the powerful learning and teaching that occurs when educators at all levels collaborate on behalf of children. Read about how cohorts of teachers explore humanity's impact on the environment through literature. It is an in-depth look at how collaborative inquiry informs practice.

From Wisconsin, Tynisha D. Meidl provides an impassioned, well-crafted plea for publishing companies to be ever mindful of the multicultural nature of children who populate public schools in the United States. In her piece, Meidl investigates the degree to which core-reading programs incorporate multicultural literacy. She frames her research around the prevalence and pervasiveness with which so many US schools and school districts rely on textbook companies to incorporate literacy standards and objectives through packaged reading and writing curricula. Her work on the potential impact of scripted basal reading programs in US classrooms and the children they are designed to serve is significant.

Stacy L. Tate offers readers a powerful portrait of a California teacher whose words became the title for her ethnographic piece. She paints a rich, vivid depiction of authentic, engaging classroom practice, wherein her participant's words remind educators everywhere of the importance of Friere's work. Using the archetypal assignment in teacher education - a teaching philosophy paper - Tate explores the tension educators experience between teaching others and knowing ourselves, demonstrating the significance of self-actualization.

The final manuscript, a position paper co-authored by Gerlinde Grandstaff-Beckers and Earl Cheek, Jr., traces the cyclical nature of illiteracy, sharing the impact of a lack of reading ability on both the individual and society. From early childhood through adulthood, these two scholars assist readers with understanding that it really does matter if Mommy and Daddy can't read.

Heartfelt thanks to our efficient and proficient reviewers and especially our webmaster; they made this issue a reality. On behalf of the IRA special interest group dedicated to literacy and social responsibility, enjoy ideas, celebrate provocative thinking, explore links, and reflect.

¿Que Mas le Va a Decir?

Preschoolers Who are Dual Language Learners

Write a Letter with a Parent

Martha Jane Buell,

M. Susan Burns,

Renée Casbergue, and

Angela Love

ABSTRACT

Schools and school policies often educationally marginalize children who are learning English simultaneously with the mother language spoken at home. Children who are acquiring two languages concurrently can be referred to as dual language learners. Frequently, educators and policy makers present educational deficits as originating through both dual language status as well as home language and literacy practices. However, there is also the potential for capitalizing on the strengths of families and on children's cognitive advantages in communicating in more than one language. The foundational theories for our study are based on theory of mind (ToM) research and a Vygotskian developmental perspective. This qualitative study examines and distinguishes specific language and literacy practices that parents use to provide support for their dual language learning preschool children in the context of writing a letter to someone. Four categories of the dyads' interactions consider on some level the perspective of the letter recipient, which we believe to support the development of ToM.

Dual Language learners (DLL), children who are developing competence in two distinct languages simultaneously, are a growing segment of the United States population, and represent an ever-increasing proportion of the children served in our schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The Office of Head Start defines "Children who are Dual Language Learners acquire two or more languages simultaneously, and learn a second language while continuing to develop their first language [Dual Language Learning: What Does it Take?]. The term "dual language learners" encompasses other terms frequently used, such as Limited English Proficient (LEP), bilingual, English language learners (ELL), English learners, and children who speak a Language Other Than English (LOTE)" [Young English Language Learners: A Demographic Portrait] Often, they are very young children who are developing the same English language skills as their single language peers, exhibiting fairly typical developmental patterns of initial language acquisition. However, their learning needs in this regard are compounded by the fact that they are also developing fluency in a second language spoken mainly at home and perhaps in their neighborhood community. The number of Spanish speaking families represented in the 2010 Census [Brief] is larger than expected (Passel & Cohn, 2011; United States Census Bureau. (2010) suggesting a significant increase in the number of young children likely to be DLL's. Appropriately addressing the learning needs of DLL children is both a pressing educational as well as a social responsibility. As the population of individual's whose mother tongue is not English continues to grow, so too will the social responsibility to support the educational success of these children (Modern Language Association, 2011 [MLA Language Map]).

Unfortunately, the cultural and linguistic richness of DLL's and their families have not been viewed as an asset within our school systems. Problematizing DLL's has escalated in the last decade since the passage of No Child Left Behind (2001), when English Language Learners were officially given risk status. This has increased the "deficit" perspective of research and discourse concerning these families (Suarez-Orozo, Suarez-Orozo, & Todorova, 2008) even though professional organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1995) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA) (2004) have issued position statements on the need to support *all* learners. A deficit perspective of DLL's and their families permeates education, including early childhood education. However, it is worthy to note strengths of DLL's and their families. The purpose of this study is to examine the strengths that such families may exhibit in adult-child literacy interactions.

Importance of Families to Children's Learning and Development

Families are critical for preparing young children for success in school. The field of early childhood education has for generations recognized findings from Brice-Heath (1983) and others (for example, Clay, 1971; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Snow, 1983; Teale, 1986) who have revealed that the family and community language environment has critical influence on children's learning and development. Further, other research points to the potential for bilingual skills to impart cognitive benefits (Bialystok, 2001). One possible source of this added benefit may be the technicalities that speaking more than one language bring to bear in communication. The ability to code switch (Auer, 1998) and the existence of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) has been recognized by linguists and researchers for years. And while some may rue the necessity of code switching,

lamenting the need to ever speak in a non-standard dialect, in reality the ability to switch language, code or dialect indicates sophisticated cognitive skill. When more than one language is spoken, by necessity the communicator must evaluate the context and then select the language that he or she thinks will best fit the needs of the communication opportunity. This evaluation depends on recognizing the needs of the communication partners. Such perspective taking can be considered a component of developing a Theory of Mind (ToM). This theory posits that individuals develop an understanding that other people's thoughts and beliefs are independent of one's own, and that others' thoughts and beliefs depend on the information to which they have access (Wellman, 1990). While it is held that ToM develops universally, it is specific to experiential factors as well (Leece & Hughes, 2010; Liu, Wellman, Tardif & Sabbagh, 2008). For example, social expectations, parent practices, language use, and exposure to interactions with others are all factors that influence the development of false belief, a ToM task aimed at determining if children understand that others' beliefs depend on accessible and relevant information. Our work focuses on preschool-aged children, a developmental period during which cognitive and social emotional skills, such as ToM occur rapidly (Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001).

In addition, our interest is in DLLs as they have access to two languages. Young DLLs encounter many opportunities to develop perspective-taking skills, particularly as they interact with neighbors, playmates, and teachers whose primary language differs from their own. In fact, they are likely to experience more situations requiring perspective taking because of language differences than are their single language

peers who can more comfortably assume that recipients of their language share their linguistic perspective.

One might expect that expanded opportunities to develop richness in perspective taking might also enhance young children's ability to consider another's perspective. Writing a friendly letter to a friend or family member, for example, offers one such expanded opportunity. The purpose of this research is to investigate the strengths that DLL's and their parents demonstrate while writing a friendly letter together.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on two lines of theoretical work in looking for strengths in the support that non English speaking parents provide their preschool children as they develop literacy skills: Vygotskian theory and ToM. From a Vygotskian perspective, children are helped to learn new skills through interactions with adults and more competent peers (Vygotsky, 1962). Vygotsky espoused the view that learning leads development. That is, children's development and learning are enhanced as they engage with others in social practices, including reading and writing, that guide them to more sophisticated understanding. From this perspective, it is important to invite even very young children to engage with adults in sophisticated activities. In the case of literacy learning, children become apprentices to those with more knowledge about reading and writing, and gradually construct and refine their own understanding of how language and print function together. Language itself is critically important in Vygotsky's theories of cognitive development, with oral language an important component of constructivist approaches to literacy learning (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) speaks of both writing and drawing as a means of thinking aloud, as he

called it "written speech" (though as argued writing does not always mirror speech in syntax), and further, of communicating through common "mark-making" among novices and more experienced peers or adults in cultural contexts. Vygotskian theory has been used extensively in examining the ways that adults support children's literacy (Rowe, 2008; van der Veer & Valsiner, 1992; Yaden & Tardibuono, 2004).

While Vygotskian theory addresses how learning occurs and is supported regardless of the content of that learning, ToM specifically addresses learning related to understanding aspects of thought, feeling, and beliefs. This theory holds that children develop an understanding that people have thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that are dependent on contextual factors, and that the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that the child him or herself has can be different or similar to those of others depending on these contextual factors (Wellman, 1991). Many factors influence how and when ToM develops, particularly language and social interaction (Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001).

ToM has been less extensively used in research on literacy development. There is some evidence to show that young bilingual children have an advantage in developing ToM (Bialystok & Senman, 2004; Geotz, 2003). Surprisingly there is little work to date on the relationship between ToM and the development of writing, despite the fact that most writing is intended to be read by an audience that must be considered by the writer. In combining the two theories we are looking for ways that adults support their children's development of a theory of mind within an adult–child literacy interaction.

Review of Literacy Research with Preschool Children

Prior literacy research with preschool children and their families has focused on

shared book reading interactions (e.g., Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995; Hammett, van Kleeck, & Huberty, 2003; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994) with a few notable exceptions when writing was addressed (e.g., Burns & Casbergue, 1992; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, Teale, 1986). However, in the context of understanding how DLL preschoolers' families support their children in acquiring literacy skills, a focus on writing is helpful as it provides insight into the family members' evaluation of the important components of a literacy exchange that cannot be examined, for example, in book reading exchanges. Specifically in book reading, the text and accompanying pictures of the book being shared dictate the content and much of the interaction. In writing, writers confront a blank page, with limitless possibilities.

Thus, writing is arguably a compelling medium for exhibiting behaviors that would evidence the existence of a theory of mind or behaviors that would support the development of such a cognitive dimension. Those who communicate in more than one language may be most likely to demonstrate these behaviors. They face additional cognitive tasks in choosing between or among the languages they speak in order to effectively communicate to a reader who is at a greater distance from their writing than they are as authors. Beyond thinking in the present and of someone else's perspective, speakers of more than one language have to think also about the language of communication. Therefore while a letter writing activity would be a compelling medium to facilitate any child's consideration of audience and in so doing hone ToM skills supportive of both social and cognitive work, for those children and parents who interface with more than one language, the need for consideration of the audience

perspective is more immediate. As Lillard (1999) comments, "maybe attending to minds is more important when one lives among a greater variety of people" (p. 55).

Olson (2009) hypothesizes that writing allows for several different roles for the writer, and that through considering these various roles the writer develops a theory of mind. According to Olson (2009) a writer can assume varying roles or "voices" as he or she writes. For instance, a writer can take the role of a reporter, giving information absent of any information about him or herself, or the writer can be an author sharing personal content. Further, it is the responsibility of the writer to convey his or her perspective. The distance created by writing, for both the author and the reader, demands that as children learn to write, children must learn to consider audience, in addition to message. In this way, the process of writing affords opportunities for taking multiple perspectives. Therefore, the demand placed on writers when they are engaged in writing for an audience, as when they write a letter to someone or a story for others to read, allows children to gain skills in literacy as well as develop an approach to learning through an understanding of what people do and do not know according to what they themselves do and do not know.

Learning opportunities in letter writing

Letter writing, more than story writing, brings the need to consider, at least in terms of the letter recipient, another specific person — the letter reader. Rather than addressing an anonymous audience, in writing a letter the author can consider the recipient's unique background and understanding. In terms of ToM, the writer is challenged to consider both what the letter recipient knows, and what he or she does not know. In addition, letter writers also must recognize that the letter itself can provide

information that results in new knowledge on the part of the recipient. This double layered consideration of letters' readers — who they are and what they know before they read a letter and then what they will know as a consequence of reading the letter — makes letter writing a robust activity. Young children tend to attribute thinking to others when clear cues are offered (e.g., when they observe someone assuming the "thinking pose" or being told the person is going to "solve a problem") (Flavell, 1999; Flavell, Green & Flavell, 1995). Sharing the task of writing a letter to someone with a family member can provide a meaningful, cultural context for developing the sense of others' thoughts and beliefs as separate from one's own.

With this in mind, if we are to see strengths in the literacy skills that DLL's get from their family members, more metacognitive skills, such as attention to audience, may be one of them. Do parents of DLL preschool writers help their children "attend to minds?" How does awareness of others' thoughts and feelings develop through the act of writing? How do parents support that development? Specifically, can we observe that support manifest in jointly writing a letter to someone?

Methods

In this research we examine, at a micro analytic level, the writing interactions of eight Spanish dominant children and their Spanish-speaking parents. All the dyads were part of a cohort of children in a prekindergarten program for children living in poverty. The prekindergarten program was administered by the school system of a large metropolitan area in a major southern city. For this study, we extracted participants who spoke a language other than English during the writing task. Spanish was the most common language displayed among our participants, but there were

single cases where the dyads spoke or wrote in other languages, i.e. Chinese and Arabic. In the analysis we looked for examples of the parent drawing the child's attention to the task of communicating to a person who was not present. We examined the topic of the written work, and the meta linguistic components present in the interactions. We were interested in identifying strengths evidenced by these parents that support their children's language and literacy learning and their awareness of others' thoughts, knowledge, and feelings.

The interactions of these eight adult and child dyads, including seven parents and one grandparent writing with six girls and two boys, were examined. For ease of discussion, we will henceforth refer to all the adults as "parents." All eight families used Spanish during their writing interactions, and in five cases the exchange was in Spanish exclusively. In three cases, dyads code switched between Spanish and English. We do not have demographic data for these families to indicate their country of origin or Spanish language heritage; given the demographics of the school system in which the children were enrolled, however, it is likely that all of the families were from Latin American countries.

As with dyads in the larger study, interactions centered on the joint letter-writing task were video recorded and transcribed verbatim in the original language spoken. The Spanish transcripts were translated into English by a transcriber fluent in both languages. The English translations of the transcripts were then used for coding and analysis.

Letter Writing Task

Parents who agreed to participate in the study came to a room in their children's

preschool with which both adults and children were familiar. Each room was equipped with a small table containing writing materials (varieties of paper, pencils, pens, and colored markers) and a video camera on a tripod. Adults were given instructions before their children joined them for the activity. Participants were asked to write a friendly letter to whomever the child wished. They were told that the child could write it or the adult could write it. The researcher left the room and the parent and child were given 10 minutes to write the letter with a one-minute reminder, a substantial writing time based on prior research. This time frame accommodates the typical ability of children this age to sustain attention to a particular task while also allowing for the emergence of meaningful composition. Our initial expectation was that each dyad would produce one letter by the end of the interactive writing session. In most cases this was true, although some children wrote on multiple pieces of paper even as only one letter was discussed with parents. One of the eight dyads more intentionally created multiple letters intended for different recipients. At the end of the session, all written products were collected and copied, with originals returned to the participants. This allowed participants to actually send their letter(s) to the intended recipients if they chose to do so, maintaining authenticity of the activity.

Transcripts of the interactions and the resulting written products were the data sources for analysis. Verbal interactions captured in the transcripts were used to facilitate analysis of the nature of the interactions, with particular attention to the literacy information exchanged and references to the letter recipients. The products themselves were used to examine emergent vs. more conventional literacy focus as parents and children encoded intended messages to the recipients.

Analysis

The methods of analysis were twofold. First, we used conventional qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) in order to examine the content of the dyads' interactions for talk referring to the recipient of the letter, our preconception of a framework for identifying ToM categories in a letter-writing activity with 4-year-olds. Second, we used a modified version of Miles and Huberman's approach to grounded theory building (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The approach was modified in that we started the process knowing we were looking for evidence of strengths and particular evidence, as mentioned above, that the adults in the interaction directed the child's attention to the message vis-a-vis the recipient of that message/communication.

As a first step in this process one of the researchers, in the role of coder, read and re-read all of the transcripts in order to determine the various ways that the adults, and in some cases children, discussed the content of the letters they were writing to someone together. Through discussion with co-researchers around the themes that were emerging, initial codes were developed. The secondary coder only reviewed sub sections of the transcripts so as to remain uncontaminated by the initial coder's perceptions. In this way, the researchers sought to achieve a balance of subjectivity/objectivity, in a degree of coder independence. The initial codes were refined as each new transcript was reviewed. When the primary coder achieved saturation (satisfied that she had noted all relevant examples of interactions in data displays and that no new categories were needed to account for types of interactions), the developed categories differentiated the various forms the parents and children took to compose a letter as they thought about the recipient or audience.

Next, the secondary coder, a member of the research team who had discussed the codes with the primary coder, used this initial set of coding categories to examine a subset of transcripts and found agreement with the above codes. In addition, the secondary coder identified an overall theme of "content, meaning making" that the children and parents emphasized in their letters. Critical discussion between the two coders to review the initial codes with the new theme led to the conclusion that by nature, the four initial codes were rich in meaning making and that this proposed new theme was represented with those four codes.

Categories of Interaction

The categories that emerged from this analysis were: a) recipient choice, b) message clarification/focus, c) child's thoughts or feelings about the recipient, and d) thoughts, knowledge, or feelings the recipient might have upon reading the letter. These four primary types of discourse are believed to support the children's development of a ToM as well as the ability to create written communication in a clear and meaningful way. The following is a more in-depth explanation of the codes.

Focus on recipient choice. This is the least complicated focus the parents prompted, and it was the type of input most children provided. However, settling upon a letter recipient is also the most critical piece of the letter writing activity; writing a letter, unless it is merely a symbol such as the letter "A", requires that the letter be written to someone or something. When giving the task directions, the examiners indicated that the children could write to whomever they wanted; however, the adult's input in structuring the task so that there was an expectation of a recipient, was a critical first step in writing the letter. Examinations of this task with other groups (Burns &

Casbergue, 1992) show that parents do not always structure the interaction to include a recipient or to write a letter; instead they let the child just write letter strings or draw pictures.

Focus on message and message clarification. We found that both children and parents focused on the message and/or message clarifications. Evidence for this focus on the part of the parent was identified through phrases such as, "What else do you want to say? What do you want to say? Is there anything else?" Some parents repeated what the child said, asking, "Is that what you want to say?" Directing the child to add to the message or making sure that the adult understood what the child meant to communicate often served as an empowering strategy to encourage young writers. In using this strategy, the parent also modeled the need both for some sort of content that the recipient would read and that the content of the letter that they were producing together needed to communicate something understandable, something that made sense and had a meaningful message. We examined the transcripts for certain key phrases such as, "What do you want to say?" and, "What do you want to tell them?" This provides evidence of the parent drawing the child's attention to the reader or audience for their writing. On the part of the child key phrases such as, "Did you write that?" and, "What did you write there?" were evidence of this clarification focus.

Focus on child's thoughts or feelings about the recipient. For this category we examined transcripts for evidence that the adult asked the child how he or she felt or thought about the person to whom they were sending the message. In this case the adult was requesting that the child consider the other person, how the child felt or what he or she thought about the other person, and how this might impact the content of the

letter. Sometimes the adult would then include these thoughts or feelings in the letter; at other times questions regarding the recipient were asked as a prompt to get the child to consider the recipient as they thought about what to write or how to write it. At times the child volunteered this information spontaneously, but more often the adult initiated interactions with this focus. Examples of this focus included questions or statements from the parents such as, "He likes blue?" (as the child selected a color to write with), and "You want to write to Daddy? You miss him, don't you? You love him."

Recipients' anticipated thoughts, knowledge, or feelings. For this category we examined the transcripts for evidence that the adult or child considered the reaction that the recipient might have to the letter. For example, statements such as, "Isn't it pretty, Santa is going to say this little boy really likes Christmas," or "Tell him you have been a good girl because Santa likes girls that are good," would indicate consideration of the recipient's thoughts, feelings, or knowledge. This type of interaction usually occurred after some time of composition, when there was a message in place and the adult was reviewing the message.

Table 1 provides an abbreviated definition and an example of each code drawn from the transcript of one parent-child letter writing interaction. In the first case it is an example from the adult, in the second it is an example of something the child said.

Table 1 Examples from Transcripts of Each Category

Code	Definition	Example	
		Adult	*Child*
Recipient choice	Discussion and input around who to send a letter to	Hello grandma	Let's write to grandma and then send her the letter
Message Clarification/Focus	Focus on making the message make sense, keeping the writing on task, making the product understandable and or meaningful	Let's see. Hello grandma, how are you? Mom and I are fine, and Daddy too, Otto is in school?	That I am fine, you said that already? That I was fine at Halloween
Thoughts or feelings about the recipient	These comments offer what the child or adult themselves are thinking about the recipient.	She knows that already	She doesn't know that Otto is in school?
What the recipient will think, know or feel	These comments give voice to the theoretical or imagined reaction the recipient will have once he or she receives and then reads the letter.	And now she does. (know that Otto is in school)	*No she doesn't know she was not there (Defending something she wanted to add about her Halloween experience*

Findings

In seven of the eight cases there was evidence of the adults discussing the message of the letter or the recipient of the letter in ways that we (as adult writers) could see as lending support to the child developing a sense of audience. Likewise the different types of recipient focus, from the most simple (recipient choice) to the more complex (how they will feel based on what you/we wrote), went from more to less common. Table 2 (see pp. 32-36) provides a list of the cases and the evidence of audience awareness at each level for these dimensions of support for ToM that was present during the interaction. In some cases there was more than one example at a given level, such as adults asked a clarifying message question more than once, and in other cases the example in the table is the only one from the interaction, such as in the category focused on the recipient's thoughts and feelings comments.

In the one case (Clara) where the adult did not provide much support for ToM development, based on the codes we developed, the child was in control of the situation from the beginning and just began to write her name and then to draw pictures, with the adult simply following the child's lead. This differed from the other interactions in which the parents all organized the approach to the task with immediate attention to a recipient, followed by the message of the letter.

From the discussion that parents had with their children regarding the recipient of the message, there was evidence that the adults were modeling, scaffolding the imagined "other," moving the children beyond a *direct copy theory* of mind (Wellman, 1990). Based on that theory, the child does not distinguish knowledge from reality, which limits the child's imagined response of the recipient to be that of the child's. In

contrast, parents in our sample scaffolded the children's thinking in seven of the eight cases to help the children think in more sophisticated ways about their recipients, ranging from the establishment of who would receive the letter to considering the thoughts or feelings of the reader once they received and read the letter. The adults structured the interaction and encouraged the children to consider the information that would need to include in the letter in order for the recipient to understand the message within its context. That is to say, parents asked the children to put themselves in the letter recipient's place and imagine how they would feel if they were to receive the same information in a letter or message, thus emphasizing audience.   While this level of consideration of the recipient's thoughts and feelings was less frequent than simpler concepts such as to whom the letter should be written, the presence of the less complex communication about the recipient laid the foundation for this understanding.

Limitations

With any qualitative study there is no aim to generalize to any particular population, thus allowing us to examine the dialogue of our sample of eight for language indicative of bringing the child's focus to the recipient of the letter. As we stated, our purpose was to look for a classification, or model for content analysis, of instances of parents supporting children's developing ToM. We attributed these instances as strengths of the adults' scaffolding or modeling. Certainly, further research is needed to examine interactions between caregivers and children and between teachers and children for models of building children's ToM through the writing process.

Scientific and Scholarly Significance

DLL's, like those included in our study, are likely to be represented in increasing

numbers in U.S. classrooms. When interactions between schools and families occur exclusively in the language of the dominant culture, speakers of other languages are placed at a disadvantage. It is easy to assume that parents who are struggling with English themselves will have little support to offer as their children learn to become literate in a language other than that of the home. This study, asking parents and children to engage in a sophisticated writing task together in the language of their choice, suggests that parents may, in fact, have much to contribute to their children's learning.

The evidence from this study indicates that a focus on perspective and narration is present in the interactions between caregivers and their children and is consistent with activities that help foster in children both skills as writers and the development of a theory of mind. Having a ToM allows the child opportunity to understand motivation and the actions of others, and heightens the emotional understanding of others through attention to the responses that others may have to one's actions, in this case to the child's writing. This understanding is a critical component of high-level comprehension of language and text, and may well support later independent reading as well as writing for an audience.

Giving agency to the child, as parents sometimes did when they followed the child's lead in choosing recipients or determining content, helps the child generate a notion of self in relationship to other during a literacy event that connects self to other in a particular way. This kind of literacy event between intimate partners and including young children has the potential to increase the complexity and internalization of agency as well as the social transmission of processes, in this case writing a letter to someone.

One of the notable dimensions used in encouraging the children to take the perspective of their audience was to discuss emotional relationships the child has with the letter recipient, again increasing an awareness of agency in both self and other. The inclusion of both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of the task creates an even richer learning opportunity for young children for whom any separation of the two is arbitrary and often artificial.

In our analysis of the interactions of these parents and DLL children from high poverty environments, we are struck by the strengths they demonstrate in negotiating a complex writing task. In seven of the eight cases, parents were able to help their children focus on sharing information and emotional connections with remote recipients. They were able to draw their children's attention to the perspectives of others, perhaps in the process contributing to developing ToM.

While many DLL's struggle in mainstream U.S. schools, it is often because of other factors, such as teacher expectations, educational resources, and teachers' lack of training that detract from these students' success. Schools and teachers have a social responsibility to support the success of all children. By acknowledging and recognizing the strengths of dual language knowledge, and using this knowledge as a way to better support the success of DLLs schools and teachers can better meet their social responsibilities. This research provides evidence of the types of supports that parents spontaneously offer their children in a meaningful literacy event. Teachers and schools must tap this strength by supporting families' interactions with their children in the language in which they are most comfortable and encouraging parents to write with their children to develop a host of cognitive skills, including literacy and ToM.

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Table 2

Evidence of Codes at Each Level by Child and Parent

Case	*Recipient*		Clarifying message		*Thoughts or feelings about the recipient*		What the recipient will think know or feel	
	Adult	*Child*	Adult	Child	*Adult*	*Child*	Adult	Child
Jalice Spanish	*Who do you want to write to*	*To grandma*	And you are not going to tell anything to your grandma? We are not going to say anything else?	NA	*With this one (pencil) say I love you*	*That I love you grandma*	NA	NA

Table 2 (continued)

Case	Recipient		Clarifying message		Thoughts or feelings about the recipient		What the recipient will think know or feel	
	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child
Hector Spanish	Who is the letter for, Jose or Jimmy	One for Jose and another for Jimmy	Tell me what you're going to say. What else? Hmm? What else do you want to are you going to say it?	I'm going to make it the same (2 similar letters)	NA	That I love him a lot. I'm going to send you a boat. If you don't have a boat. If you already have a boat, I won't send one to you.	NA	NA

Table 2 (continued)

Case	Recipient		Clarifying message		Thoughts or feelings about the recipient		What the recipient will think know or feel	
	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child
Sara [Dyad spoke Spanish and English] [Produced two letters in one session]	Who are we going to write to	Chicki Velma	What are going to do? Pictures? Or are you going to do letters? What do you want to write?	I am going to write my name for Chicki	He likes blue? Why you think He I likes blue? What color does MawMaw like?	maybe he likes blue (looking or a blue marker	NA	NA
Maria [Spoke only in Spanish]	I'm already here, so let's write to your mom	I want to write to my grand mother	I am going to write a serious letter.	Now I am going to do a happy face all by myself	NA	NA	And now she does	No she doesn't know she wasn't there

Table 2 (continued)

Case	Recipient		Clarifying message		Thoughts or feelings about the recipient		What the recipient will think know or feel	
	Adult	*Child*	Adult	Child	*Adult*	*Child*	Adult	Child
Ginny [Spoke primarily in English, while using some Spanish]	*You can't write a letter to yourself, how about grandma or grandpa*	*Child persisted in wanting to write a letter to herself, but did agree to write to Santa*	Tell him (Santa) so he can send you all the stuff you want, but you have to tell him	*NA*	*Tell him you have been a good girl because Santa likes girls that are good.*	*NA*	Tell him so he can send you all this stuff you want. But you have to tell it	*NA*
Francesca [Spoke primarily in English, while using some Spanish]	*Father, Santa Claus you're your grandmother? To who do you want to write?*	*To my father*	What else are you going to say to your Dad?	*NA*	*Suggesting child tell father that she loves father*	*Child draws hearts*	*NA*	*NA*

Table 2 (continued)

Case	Recipient		Clarifying message		Thoughts or feelings about the recipient		What the recipient will think know or feel	
	Adult	*Child*	Adult	Child	*Adult*	*Child*	Adult	Child
David [Spoke only in Spanish]	*Who do you want to write a letter to?*	*Santa Claus*	Okay what kind of toys what kind? What type do you want?	A black truck and a black car	*What are you going to say to Santa…I hope that when you receive this letter that you and your wife are well….*	*I love you*	Isn't it pretty, Santa is going to say this little boy really likes Christmas	NA
Clara [Spoke only in Spanish]	*NA*	*I'm gonna do a house for you*	What are you making right now?	A letter you said a letter	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*

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Nurturing Expanded Critical Literacy Through the Teach Reflect Teach Process (TRT)

Kristine Lynn Still
and
Mary K. Gove

Key Words: Critical Literacy, Earth and Civic Stewardship, Children's Literature, Action Research, Teacher Professional Development

Authors' Note

We wish to dedicate this paper to Dennis Sebian. Dennis worked as one of the project team leaders during Year 1 of this study. Dennis served as the environmental educator for this project and worked tirelessly to help secure the grant funding which ultimately supported this work. As well, he was instrumental in facilitating the Year 1 professional development sessions with the teachers who participated in this study. Dennis's passion for this topic clearly emanated, as his excitement for earth stewardship was truly contagious. At the beginning of Year 2, Dennis endured a brief illness and passed away shortly thereafter. Our hope is what is presented in this article will serve to keep alive Dennis's powerful devotion to this critical topic of inquiry. Dennis, we miss you greatly but you will be forever in our thoughts.

~Mary & Kristine

Dennis Sebian was a licensed professional engineer with over 25 year of experience in the environmental engineering field. With a master's degree in Environment Engineering, he held appointments as Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Research Fellow and Visiting Scholar in the Program in Science Technology and Society at MIT. Dennis published on engineering, public health, and environmental topics. He was an environmental consultant interested in environmental educational issues and public policy. He epitomizes what happens when people collaborate around common issues.

ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to explore the impact of university literacy professors and an environmental educator leading urban teachers in classroom action research studies investigating how an *expanded critical literac*y approach engaged and impacted urban children's reading and writing skills. The heart of this project provided participants the use of *critical literacy* teaching approaches, classroom texts focusing on citizenship and environmental themes, expertise from two literacy education professors in "best practices" with a particular emphasis on struggling readers, and expertise in citizenship and earth stewardship epitomizing *critical literacy* from an environmental educator. In this research, we built on recent findings in literacy research useful for specifically developing strategies aimed at improving education in low socio-economic groups – that is, students appear to benefit when they are taught a critical literacy approach to texts and not just traditional text comprehension and critical reading skills. Data analysis revealed teachers demonstrated a high level of involvement during the project teaching episodes and collegial support increased by advancing the ways degree in which they talked about their craft of teaching with each other. Critical literacy takes text comprehension one step further when a teacher inspires her students to think, discuss, and write about questions involving: a) voice the text represents, b) voice missing in a story, and c) consideration of winners and losers in a story. The subject matter or themes of the books and other texts used by the teacher in critical literacy, are selected as relevant in meaning, of interest to the students, and lend themselves to social critique.

Critical literacy theory has its roots in the work of the educational philosopher, Paulo Freire, who believed that all education was political. Freire established a pedagogy supported by his socio-cultural view of literacy illustrated in his classic book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). His philosophy developed as he worked with teaching reading and writing to poor adults in Brazil. For Freire, the traditional education approach consisting of pouring information into the heads of his "educants," as he called his students, was neither suitable nor just. Freire developed a pedagogy involving democratic dialogue between teacher and educants that respected and validated what the educants brought into the discussion. He believed that through a process of dialoguing about themes and issues relevant to students' lives, the teacher facilitated students' thinking as they increased their critical awareness of the forces, or political realities, in society. In Freire's approach to education, educants became empowered to put reading and writing skills into action projects which could help to transform society into one which was more just and healthy.

An Overview of Critical Literacy

Critical literacy in the United States (U.S.) has advanced through the efforts of Henry Giroux (1981) and Ira Shor (1991), among others. Patrick Shannon's work on progressive reading instruction in the U.S. has also been influential. Shannon (1990) defined *critical literacy* as "a tool with which (students) learned about themselves, their lives, history, culture, and contradictions; (students) made connections between and among their lives and those of others within a social structure; and (students) acted upon this new knowledge in order to bring about social justice and equality. It provided

a questioning attitude and recognition that social relations do not have to take their current form and that collective action can change them" (p. 149).

The heart of critical literacy practice is the teacher's selection of texts as generative themes, sensitivity to, or an awareness of, the underlying assumptions of the teaching, the types of questions posed to students, and an open and encouraging stance toward student input and dialogue. Critical literacy in the classroom seeks to move students beyond understanding and critically reading texts to investigating the social context of various "voices" and world views in ways that are relevant to their lives.

In early elementary classroom practice, socio-cultural critique can be applied in an appropriate manner to picture books and other texts used in the teaching of reading and writing. From this perspective, students examine the questions of competing points of view in a story and how they shape texts and literacy practices. Themes presented to students can go to the heart of such social issues as racial injustice, intolerance, and inequity.

Two project team members, Gove and Sebian (2006), introduced the term *environmental critical literacy* (ECL) to refer to applying a *critical literacy* approach to using texts with themes around the human impact on the environment in classrooms. In describing this new tool, they emphasized how ECL builds on the same foundation of *critical literacy* pedagogy as *citizenship critical literacy*, with its focus on issues of equity, social justice, and multiculturalism, and follows the same approach in classroom practice as described above. In ECL, the texts selected by teachers, and the follow-up discussions and projects with children, have environmental or ecological, themes, not promoting a particular environmental agenda but as in citizenship critical literacy,

building on children's interests and experiences (See **greenliteracy.org** for an extensive list of books suitable for introducing environmental themes to children).

Although ECL can be useful as an educational tool on its own in environmental education, using the approach in the literacy classroom is powerful when used in conjunction with citizenship critical literacy. This combined approach provides the teacher with a means of engaging students in exploration of both the social world and the physical world through reading, discussion, and writing around social and environmental themes. Throughout the current study, this combined approach was referred to as *expanded critical literacy.*

Purpose

Educators in the 21st century are faced with the challenge of helping students acquire a range of literacy skills, including traditional comprehension of texts as well as higher level comprehension involving such concepts as determining the author's purpose and understanding the social context of multiple genres of texts (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007). These skills are important for all students to have considering Internet communication and mass media bombardment and in order to contribute to a viable, sustainable society. The challenge of meeting these requirements is especially great for students in school districts within low socio-economic communities, such as the City of Cleveland, where general literacy attainment is below that of students in more affluent school districts (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007).

Using texts to explore social context, with emphasis on poverty, equity, social justice, and multiculturalism, we refer to this as *citizenship critical literacy.* This article highlights *expanded critical literacy* which adds an ecological component to citizenship

critical literacy. An important benefit of such an *expanded* approach is that it increases meaning orientation for students; that is, it has a high degree of relevancy to students' lives, thereby engaging students in acquiring literacy skills. Table 1 presents brief descriptions of these related approaches.

Table 1 Brief descriptions of terms

TERM	DEFINITION
Critical Literacy	*moves students beyond understanding and critically reading texts to investigating the social context of various "voices" and world views in ways that are relevant to their lives.*
Environmental critical literacy	*Critical literacy with environmental themes*
Citizenship critical literacy	*Critical literacy with themes related to class, race and Multiculturalism*
Expanded Critical Literacy	Environmental and citizenship critical literacy combined

The need exists, however, for a professional development (PD) program that will facilitate teachers acquiring this pedagogical approach, especially for application in the urban school setting. One of the project team members served as the Director of a community-based literacy initiative known as the Cleveland Schools Book Fund (CSBF). First author, Dr. Kristine Lynn Still, in her capacity as Director, felt that the Cleveland Schools Book Fund would provide an excellent opportunity for meeting this professional development need through the undertaking of an expanded critical literacy PD program

linked specifically to the Book Fund.

Critical Resource: Cleveland Schools Book Fund

Established in 2003 by local foundations and individual donors and administered through Cleveland State University, the mission of the Cleveland Schools Book Fund (CSBF) was to create authentic classroom libraries for elementary grades Pre-K through Grade 3 in the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD).   The main objective of the CSBF was to help the CMSD in attaining literacy goals for its students through the creation of classroom libraries consisting of 150 hard bound authentic literature selections in a custom made book display unit. The CSBF also served as a vehicle by which the CMSD could leverage other funds and grants for the purpose of addressing literacy needs, especially in the area of teacher professional development. In its role in support of the CSBF, the Cleveland State University College of Education and Human Services was committed to providing assistance to the CMSD through PD. The project described herein was specifically designed for "capacity" or leadership building through the CSBF. The project was determined to be "capacity building'" in that 11 CMSD teachers participated in an interactive personalized manner that was designed to build enthusiasm and expertise for further CSBF related projects.

Because school districts in low socio-economic areas like Cleveland need to meet increasingly complex literacy education goals in the 21st century, as a context for the importance of this study, the authors note the literacy achievement in the country's schools. The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) and international education data indicate that there is no general decline in overall literacy achievement in schools in the US despite the media claims of a literacy crisis. In fact, NAEP

assessments and related data indicate there has been consistency in levels of reading performance in US schools over a 30-year period (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007).

There are, however, several disturbing trends in literacy education in US schools. (Cummins, Brown & Sayers, 2007). Although early literacy attainment in the US taken together has remained stable, and is comparable to other industrialized countries, many U.S. students fall short in their reading and writing ability. The best U.S. readers read as well as students anywhere in the world, but less proficient adolescent readers have considerably lower reading skills than their peers in many other countries. This trend has been found to be strongly correlated to social inequalities experienced by low-performing US students. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA [**PISA 2009 database**]) (2009) and Cummins, Brown & Sayers, (2007) concluded family income was more strongly related to reading performance in the U.S. than in any other country. The PISA study found large differences in reading performance between affluent and impoverished 15-year-old students in the U.S. An emphasis on a combined approach of teaching traditional comprehension and higher level comprehension, which *critical literacy* provides, has potential to fully engage students in reading and writing in Cleveland.

At the same time, it has become apparent that this combined approach to the teaching of reading and writing, is particularly well suited to prepare students, even in the early elementary grades, to deal with the multitude of texts and text formats in this age of modern electronic communication, the new literacy challenge of our day. Higher level comprehension is also a valuable means of connecting young readers to age-appropriate themes involving current social issues. Our challenge was to bring this

combined approach to meeting reading and writing goals into the mainstream of literacy education in CMSD. The intent of this study was to support teachers in using critical literacy through professional development that included the Teach Reflect Teach Process (TRT). The following discussion offers more detail about each of these aims.

Supporting Critical Literacy Practices through Professional Development

The goal for the professional development aspect of the project was to lead urban teachers in exploring authentic literature while also reflecting on their practice. . In so doing, we expected that teachers would incorporate appropriate classroom texts focusing on themes of citizenship, diversity, multiculturalism, and the environment. Ultimately, the program was designed to provide valuable feedback to inform future professional development opportunities in support of these teaching practices, build capacity. as well as encourage student discussions of diversity and the environment.

"Nurturing Expanded Critical Literacy through the Teach Reflect Teach Process (TRT)" was a multiyear project which involved TRT. The project team worked with 10 first through third grade teachers and one literacy coach to showcase how expanded critical literacy could potentially engage urban youth while also increasing literacy skills. Teacher demographics included one of Hispanic origin, one who was African American, and one Asian American; the rest were White as were the two university leaders. The majority of teachers had taught for eight years or more. All volunteered to participate in the program, received graduate credit, and a small stipend for their efforts. Most of the children in this school speak English as a second language and come from countries all over the globe including Central and South America, Africa, and the Middle and Far East.

Expanded Critical Literacy focused on the integration of authentic children's literature offering the opportunity to explore themes of diversity and multiculturalism as well as themes related to humanity's impact on the environment. This project involved intensive monthly on-site PD opportunities consisting of focused group work sessions targeting a variety of topics including, "best practices" in literacy instruction as well as specific instructional activities to encourage the use of authentic picture books. Specifically, this project led teachers through team-based action research studies, involving their current students.

The TRT process (Gove & Calloway, 1992) was used to follow up whole group PD sessions and encouraged teachers to choose read aloud books promoting environmental and/or diversity themes. Through TRT, teachers co-taught lessons using read aloud and questioning strategies. During this process, they observed students, collected and analyzed relevant artifacts, and asked students about their learning. Using their data, the teachers reflected on ways to impact teaching and learning in subsequent lessons.

As researchers, our overarching goal was circular. Our goal around the TRT project was to investigate how an *expanded critical literac*y approach engaged and impacted urban children through a careful analysis of the teachers' TRT process and projects.

Teachers worked in instructional teams with two professionals working in one classroom. Instructional team configuration included two classroom teachers, a teacher and a literacy coach, or a teacher and a university professor. During TRT, teachers worked in pairs to teach lessons using read aloud and questioning strategies. The

university facilitators encouraged the pairs to choose read aloud books promoting environmental and/or diversity themes from the Book Fund classroom collections and to plan the lessons together. All teams were asked in their TRT project to answer the following question: When using expanded critical literacy for a series of lessons, what teacher activities and child engagements seem to support struggling students the most in meeting the content objectives?

The TRT process had three phases. We delineate them here.
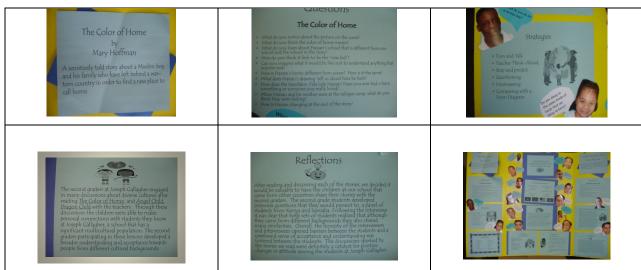
Phase 1*Teach*: One teacher taught a lesson that included a read aloud, led dialogue about the ideas in the book, and encouraged drawing or written responses. The other teacher observed, took notes, and informally interviewed children about what they had learned. Thus, each team collected three kinds of data: 1) What do you see? One of the team members scripted the lesson. Teachers were encouraged to write down what children said during the dialogues. 2) What does the written work tell us? 3) What do the students tell us?

Phase 2 *Reflect*: Each pair of teachers reflected on the data they collected. The group met as a whole to share their "findings" and from this brainstormed what could be done to increase the children's engagement.

Phase 3 *Teach*: Each pair then planned and taught a second series of lessons that included a read aloud, dialogue, and student written or artistic responses as did the first series of lessons and incorporated the ideas they thought would further impact student learning. At the core of this program was the notion of Expanded Critical Literacy that involves the use of texts selected by teachers as well as follow-up discussions and projects with children; the authentic texts used showcased rich diversity

and multiculturalism and/or humanity's impact on the environment. While negotiating

each text, the teachers and students explored the content as well as the issues

surrounding these themes. In so doing, the goal was that interaction with these texts

would build upon children's interests and experiences. This approach provided the

teacher with a means of engaging students in exploration of the world through reading,

discussion, and writing around social and critical themes. To culminate the TRT

process, each team of teachers shared their efforts through a poster board presentation

at a faculty meeting. The following example is a poster created by a TRT team.

[contact authors for a complete display of presentations]

Methods

As a multiyear project, the TRT projects developed in the spring of 2009 were

analyzed for this manuacript, and grounded in the concept of the teacher as a researcher and critical reflector (Craig, 2009; Milner, 2007). Four data sets were considered.

Data Sources

We used four sets of data which included the following: a) listing and categorizing the books that the teachers chose for their TRT Projects, b) analyzing the TRT action research projects which were the posters the teachers produced showcasing their final TRT projects (See appendices for TRT Action Research Projects), c) an exemplar model of how one team used the state standards in their TRT with a short explanation with student response, and d) the teacher interview data for the teachers' opinions of both critical literacy and the TRT process. For this analysis of teacher interviews we used interviews from teachers who had been in the program for the full two and one half years during this project.

Data Analysis

These action research projects were analyzed based upon the Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy Framework offered by Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint (2002). Data analysis also included a multilayered pattern analysis (Gregory & Williams, 2000). The constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998) was used to identify patterns and *"a priori"* themes emerging from data. Consistent with the techniques used in critical ethnographies (Anderson, 1989), these analyses involved "a dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informants' commonsense constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study" (pp. 254-255).

Analyzing teacher book selections. The following table presents the way in which we analyzed the book choices teachers made when deciding upon those to incorporate into their teaching episodes and final TRT Action Research projects. Books were labeled and coded according to author, year, title, summary, and theme emphasis. It was also noted that in one instance, one of these texts was chosen by multiple teams of teachers. The researchers wish to acknowledge that during the first year of the project, primary emphasis in the professional development sessions was given to establishing an interest in environmental themes whereas in year two, the emphasis of themes shifted to citizenship critical literacy. Table 2 reflects accurately that "environmental themes" were preferred by the teacher participants involved in this study even in the second year of the study.

Table 2 Books chosen by the teachers to use in Read Alouds during Teach Reflect Teach Projects Spring 2009

AUTHOR	YEAR	TITLE	SUMMARY	THEME *EMPHASIS* TRT PROJECT TITLE
Baker, Jeannie	1987	*Where the Forest Meets the Sea*	A child explores with his father a primeval wilderness that is now being threatened by civilization.	Environmental
Baker, Jeannie	1991	*Window*	A wordless book in which a boy's life is shown as he looks out his window and the land around his house is being developed.	*Environmental* Connecting With the Past to Read for The Future
Bang, Molly	1997	*Common Ground*	A book about the water, earth, and air we share.	*Environmental* Creating Environmental Connections in a Multicultural Class
Brett, Jan	2004	*The Umbrella*	Visiting the cloud forest in Costa Rica, birds and animals appear and disappear as if seen in a kaleidoscope.	*Environmental*

Cherry, Lynne	1990	*The Great Kapok Tree*	A lumber jack falls asleep in an Amazon forest and dreams its inhabitants talk to him.	*Environmental* Preserving Our Environment for the Common Good
Cherry, Lynne	1992	*A River Ran Wild*	A story based on the history of the Meramac River.	*Environmental* Preserving Our Environment for the Common Good
Cole, Kenneth	2001	*No More Bad News*	Marcus travels to the barbershop and notices litter from the night before in the urban area where he lives. The people at the barbershop help him see the "good news" in the neighborhood of people helping each other.	*Environmental*
Peet, Bill	1970	*The Wump World* *	Peaceful Wumps are Invaded by ecologically-Challenged Pollutants *	*Environmental* Creating Environmental Connections in a Multicultural Class
Silverstein, Shel	1964	*The Giving Tree*	A classic about a tree's gifts to a boy, a parable what nature gives humans.	*Environmental*
Hoffman, Mary	2002	*The Color of Home*	A sensitively told story about a Muslim boy and his family who have left behind a war torn country in order to find a new place called home.	*Multicultural* Understanding and Accepting Diversity
Surat, Michelle Maria	1983	*Angel Child, Dragon Child*	A story about a girl who has come to the United States from Vietnam and the struggles she has adjusting to her new home, school and country.	*Multicultural* Understanding and Accepting Diversity

*This book was chosen by three teams.

Analyzing TRT action research projects. Research on critical literacy

(Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006) provided a

framework of inter-related dimensions for understanding the varied critical approaches

some researchers have taken related to this topic. Table 3, a data analysis chart, is a

blank version of how we began to consider analyzing the data offered by the actual TRT

Action Research Project.

Table 3 Data Analysis Chart

Analysis Frames **Data Sources**	*Disrupting the Commonplace*	*Considering Multiple Viewpoints*	*Focusing on the Socio Political*	*Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice*
➢ Action Research Projects				
➢ Teacher Interview Transcripts				
➢ Teacher Exit Slips				
➢ Gallagher Project Binders				
➢ Ellin Keene Video				
➢ Text Talk Post It Notes				

The first of these dimensions was "disrupting the commonplace," a process of

providing new lenses on taken-for-granted occurrences by problematizing them and

raising questions about "what counts" as "appropriate" and "official" strategies,

materials, participants, and contexts. The second dimension was "interrogating multiple

viewpoints" by bringing to the fore the "multiple and contradictory" voices of all

participants, but particularly those often excluded from interactions where decision-

making and other activities of the powerful occur. The third was "focusing on

sociopolitical issues," making visible the "outside" forces in the society and the ways

they are embedded in learning interactions. The fourth dimension was "taking action and promoting social justice" through agency in which participants use the knowledge and understandings generated through collaboration, activity, and self-reflection to create change and greater equity. As Vasquez (2004) noted in her study of critical literacy in a kindergarten classroom, "A critical perspective suggests that deliberate attempts to expose inequity in the classroom and society need to become a part of our everyday life" (p. xv).

Analyzing the TRT projects against academic content standards. The following vignette provides an illustration of how the TRT projects were analyzed with respect to their integration of Language Arts and Social Studies Content Standards and provides an example of the rich discussion these projects entailed.

One team of teachers in an exemplary project used the following Language Arts Standards: *asking clarifying questions about essential elements of text, drawing conclusions from information in text, and establishing purposes for writing.* Social Studies Standards apparent were the following; *wants are unlimited and resources are limited; therefore, people make choices because they cannot have everything they want.* One of the teachers led a discussion around *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (1988) by Jeannie Baker with a class of English as Second Language first graders from Somalia. In this book a child explores with his father a primeval forest that is being threatened by development. On the last page the child and his father are building a sand castle by the sea. A mirage of a resort is partially seen on the landscape. The text says, "But will the forest still be here when we come back?" After the discussion a student wrote, "I love to stay in the hotel. People cut down trees to build hotel and park.

I like to play on the beach, too." To us, this immigrant first grader wrote about the dilemma that all of us feel. We want comfort, even luxury, but we also want nature to support us.

Analyzing teacher interviews. The teachers in the PD program were interviewed at the conclusion of the TRT process. The interviews were informal and inquired into the teachers' thinking about both expanded critical literacy and about the actual TRT process.

Here, an excerpt from one teacher interview concerning the impact of critical literacy on her teaching epitomizes the impact of the project: When asked, How do you think expanded critical literacy has affected you and your teaching?, this teacher responded:

I really think it's made me aware more than anything else that literature can be used to teach deeper concepts, even to young children. Concepts of responsibility to the environment and social responsibility, and things like that. I think it's made me more aware of that plus it made me more aware of how I teach and what I am looking for. What kind of questions can I ask? It has made a big difference. I am more aware that a book represents something rather than just the story that's there.

They (her students) are more able to see it in the world around them. For example, we went on a field trip. They saw water pouring out of a factory. They immediately saw more polluting so they were able to make those connections after we were done. I see them doing that. It makes things more relevant. It helps them make more relevant connections by reading a story. It helps them create connections that they need to be able to make through using a story. You go through the pollution and

what it is, but when they see it in the world; they're able to then connect it. It allows

them to connect in a way that they otherwise wouldn't necessarily do.

Another teacher responded in this way when asked about critical literacy:

It caused me to look at things differently. When I'm looking at a book to use, it

causes me to ask questions about how I can use this to get something across socially

or how can I make them more socially aware. It causes me to think about it differently

and use books differently.

And when the interviewer inquired about looking at it through a different lens, another

teacher stated:

Yes. As opposed to just comprehension questions or what's important but

getting them to think a little deeper about certain issues rather than not

necessarily just a science question, but how can you tie this in to social thinking

or the environment. How can we go beyond with this? We look at it more

critically. It's good and helpful.

Obviously, this PD had an impact on teachers' thinking and pedagogical choices,

connecting literature to environmental and social issues. Concerning the teaming

aspect of the TRT process, here is a typical response to our question about it:

I think it's helpful. It's two sets of eyes. It helps you. Once you read something,

you can say, what did you think; do you think they got this? Where are we going with

this? What could we have done differently? What can we do the same? That was

helpful, feeling like you're not quite alone. The input was good.

It would be difficult to be the teacher, do the lesson, and then also try to collect

data.

Yet another teacher responded in this way when queried about the teaming

involved in TRT:

I think it was helpful just because two heads are better than one. You can learn from each other. When Kathy (her partner) would read, I learned from her and the kinds of questions she asked and I'm sure vice versa. You get different takes on ways to expand as a team. It made it a little easier to do it in a team. You didn't feel like you were out there by yourself and confused. I think in teaching we don't do enough of that.

Research Findings

After looking closely at the changes that occurred during this professional development program, as researchers in this present study, we determined use of the four dimensions of critical literacy as suggested by Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) was worthwhile in framing our analyses and findings. Lewison et al described these dimensions as a way for teachers and students to look below the surface and challenge dominant ways of seeing the world. In this present study, we relied on these dimensions as a model for analyzing the TRT process, related action research projects, as well as various comments gleaned from the teacher interviews. Tables 4-7 illustrate specifically how these four dimensions, including: a) disrupting the commonplace, b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and d) taking action and promoting social justice were woven throughout this inquiry.

Table 4 Four Dimensions Of Analysis

Analysis Frames Data Sources	Disrupting the Commonplace	Considering Multiple Viewpoints	Focusing on the Socio Political	Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice
Action Research Projects (Spring 09) 1. Connecting with the past to read for the future (Phase 1)	One critical point that interacting with this text offered to children is the notion that environments do change…that surroundings, and in this case, do evolve over time and during this "change process" one often feels that their comfort zone or surroundings have been disrupted.	The text used in this project lends itself to looking at an environmental concept from many perspectives and really to "see" the details from of the environment from multiple entry points. Teachers in this study prompted students to pose questions such as: -How has the neighborhood changed? -How have these changes affected this family? This experience allowed the children involved in this lesson	This study makes the case for exposing students to topics of social justice in the hope that as children become more knowledgeable about who they are and where they come from and the issues that surround them, they will then be more apt/successful in making critical decisions. This study involved ESL/TESOL students.	One of the goals of this study is to provide skills necessary for students to be able to make informed and critical decisions.

Table 5 Four Dimensions Of Analysis

Analysis Frames Data Sources	Disrupting the Commonplace	Considering Multiple Viewpoints	Focusing on the Socio Political	Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice
Action Research Projects (Spring 09) 1. Creating Environmental Connections	Students were sensitive to the consequences of actions that result in polluting the environment.	One detail that is highlighted in this study is the demographic make-up of the students involved in this project. Student participants represent various multicultural backgrounds including Eastern European, African, Hispanic, and African American. Language support is offered in this classroom for African and Eastern European Languages. The children in the setting use English while in this classroom while at home communicate in their native language.	The environmental topics of these books bring to the fore, in this primary grade classroom, the notion of good citizenship.	The content of these lessons encourage students to realize and take action, when appropriate, for preserving the environment in which they live. Students suggested that President Obama's team could help the environment. Students mentioned a "school recycling" program…not sure if these means they'd like to start one? OR is there already one at their school that they might choose to become involved with?

Table 6 Four Dimensions Of Analysis

Analysis Frames Data Sources	Disrupting the Commonplace	Considering Multiple Viewpoints	Focusing on the Socio Political	Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice
Action Research Projects (Spring 09) 3. Preserving Our Environment for the common good	Students learned that the choices they make about the environment have been for the greater good…and at times, could disrupt the status quo.	As a result of this study, students realized that the environment is shared by many and that we can all take part in preserving it.	Discussion of the impact that people in a society have on the environment.	**Student Artifacts:** *What do you do for the common good?* -I clean up when someone throws something and then I tell them about it. *What are you going to do to take care of the environment?* Sometimes, my mom and I go to our front yard and clean it up. *What do you do for the common good?* I will share toys, books, and pencils, and help everyone. *What can you to preserve our planet?* I can put a sign up that says, "no littering!" *What do you do for the common good* Don't throw stuff on the ground at school!

Table 7 Four Dimensions Of Analysis

Analysis Frames Data Sources	*Disrupting the Commonplace*	*Considering Multiple Viewpoints*	*Focusing on the Socio Political*	*Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice*
Action Research Projects (Spring 09) 4. Understanding and Accepting Diversity	This story describes a Muslim's boy journey as he leaves his wart torn home country in search of a new place to call home.	Students were involved in questioning strategies that allowed them to consider other viewpoints as they posed the following questions: -What do you do on a normal day? -Do you sleep in the same kinds of beds that we sleep in here? The findings of this teacher study suggest that the students involved developed a greater appreciation and knowledge base about students from cultures different from theirs.	Topics presented in these texts: -War -Cultural Diversity	This study involved students interviewing peers from other cultures. The findings suggest that as a result of the interview process revealed that the texts read in the sequence served as a catalyst in helping students to accept and appreciate their diverse peers.

Emerging "A Prior" Themes - Findings Based Upon the Four Dimensions of

Critical Literacy

Four teams of two teachers, from a multicultural elementary school described

above, participated in the TRT process as a follow-up to focus group work sessions. In

this process, each teaching pair chose books to read aloud on either environmental

and/or diversity themes. The particular texts selected in the project presented

generative themes that led to dialogue designed to *"Disrupt the Commonplace."*
Lewison, Flint and Van Sluys (2002) explained this as "seeing the 'everyday' through
new lenses," that is using "language and other sign systems to recognize implicit modes
of perception to consider new frames for which to understand experience." One aspect
of this dimension is studying texts "to analyze how it shapes identity, constructs cultural
discourses, and supports or disrupts the status quo" (p. 383).

An example of what appeared to us as representative of the status quo was
expressed by two of the teachers in an initial professional development session who
verbalized they would not incorporate books like *The Other Side* by Woodson, which
tells the story of an interaction between a White girl and an African-American girl over a
fence separating their yards. These teachers expressed that their first and second
graders "loved each other" and they did not want to disrupt this perception of theirs.
Another participant, a very skilled literacy coach, explained how she insightfully used
The Other Side as she, a White teacher, taught a class of African-American children.
For the teachers participating in this session, it was a powerful moment as this
individual teacher's response seemed to present a "new frame" concerning the need
and how to talk about the interactions between two culturally different groups of people.
This new frame for thinking emerged from a teacher participant rather than being
suggested by the literacy professors facilitating the session. As a result of this sharing,
this type of dialogue continued through the remaining professional development
sessions.

When the teams of teachers embarked on the TRT process, it was interesting to
note that only two of the five teaching pairs chose texts with multicultural themes

whereas the other three teams chose environmental themes. The researchers are unclear whether the three teaching pairs chose environmental themes due to their discomfort in dialoging about themes of diversity as expressed in the two teachers in the vignette regarding their ideas on using the book *The Other Side* as described above. However, the researchers would like to note that this could have been a factor.

As the researchers analyzed the action research projects, they were surprised to discover that only 50% of the projects considered issues of diversity and multiculturalism through the use of authentic texts. Of these two projects, one moved the students through all four dimensions as suggested by Van Sluys et al. (2006) whereas the other project only touched upon one of the dimensions.

To illustrate **"*Disrupting the Commonplace"*** which involves seeing the "everyday" through new frames, one team, Keri and John, read *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say to a class of special education children. The students identified with the term Grandfather; however, it was not an everyday idea that a person could move from one country to another and want to be in both places. In the other TRT project, Carole and Kathy, through discussion *of The Color of Home* by Mary Hoffman and both about *Angel Child Dragon Child,* children displaced to the U.S. by war*,* mainstream children began to think about some of their classmates who came from places like Somalia and Kenya and experiences they may have lived through concerning war in their country. These experiences were far from commonplace to their lives in the U.S.

To illustrate **"*Considering Multiple Viewpoints"*** which involves having children and teachers "walk in others' shoes" and pay attention to and seek out voices of those who are marginalized, in this case the immigrant children within the school. The team that

used *Grandfather's Journey* engaged their children in dialoguing about how people who move to another country may view things differently than those who stay in one country. Going deeper, there was a team that used the books *The Color of Home* by Mary Hoffman and *Angel Child Dragon Child* by Surat and Mai, both about children displaced to the U.S. by war. These books seemed very pertinent to some of the children's lives in this school because many children were from Somalia and Kenya, two war torn African countries. Thus, these books brought to the attention of the non-immigrant second graders a new viewpoint toward their schoolmates and they themselves became interested in finding out specific information about the lives of fellow students from foreign countries. After reading and dialoguing around these books, the second graders developed interview questions and presented them to a panel of third grade students from the African countries. Teachers reflected on this activity stating:

After reading and discussing each of the stories, the teachers decided it would be valuable to have the children at the school who came from other countries share their stories with the native born second graders. The second graders developed interview questions and then presented these to a panel of students from Kenya and Somalia. It was clear that both sets of students realized while from different backgrounds they shared many similarities. The honesty of student interviewers and interviewees opened barriers between students and newfound acceptance and understandings flourished.

"Focusing on the Sociopolitical" involves defining literacy as a function of cultural criticizing and politics that increases opportunities for subordinate groups so they can participate in school to a greater degree. Moreover, *Taking Action and Promoting*

Social Justice includes ways non-dominant groups can gain access to dominant forms of language without devaluing their own language and culture. This often happens when the dominant group becomes familiar with and appreciates aspects of the non-dominant group experiences. This seemed to happen within Carole and Kathy's TRT project. Another aspect of "*Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice"* consists of "border crossing" or creating ways for differing groups to respect and understand each other to a greater degree. As researchers, we felt this team of teachers accomplished both of these dimensions as illustrated in their conclusion of the TRT project when they stated:

> *It was clear that both sets of students realized while from different backgrounds they shared   many similarities. The honesty of the student interviewers and interviewees opened barriers between students and newfound acceptance and understanding flourished. The discussions sparked by stories read were catalysts for positive attitude changes (Teacher Participants, Spring 2009).*

What is most exciting to note with regard to the above mentioned vignettes is that not only did changes occur within the children around their perceptions and behaviors, but also that it was apparent that teachers made specific shifts within their own thinking which resulted in more meaningful, thought provoking, and critical pedagogy.

Scholarly Significance/Implications

This study is significant for teachers given the challenge of culturally responsive teaching and the importance of raising awareness of environmental stewardship using generative themes raised by children's books. The TRT Process coupled with critical literacy offers *one* means of meeting these challenges.

We feel that strengths of the project included the following: the mutual trust the project team built with the teachers, the enthusiasm with which the teachers presented their TRT projects to other teachers in the school, the excitement and insights of the children concerning the critical literacy teaching, and the interactive way we led the sessions. Both theoretical and practical teaching ideas were presented; however, we did not overload them with concepts. It was the teachers who ultimately decided that critical literacy would be an important addition to their school day, a needed complement to Direct Instruction reading instruction.

At the conclusion of this study we wonder, What can PD leaders do to facilitate teachers within schools to become leaders? Can the TRT process be used to impact teachers in other PD efforts?

Clearly, the teachers in the program viewed expanded critical literacy as a way to meet social studies and science standards. We question if this this unique to these 10 teachers or would other teachers come to a similar view if presented with the expanded critical literacy approach? Would the expanded critical literacy approach be interpreted differently in different socio-cultural communities? Hopefully future research will investigate these questions.

In the meantime, we believe that using the TRT process has much potential as a way for teachers to support each other in using expanded critical literacy with read alouds and discussions that include social critique. The teachers were enthused about the built-in collegiality of TRT so that they talked about the craft of teaching, specifically about teaching books with social and environmental themes. The TRT process also seemed to increase their involvement in teaching at least during the project teaching

sessions. Finally, the TRT process provided teachers with focused feedback of ways to increase their students' engagement in discussions concerning diversity and the environment.

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Core-reading Programs:

A Plea for Multicultural Literacy

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Keywords: Multiculturalism, Literacy, Core-Reading Programs, Effective Reading Instruction, Diverse Learners

ABSTRACT

Current policies have made it difficult for teachers to change or manipulate the curriculum assuring all learners benefit from instruction. The re-emergence of basal readers, as core-reading programs, can be seen as a debilitating curricular choice for teachers. This content analysis investigates current core-reading programs as a means to evaluate how well core-reading programs explicitly make in-text connections through a multicultural literacy perspective, acknowledging the possible socio-cultural resources and knowledge students bring to the classroom. The findings indicate an absence of multicultural literacy or pedagogical strategies allowing teachers to draw on student knowledge before, during, or after reading a text.

As the cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States changes, so must the approaches to teaching and learning in educational settings. Large class sizes, changing curriculum, and high-stakes testing have increased the pressure for school districts and teachers to find more ways to cover excessive amounts of content knowledge. In most elementary schools across the United States (US), it is expected that students are reading on grade level by third grade (United States Department of Education, 2001) [http://www.ed.gov/]

For the purposes this study the literacy skills measured on most state wide

literacy assessments, are referred to as functional literacy skills. The term "functional literacy" has been part of literacy debates since the early 1900's. Gray (1976) as reported by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory defines functional literacy as "the ability to engage effectively in all those reading activities normally expected of a literate adult in his community" (p. 20) [http://educationnorthwest.org/]. However, this definition does not encapsulate what is needed to be successful in the classroom or on state mandated assessments. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1975) defines functional literacy as the "reading skills usually taught in schools that are essential for adequate functioning in everyday life" (p.1) (http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/). In a more contemporary definition, functional literacy is the ability to decode texts as a means to understand the newspaper, headlines, and understanding signs (Williams & Capizzi-Snipper, 1990). As a means to define how functional literacy is used in this article, I draw upon the three aforementioned definitions.

Despite the limited utility of functional literacy, which focuses on acquiring basic skills necessary for success on tests rather than the meaning and power of literacy, many states and districts emphasize direct instruction as a means to teach literacy. Oftentimes structural skills define functional literacy such as the ability to: decode text, understand vocabulary, and respond to text. These skills are often taught by having students answer questions, verbally asked from a teacher's manual and/or written in a workbook. Consequently functional literacy is further defined as the decoding and reading comprehension skills needed to perform at a proficient level on state mandated assessments as a form of "survival" within an educational context.

Commercial interests-brokering, curriculum decision-makers who market literacy materials as research-based and/or evidence-based, have emphasized functional literacy, especially in urban settings, as demonstrated by national funding of literacy being tied to Reading First grants, which are core-reading programs [Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read; Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read]

Such programs adhere to the National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) report offering a narrow definition of literacy skill, focusing on five specific literacy skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (United States Department of Education, 2001) [http://www.ed.gov/].

However, educators have a responsibility to develop literacy skills with students beyond the functional literacy of being able to understand the newspaper, headlines, and understanding signs (Williams & Capizzi-Snipper, 1990; Vygostsky, 1997). Literacy from a constructivist perspective consists of complex intersections of many components (i.e.: meaningful text, expressive writing styles, syntax, semantics, etc.) and needs to be understood in multiple ways similar to learning styles and intelligences. One form of constructivist literacy, beyond the basic skills of functional literacy, is multicultural literacy, which incorporates multiple utilities of literacy for sense-making and expression.

Multicultural literacy as presented by Danny Weil (1998) is a commitment to pedagogy of liberation and human reason. Multicultural literacy provides students with the space to "examine biases and prejudices while enhancing and expanding their abilities to think and act fair-mindedly and critically about other culturally diverse viewpoints" (Weil, 1993, p. 26). The cultural, political, historical, and economic realities

shape students' literacy acquisition, instruction, assessment, and performance are identified as essential to making literacy meaningful to many students, especially those from the non-dominant culture (Willis, Garcia, Barrera, & Harris, 2003). Despite constructivist pedagogy being promoted by most teachers and associations involved with educating children, current policies prevent multicultural literacy from occurring.

In the current transition in demographics where multicultural literacy is needed, the accountability policies enforced by national and state government officials and district administrators have caused stress on many teachers, who attempt to accommodate the needs of learners by changing or manipulating the curriculum. Core-reading programs, as one specific approach to curriculum in literacy, are skill driven and not student-centered; therefore, making it difficult for many classroom teachers to make adjustments for student needs. As a result, literacy curriculum emphasizing core-reading programs pedagogy and assessment creates a system where many students are deficient. Students who already struggle with reading and writing are forced to learn skills in which they do not often have the context or experiences to be successful. What they "don't know" is focused on rather than what they "do know." This study attempts to understand how teachers use core-reading programs, which I posit are limited in nature, to create multicultural literacy experiences inclusive of all, as one form of literacy beyond functional literacy.

Also investigated, is the deficiencies of contemporary curriculum materials in creating teaching and learning of multicultural literacy, as it is related to critical theory as a means of addressing issues of power, race, class, and gender that may be present or absent in these programs. Within the realm of core-reading programs, their historical

underpinnings, and assumptions for literacy instruction, three core-reading programs
were explored. Scott Foresman's *Reading Street®,* Houghton Mifflin's *Journeys®,* and
McGraw-Hill's *Open Court Reading®* (see Table 1) were analyzed to frame the
argument. As a content analysis, the conclusions speak to implications for classroom
teachers and literacy specialists/coaches within an educational framework that values
multicultural literacy.

Table 1 Three Core-Reading Programs

Name of Program	Publisher	Website
Reading Street	Scott Foresman	http://www.pearsonschool.com
Journeys	Houghton Mifflin	http://www.hmhschool.com/School/index.html
Open Court Rdg.	McGraw-Hill	https://www.mheonline.com

Standards Based Reform Efforts and Core-reading Programs

Basal readers as the curriculum and materials for literacy became highly utilized
in the 1980's and 1990's in the US. They were the curriculum and materials, along with
supplemental workbooks, used to deliver literacy instruction from a framework of
learning specific concepts. Today the basal reader framework has morphed into core-
reading programs (Maslin, 2007; Shannon, 2007; Heibert & Martin, 2001). Many
teachers have expressed discontent with core-reading programs being referenced as
teacher-proof curriculum materials, secured by being grounded in research and
evidence associated with goals of the standards-objectives movement (Maslin, 2007).
Teacher-proof curriculum prescribes a particular sequence and format that is often skill
driven (Darder & Torres, 2004) and may be "scripted" to assure the instructional lessons

create proficient readers in a consistent manner.

The research base that is advertised by marketing agents is usually performed by teams of teachers, professors, and researchers working on the core-reading programs or implementing the program in a set of classrooms that have access to all of the materials and ongoing training. This presents two issues, 1) the results of the research becomes untrustworthy, potentially partially or completely invalid, and 2) the same approach to literacy may lack the generalizability to other classrooms without access to the same full range of resources. As a result, core-reading programs have established the content and organization of instruction, thus removing teachers from the decision-making process (Marsh & Willis, 2007). This allows policy makers to take credit when there are successes and blame schools, teachers, and students when goals are not met, with the insinuation that the program was not followed, co-opting the phrase, 'with fidelity'.

Standards-based curricular policies often focus on aligning teaching and learning to state standards and state testing anchors or objectives, including the most recent common core state standards. Maslin (2007) describes the near fanatic use of basal readers in his study finding, "Basal reading programs are estimated to be used in more than 95% of all school districts" (p.1). Basal readers, currently called "core-reading programs," are a form of commercially available curriculum that can be planned and enacted as the school curriculum in literacy. In the current era of standards based reforms, government and district curriculum decision-makers have endorsed core-reading programs, and their popularity in many schools has increased. Core-reading programs are marketed as research-based or evidence-based curriculums aligned to

standards either according to state or the common core. Despite these programs providing professional development, on-line support, supplemental materials, and assessment packages, they are very costly (especially upgrades and new editions) and oftentimes not purchased in their entirety due to budget restraints.

Core-reading programs are often purchased to serve as the planned curriculum of the school in the US. The core-reading curriculum, from the designer's perspective, is the planned learning and literacy experiences students have to attain literacy skills and knowledge (Marsh & Willis, 2007). The difference between planned and implemented curriculum plays an important role in the use of core-reading programs in many school. The planned curriculum is a reflection of the curriculum designer's, the district's, or school's agenda as defined by policies, programs, and lessons. The implemented curriculum, however, is how teachers interpret the curriculum and "maximize the value of their lessons in light of the dynamics of their classroom" (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p.185). Teachers' lesson plans outline the implemented curriculum, which is what is actually presented in the classroom. Core-reading programs serve as a planned curriculum, presenting a set of assumptions about learning and literacy instruction. Emphasis is placed on the core-reading programs as scientifically-proven, stressing an analytical skills approach to literacy instruction primarily using direct instruction.

As understood by Shannon (2007), there are key elements that are common to most core-reading programs. First, they are described as research-based programs grounded in the essentials to effective reading instruction as defined by the NRP (2000) [http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/]. The core areas are: phonics, phonemic

awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Core-reading programs provide teachers' manuals that contain teacher-directed lessons, target skills, and assessments to monitor student performance. In addition, they provide various supplemental materials that may include additional texts, video, and technological additives to instruction and monitoring of student progress. But there is disagreement as to whether the "scientifically based" research used by the NRP was too narrow and left out other important aspects necessary for creating literate students versus "evidence-based" reading instruction [http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/]. "Scientifically based," rigorous research was defined as empirically rigorous research design versus *strategies* employed by teachers over time that were successful but did not undergo the rigor that "scientifically based" reading *practices* did (Allington, 2002).

Core-reading Programs as Antithetical to Critical Theory

At the root of the disagreement about the assumptions of literacy programs is the value placed on the *skills* of literacy over the *purpose* of literacy. Critical theorists argue core-reading programs influence the regulation of literacy instruction as the skill of reading, (Apple, 2004; Shannon, 2007). These programs have a clear focus in their approach to teaching literacy, but what is neglected is the role of literacy in examining class, race, gender, and disability, which is defined in this study as a multicultural approach to literacy.

The organization of literacy programs proposes not only what students read, but also how they will acquire reading proficiency based on the goals, which are influenced by its purpose. Core-reading programs give prominence to theories of literacy pedagogy perpetuating teacher-centered and skill driven teaching and learning rather

than a student-centered approach (Shannon, 2007). The literacy skills are taught as isolated units of learning, practiced using supplemental materials coordinated with the texts. But due to the fact that learning is isolated and lacks context, it may not engage students or foster an environment that encourages natural reading development and aesthetic enjoyment. Isolated literacy instruction fails to address differentiated need within a classroom or group of children. Core-reading programs normally promote practice and drill of skills in isolation to achieve literacy. As a result, core-reading programs often don't provide opportunities for authentic literacy activities that promote reading literature and writing in a holistic context that allow for both learning to read and reading to learn. Students subjected to this type of instruction are left without meaningful literacy experiences.

Multicultural literacy advocated for in this study incorporates critical pedagogy, founded in expressing voice through spoken and written dialogue, using conceptualization that knowledge and identity are interwoven as espoused in the constructivist tradition (Radencich, 1998). Using elements of progressive literacy with an imbedded piece of transformative literacy, multicultural literacy in the curriculum recognizes and analyzes the content of various cultures in the style of critical literacy. In order for multicultural literacy to be successful with students, educators must learn to explore their own culture and develop a pedagogical sensitivity to investigate others. Educators need to be aware and recognize that "groups identifying themselves perhaps by ethnicity, perhaps by moral orientation, may feel unfairly subjected to the educational values of a more powerful group" (Levinson and Holland, 1996). Pedagogy needs to move beyond "comfort zones" and traditional social norms and social etiquette that

avoided discussing race. School curriculum including literacy that doesn't always have happy endings, needs to explore the oppression interwoven into race and class issues.

Multicultural learning as a curriculum concept values the opportunity for multicultural understanding and a pedagogical goal of working through conflict. In the curriculum, multicultural literacy would include fiction and non-fiction, as well as poetic opportunities for students to think about and explore elements in and out of culture perspective taking. Ultimately, multicultural literacy means educators are not only studying racial and/or ethnic differences, but also issues and resulting tensions concerning gender, socioeconomic status, age, religion, preferences, and exceptionality.

Beginning long before elementary school, students observe and experience differences in the world around them and want guidance on how to make sense of what they see and hear. Students will try to make sense of their interpretations whether adults validate and discuss them or not; therefore according to critical pedagogy if they are asking the questions, educators are obligated to provide the time and safe space to discuss the issues. The important part of critical theory and pedagogy is that the process of learning is more important than the answers. The framework of multicultural literacy is anchored in teaching and learning as a process in moving towards social transformation for both the educator and the student.

The Plea for Multicultural Literacy

Multicultural literacy necessitates educators, through their own cultural journey, use curriculum allowing for questioning, reasoning, and analyzing cultural diversity and points of view, using historical and contemporary realities of society and stakeholders

(Weil, 1998). Also, multicultural literacy in the curriculum is designed to empower students to critically examine real issues affecting them and their families (Boyd & Brock, 2004). Individuals who develop curriculum for multicultural literacy are mindful of the cultural, political, historical, and economic realities that shape students' literacy acquisition, instruction, assessment, and performance (Willis, Garcia, Barrera, & Harris, 2003). Teachers are the only ones with enough knowledge of individual students to fully develop the curriculum for their students.

The curriculum is meant to support and encourage diversity and respect for others by providing students with opportunities to encounter a range of diverse cultures. Boyd and Brock (2004) described multicultural literacy as, "It teaches them to look at themselves as cultural human beings and to recognize their own cultural biases" (p.7). Multicultural literacy in the curriculum provides a powerful range of both fiction and non-fiction texts; it also encourages students to be active members of the learning community by empowering them to question and challenge cultural biases reinforced by societal status quo and current educational policy. Multicultural literacy as presented by Weil (1998) is a commitment to pedagogy of liberation and human reason. Recognizing the relationship between theory and practice, multicultural literacy creates praxis through pedagogy of dialogue, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of issues pertaining to historical and contemporary multicultural concerns.

Recognizing that scholars have done extensive research supporting each of their claims in advocating an approach to literacy prevalent in schools today, in this study, I investigate the degree to which core-reading programs incorporate multicultural literacy. Many schools and school districts rely on textbook companies to incorporate literacy

standards and objectives through packaged reading and writing curriculum as a means to develop proficient readers. Policy makers in the US, often federal and state legislatures, and district leaders who implement policy, reason that the best way to teach and learn is by creating a standard or uniform approach to teaching and learning exemplified through a prescribed and often scripted curriculum. The inability for many US public school educators to create, modify, add, or delete texts in the textbook or the curriculum guide, prevents them from meeting the goals set by the actual standards the curriculum is intended to address. Furthermore, lock-step, formulaic teaching expectations hinder many teachers from moving to a more progressive or critical application of literacy development in their classrooms, development which meet their students' needs. Teachers are left unable to utilize prescribed curriculum because of its lack of meaning and yet cannot fully meet the needs of their students because of a perceived obligation to use the district adopted curriculum.

Methods

Due to policy and the inability for many public school educators to modify literacy texts when a core-reading programs serves as the primary curriculum, many teachers face tensions, hampered from embracing the progressive or critical literacy development needed in their classrooms. Therefore, my goal in this inquiry was to explore, using multicultural literacy through the research and analysis of selected text books, was to gain an understanding of the deficiencies of three select core-reading program from a socio-cultural perspective and as a means to negotiate the inclusion of multicultural literacy in such core programs. The following questions guided the inquiry:

(a) How does the core-reading program explicitly make in text connections that acknowledge the possible socio-cultural resources and knowledge students bring to the classroom?

(b) How does the core-reading program leave opportunities for the teacher to draw on student knowledge before, during, or after reading a text?

Data Collection Context of the Study

The content analysis of these core-reading programs was shaped by the multiple perspectives presented in the literature, along with the view of the researcher; a practitioner at the time the data from this research was collected. I was a classroom teacher in Baltimore, Maryland and had previously taught in South Texas. Both districts required the use of core-reading programs, including two of the texts analyzed. From a practitioner's standpoint, I had experience working with core-reading programs. As a classroom teacher, I felt limited as an educator when bound by core-reading programs; using the philosophy that good books are the best way to get students to read. I regularly used authentic literacy materials that were relevant to students' backgrounds and literacy needs.

The anthologies selected for this investigation were based on three separate episodes. In addition, these three publishing companies are prominent within the existing US educational literacy materials publishing market. First, I accessed the materials and curriculum I utilized, evaluated, and put aside as part of my experience as a public elementary school teacher in Baltimore, Maryland. This episode also included pedagogical knowledge from graduate course work and the numerous professional development trainings offered by the school district while employed

For the second episode, I reviewed previously collected, unpublished raw data. Shortly before teaching in Baltimore, I had completed data collection for my dissertation where the participants of that study were required to use a core-reading program. Although core-reading programs were not the focus of dissertation research, I kept field notes as well as documents regarding participants' use of core-reading programs.

Finally, data collection for this content analysis incorporated a third episode of text analysis. As part of serving on the planning board for a charter school in Pennsylvania, where a core-reading program was requisite, I had the responsibility of reviewing various anthologies, which also serve as documents in this study.

Analysis

The three core-reading programs analyzed in study were Scott Foresman's *Reading Street*®, Houghton Mifflin's *Journeys*®, and McGraw-Hill's *Open Court Reading*®. For each of the core-reading programs, each story was read from the teacher's edition along with reading the scope and sequence and the pre-reading and post reading questions, lessons, and activities. Each program was organized into six units with five stories in each unit, leaving one week for review and assessment. Each of the stories followed a five-day cycle where the story is introduced, vocabulary is introduced the first day and reading strategies are modeled. Stories are read and strategies are reinforced through review and re-teaching strategies. The week culminates with an assessment for the fifth day. Because the focus of this study was to specifically scrutinize the texts, program lessons that focused on vocabulary, spelling, grammar, phonics, or writing, were not examined.

Primarily, data was collected by reading through each of the texts page-by-page

and story-by-story. I recorded notes on personal feelings, but also referred to field notes of conversations with others, re-examining them through a critical multicultural lens, and examined findings from the core-reading programs, as a means to address potential bias. These notes or memos captured my personal ideas, questions, and concerns while analyzing each of the texts. These notes served as a means to, "maintain a critical outlook during data analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p.24). This process addressed triangulation of data, a procedure widely expected by qualitative researchers to ensure trustworthiness (Merriam, 2002).

The qualitative data derived from the documents was similar and different in variety of ways. As a means to understand the data across the three programs, I followed a recursive pattern of making constant comparisons across the data sets in order to identify patterns and contrasts, as well as to develop concepts and tentative themes (Corbin &Strauss, 2008). These comparisons served to refine, revise, and synthesis codes into larger patterns of meaning from which themes were derived (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The following areas were explored while analyzing the texts and served as preliminary codes: the total stories included in the anthology; the selections representing multicultural (characters, theme, or setting) voices; whether the authors represented a variety of cultural backgrounds; the number of cultural readings outside of dominant "American" culture; and whether the core-reading program explicitly identified multicultural connections for the teacher.

Because core-reading programs have many components and supplemental materials, an analysis tool was created to assist in the organization of data that indicated the title of the text, and organization of the text, title, and author. Overall, each

of the programs provided the students a variety of genres such as narratives, non-fiction texts, poems, fine arts integration, biographies, as well as assessments throughout the units. The texts alone did not help answer the questions I posed, because the text could not stand alone as I realized the part the educator plays in understanding the text.

Results

The results of the analysis lead to the identification of two major themes. Those two themes are: (a) redefinition of teacher, (b) theme reconstruction coupled with text variety.

"Redefinition of teacher" is when the teacher is on her own cultural journey, and finds the need to enrich the curriculum by including diverse historical and contemporary viewpoints from texts. The teacher then thinks about the intersection of one's pedagogy and text as a means to empower students to examine critically and relate to real issues that affect them and their families (Boyd & Brock, 2004) while keeping in mind the cultural, political, historical, and economic realities shape students' literacy acquisition, instruction, assessment, and performance (Willis, Garcia, Barrera, & Harris, 2003). Theme reconstruction refers to the way the stories in the core-reading program are reevaluated to support and encourage diversity and respect for others. The sequencing of texts needs to provide a range of fiction and non-fiction texts, encourage students to be active members of the learning community, and empower them to question and challenge cultural biases that may be reinforced by the status quo.

Redefining Teacher

Many of the lesson plans created through the core-reading companies lacked opportunities for students to engage in meaningful conversations, and thus,

opportunities to further develop oral language, to refine thinking, and also, to experience possible new vocabulary within a naturally occurring context. The need for educators to go beyond the basic or surface understanding of cultures presented in the texts in order to embrace pedagogical processes for understanding and exploring the cultures of students in individual classrooms was evident.

For example, in one of the programs, a story explored the experiences of an African boy living in the Ghana/Kenya area of Africa. This text explored the experiences of someone living in a different country and of a different racial background, than that of a many students living in the United States. This story highlights the interactions between himself and an elephant. The program did not offer any pre-reading, during or post-reading questions to challenge students to think about living in a different place and reflecting critically on the cultural differences between the reader and the text. The questions presented in the text were simply comprehension questions either linked to a reading strategy or other skills such as: What happened to Toto first? Or how would you describe Toto's relationship with his elephant? However, in order for students to be able to think about the text from a multicultural perspective, teachers would need to infuse these before-during-after thinking and discussing strategies into their lessons as a part of their pedagogy. Opportunities to infuse such conversations or opportunities to think about difference were absent from the teacher's manual.

Another example, a short story, explores the journey of two Black men escaping slavery, bringing the historical experiences of slaves and Blacks in the US to the forefront. The guiding questions and activities presented for teachers for this story, did not contain opportunities for students to explore the issue of race, and historical

experiences of people of color in the US. The manual did not offer examples of

questions that would challenge students to explore difference, privilege, or power. In

fact, across all of the programs examined, the characters or plot with multicultural

voices typically did not intentionally provide experiences that displayed characters of

different cultures interacting, comparing across cultures, or persons hostile to another

culture that 'learns' multicultural understanding (Radencich, 1998).

Lack of strategic opportunities to discuss difference when reading the stories and

programs selected for investigation, are problematic. Radencich (1998) notes,

"Pedagogy should invite student interaction and provide academic challenge while

serving to help students affirm their own cultural identity and develop an appreciation for

the cultural heritage of others" (p.15). Opportunities for student discussion, as a means

to continually develop oral language, listening, speaking, and thinking skills are part of

effective learning experiences, and were noticeably absent in the programs. Pedagogy

that allows for oral dialogue about experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the pros and

cons of an issue as a means to respond to literature, equates to students who are able

to explore multiple perspectives as well as construct personal meaning and knowledge.

Data revealed that questions presented before the reading, during the reading, and after

the reading of selected stories were used as a means to only develop skills such as

comprehension, cause and effect, sequence of events, or main idea and detail. What

was absent was the opportunity and ability for teachers to mediate children's' ability to

make personal connections with the text.

None of the three textbook companies, *Reading Street®, Journey's®,* or *Open

Court Reading®*, appeared to consciously utilize making connections with the texts as a

deliberate part of the teaching and learning. Literacy "skills" were emphasized, even overemphasized, with a disregard to making literacy meaningful. As discussed before, the focus, and arguably it is the only focus, of these materials, is to teach the five literacy skills identified by the NRP (2000) [Teaching Children to Read—Reports of the Subgroups]. The disregard of pedagogy meant to help students connect with the literacy materials indicated the absence of multicultural literacy pedagogy when designing this curriculum.

Theme Reconstruction and Text Variety

Scott Foresman articulates that multicultural activities are a natural part of the curriculum not just an "add on." Despite this claim and the appearance of meaningful themes for texts such as, "All about Me," "As We Grow," and "Discoveries," the flat writing style lacked an aesthetic engagement as well as an opportunity to engage in a personal experience for teacher or students. Themes such as family relationships, friendships, and identity like, "Who am I?" and "Who are you?" lacked a multicultural understanding of diversity. The themes chosen by the publishers attempt to explore diversity, but from a superficial or surface orientation. In a sense, it appeared that inclusion of multicultural material was simply included within the mentality where you can 'check off' that it was included. However, it is doubtful students will never see themselves related to the situations presented due to the kinds of instructional activities prescribed. The core-reading programs provided a variety of themes across grade levels, but they were both shallow presented and developed, lacked opportunity and depth for critical thought, and clearly lacked the voice and thus, experience, of diverse students. As created, with these materials, both teachers and students were denied the

circumstance or opportunity to try to relate and make sense of the text. This aesthetic part of literacy was absent in these examples of skills-driven curriculum. Instead, as suggested by Boyd and Brock, the goals to challenge students to see themselves as cultural human beings and to recognize their own cultural biases was nonexistent from the core-reading programs examined (2004).

Only one non-fiction selection in the Scott Foresman program, the experience of a young girl who moved from El Salvador to the US, was explored in an in-depth manner. This text created the foundation to have a conversation to explore difference and what it meant to be an immigrant as well as the privileges that are associated with being a US citizen. Unfortunately, the guiding questions provided for the teacher in the text did not explore language differences or descriptions of people from around the world; rather they focused on comprehension skills common to understanding a non-fiction text, such as: how sub-titles help the reader understand the main idea of the paragraph, how context clues are used help define new words, or how details support the main idea. While this selection provided a multicultural voice in relation to race and ethnicity, the additional perspectives of class, gender, and disability were not explored in the core-reading text.

Again, the purpose of core-reading programs is to learn to read, but books must also engage the reader. The publishers from all three programs, however, incorporated a variety of texts addressing developmental needs. While no classroom is homogeneous as it pertains to reading levels, the leveled readers provide opportunities for teaching differentiated skills to readers of high, medium, and low ability/skill levels. Book titles appropriate for read alouds, targeting auditory learners, were also suggested

in the teacher edition. And, 'big books' were available for the younger grades which could be used to facilitate auditory and oral comprehension as advocated by Johnson and Smith (1993). The publishers suggested using these readers for paired or shared reading activities, peers-helping-peers, as well as texts for independent reading. Texts in the curriculum supported the standards of literary elements such as: setting, plot, point of view, character development, theme, authors' purpose, and style (Johnson & Smith, 1993), clearly important for students to develop functional literacy skills.

For example, in the preface to each teacher edition, the Scott Foresman core-reading program described that the curriculum will, "provide learning experiences that challenge students to read and respond to a variety of texts, learn to communicate effectively, learn how to work independently and collaboratively, as well as building thinking and problem solving skills" (p. 17). The promotion of the program also claimed that multicultural activities are a natural part of the curriculum not just an "add on."

Another instance that appeared noteworthy was a text used within the Houghton Mifflin series about Amelia Earhart. The core-reading program recognized the struggles and accomplishments of Amelia Earhart, a woman whose character transcended societal expectations and broke through gender barriers. This text offered a prime opportunity for students to think critically about the text particularly from an historical gender perspective. The reading presented potentially opens up doors to allow for students to discuss gender differences historically during Amelia Earhart time and today. Although the reading itself offered a starting point to discuss difference in relation to gender, the questions that teachers are offered in the margins of the teacher's edition merely focused on skills-oriented questions situated around

comprehension, prediction, drawing conclusions, and generalizing, functional literacy skills.

One other text presented in the program was an excerpt from *Sarah Plain and Tall*, a recognizable text in most fourth grade classrooms. This text explores issues of death and growing up in a single parent house with the search of being a complete two-parent family. The story provided the premise to discuss the loss of a loved one and how it changes or impacts one's life. Unfortunately, questions provided in the text were structured to target only comprehension skills.

Classroom conversations become more powerful when students are able to imagine and discuss what it might be like growing up with only one parent or for students to share their experiences within their family configurations. In some learning communities, this type of loss is commonplace. Students would benefit emotionally and psychologically when able to compare how experiences are different and what opportunities are afforded when one has two parents. Family dynamics are a potential theme students might explore as a means to understand themselves and their world.

Even with the variety of texts, there remains a question as to the authenticity and connectivity any of the texts have to students who come from diverse settings including urban and rural areas with diverse cultures represented. Without some meaningful connections with students lived experiences, there was little motivation to choose from any of the texts included in the anthology.

Learning connected with personal background gives curriculum authenticity as well as engagement and ownership by stakeholders; however, the leveled readers and scope and sequence provided by these specific publishers and subsequently endorsed

by schools and districts, negate choice and flexibility in *how* the text is approached. As described earlier, texts designed in the context of multicultural literacy, with opportunities for engagement and related ro children's personal lived experience representing cultural background, religious differences, gender, class, ability, and varying orientation, were not evident in the variety of texts examined. In this examination, there was a paucity of realistic, multicultural novels and stories, characters, and settings.

Discussion

When presented with texts such as these, teachers employing multicultural literacy in the curriculum have the opportunity to help students recognize the realities of an unjust society (Boyd & Brock, 2004). Using multicultural literacy in curricula, educators are afforded opportunities to teach students processes of critical pedagogy that result in learning to recognize cultural biases embedded in many texts. Teachers employing multicultural literacy in the curriculum realize the need for literacy to empower students rather than disempower them (Boyd & Brock, 2004). The discussions and interpretations of texts allow all students to develop multiple lenses with which to view the world. Teachers can navigate the world of textbooks as curriculum through two complementary roles: as curriculum mediator and as agent of social change.

As a curriculum mediator, teachers are responsible for planning, setting learning objectives, delivering instruction, and assessing students' progress. As agents of social change, teachers must connect classroom-learning experiences to the real world as a way to assist children to make sense of the world around students. Educators must be

reflective enough to challenge their personal worldview and student understanding, using multicultural literacy to stimulate the critical exploration of cultural biases often embedded in texts. As a result, teachers can utilize classroom curriculum and learning to improve the world and lives of all students.

Adding depth to themes used by the core-reading programs as a means to create multicultural literacy calls for substantial knowledge of students, through observing or surveying them in the class, as a means to understand what ethnic, racial, ability, or other aspects of diversity they bring to the class. Along the lines of racial and ethnic diversity, the educator who has a large African-American population might attempt to use literacy and resources connected to the cultural and social references of African-Americans and African-American experience from a socio-historical perspective (Johnson & Smith, 1993). Other themes providing a variety of literacy experiences may include: suffrage, segregation, poverty, immigration, etc. These themes may be focused to discuss issues of race, class, and prejudice. In the search for multicultural literacy, issues of ability, gender, and sexual orientation should also be addressed in the curriculum. For example, if exploring issues of disability/exceptionality, books reflecting the reality of the social experiences confronting students with disabilities can be incorporated. These texts allow for students to genuinely feel understood rather than further ostracized by the simplification of their circumstance. These types of readings also allow readers to relate to characters which might increase interest in the text, a series, or a particular author, as well as stimulate the love for reading and the ability to "get lost" in the text.

The caveat to multicultural literacy is that educators need to also be aware of the

values and perceptions of the world transmitted in texts. Multicultural texts would be deliberately chosen for the depiction of a variety of social dynamics, family configurations, and gender roles, for example. Ultimately, readings such as novels or stories require rhetoric meant to challenge dominant culture norms from a multicultural perspective. Critique without hope may leave students disillusioned and without agency (Banks, 2004).

Implications

Multicultural literacy is linked to critical pedagogy grounded in constructivist conceptions of knowledge and identity, expressed through oral and written dialogue (Radencich, 1998). In the curriculum, multicultural concepts provide opportunities for understanding oppression and marginalized lives. Multicultural literacy in the curriculum provides fiction and non-fiction, as well as poetic opportunities for students to think about and explore multiculturalism. Overall the main goal of multicultural literacy in the curriculum is to establish connections between the curriculum and real-life experiences of students as a means to reflect on and critically evaluate its impact on individual and collective attitudes and dispositions (Boyd & Brock, 2004). One pedagogical approach to multicultural literacy, responding to literature, occurs during pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities. Activities allowing students to respond to literature include: role-playing, observing, taking notes, and reflection/journaling. Students are provided with multiple opportunities to engage interactively with both the syntax and semantics of the text.

No matter the curriculum and materials, educators must provide opportunities for student discussion as a means to maintain, as well as develop, oral language, listening,

vocabulary, speaking, and writing skills while providing student voice. This approach incorporates some of the skills emphasized by core-reading programs while recognizing the need for student engagement. When students are taught to recognize and critically understand injustice in the world, there is the possibility the next generation of current school-age students might seek to change the world, making it more just.

Conclusion

As the goal of core-reading programs is to create students who can read by third grade, the myopic focus on basic skills is inadequate; it is imperative to provide authentic texts representing the cultures and perspectives of students. With multicultural literacy as a framework, curriculum has to link to the, "cultural experiences, histories, and languages that all children bring to school" (Diamond & Moore, 1995). Because the focus of curriculum is aligned with standards and is implemented in skills, multicultural literacy serves as a pedagogical balance for learning, designed to enhance understanding and appreciating socio-cultural dynamics (Diamond & Moore, 1995). Curriculum should seek to, "affirm the language backgrounds of children by reading stories about children who share a similar language pattern" (Diamond & Moore, 1995, p. 31). Reading selections within the curriculum need variation of author as well as reading level in order to reach differing levels of literacy skill represented in any given classroom. Literature is particularly meaningful when the interests of students are piqued and stimulated through imaginative experiences. The skills acquired through the core-reading programs must be interwoven with opportunities for literacy to be connected with students' experiences and cultural backgrounds, expressed in the stories being studied. For educators, literacy can foster positive inquiry and

understanding of the cultures of students in classrooms as well as an exploration of one's own culture. Teaching and learning must move from an overreliance on developing skills to exploring the uncomfortable contexts related to the social inequalities of students' lived experiences.

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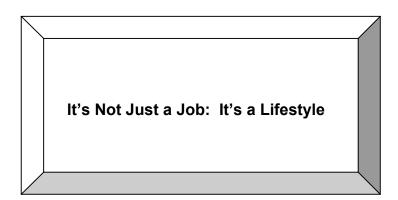Marsh, C.J., & Willis, G. (2007). *Curriculum: Alternative approaches, ongoing issues*. Columbus: Pearson.

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It's Not Just a Job: It's a Lifestyle   **Stacie L. Tate**

ABSTRACT

According to bell hooks (1999), teaching should be a career that engages not only the student but also the teacher. She believes the innate practice of critical literacy is not only committed to making connections to students but a practice of understanding ourselves. Using data from a yearlong ethnographic study, the research presented in this article identifies core practices in the development and enactment of an urban high school teacher's philosophy that encompasses the ideas of critical literacy and pedagogy. Two of the core practices examined are the pedagogical and theoretical knowledge that guide this teacher in the development of his teaching philosophy and hooks' (1994) notion of the self-actualized teacher and how this theory functions in this teacher's enactment of his beliefs.

For several years I have asked my pre-service teachers to consider their purpose for teaching, as well as to exam their personal orientations and assumptions they possess to determine those purposes by writing a teaching philosophy paper. However in the fall of 2007, one of my pre-service teachers challenged this assignment by stating, "Shouldn't my job be about teaching and imparting knowledge not about my own personal feelings towards what I teach?" Although my reasoning for this assignment is to illustrate that effective classroom teachers understand the reasoning behind the choices they make, however, my student's statement helped me to consider that perhaps, teachers do not truly understand that many of the choices they make in the classroom are based on a combination of personal and theoretical knowledge. Yet another reason for me to contemplate if educators understand what shapes decisions is because of the lessons learned from another teacher, Mr. Cruz, who taught me the significance of how teaching philosophy impacts practice.

Author, feminist, and social activist, bell hooks (1999), states that part of the luxury and privilege of the role of teachers today is the absence of any requirement regarding self-actualization as she argues that the self-actualized teacher connects who they are to the lives of their students. Such teachers understand that what they teach is deeply connected to who they are. Consequently there is a fear, just as this pre-service teacher articulated to me, that a teacher's pedagogical practice should somehow be separate from their personal lives. This tension, according to Bartolome (2007) plays out in that, "this practical focus far too often occurs without teachers examining their own assumptions, values, and beliefs…this ideological posture informs, often unconsciously, their perceptions and actions…" (p. 263).

This article examines how the development and use of a teaching philosophy can help educators unpack their own discursive practices and make visible their ideological positions. Using data from a yearlong ethnographic study, this article identifies core practices in the development and enactment of an urban high school teacher's (names and places are pseudonyms) philosophy. Two core practices examined are the pedagogical and theoretical knowledge that guide this teacher in the development of his teaching philosophy and hooks' (1994) notion of the self-actualized teacher, exploring how this theory functions in this teacher's enactment of his beliefs.

Why a Teaching Philosophy in Teacher Education?

Many teacher education programs have adopted the practice of asking pre-service teachers to develop a teaching philosophy with the intent of students developing a viewpoint about the practical and theoretical characteristics of education.   According to Hansen (2007), a philosophy of education is comprised of: (a) a statement of values, (b) a moral compass, and (c) an abiding engine of ideas. Hansen believes a philosophy reflects what a thinker esteems (p 7). More importantly, Hansen states that the philosophy statement assists in examining the unexamined:

> Moreover, consider what it would mean if a teacher operated without a philosophy of education. In its absence, the teacher would have no recourse but to rely on unexamined habits; on memories of his or her own teachers, as well as experiences as a student; and on resources contrived by other people whose outlook may or may not be compatible, much less more enlightened than the teacher's own (p. 8).

Hansen's statement highlights the importance of having a teaching

philosophy. Hansen believes that teachers who operate without a philosophy have only one recourse- they must rely on "unexamined habits" (p. 8). The question that remains is whether or not a philosophy of education does change a teacher's pedagogy.

In order to change a philosophy, educators have argued that it takes a certain type of approach, whether that stance be Freirean, progressive, behaviorist, constructivist, or traditional. This is of importance because teachers are often resistant to change and maintain a naïve commitment to progressivism. This naïve commitment to progressivism has been one that has kept teachers loyal to the pedagogical practices closest to their own beliefs and culture (Ball, 1997).

Peterson (2003) examines how he became a proponent of the Freirean method of teaching. He argued that after he read philosopher, Paulo Freire's work, teaching and learning became more than just "relevant" and "student centered" (p. 365). He realized in order to make a difference in his bilingual inner-city classroom, he needed to incorporate the Freirean method of "problem posing" education (p. 366). This method required that he and his students become actors in figuring out the world through a process of mutual communication. However, what is unique about Peterson's change is he realized that the "Freirean Method" was not just about his practical experiences in the classroom, but it focused on him changing how he saw his students. He realized "one has to have a perspective about learners and learning which runs counter to the dominant educational ideology" (p. 366). His philosophy about teaching and learning became one that embraced the experience of students and respected the students' culture, language, and dialect.

Broad questions framed this study and are presented here: How does a philosophy guide a teacher's pedagogy? What theoretical knowledge is necessary regarding philosophy? How is this understanding enacted in a classroom? With these questions in mind, I began this inquiry into how a teacher's philosophy intersects with classroom practice.

Methods

Driven by a critical social theory as defined by LeCompte, (1972), the main focus of this study was to discover student and teacher empowerment within the teaching of reading and writing. Given this goal, the study used a qualitative approach viewing literacy and pedagogy as situated within a socio-cultural and critical perspective. This particular approach views literacy and pedagogy as: (a) a practice that engages reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it, (b) a practice that uses language to exercise power and to question everyday practices of privilege and injustice, and (c) analyzes how non-dominant groups can gain access to dominated forms of language (Freire, 1987; Comber, 2001; Janks, 2001; LeCompte, 1972). Additionally, a socio-cultural and critical perspective assisted in discovering how teachers could become more self-reflective about their instructional practices and curricular philosophies (LeCompte, 1972).

These particular epistemological assumptions correlated with emic methods that involve research subjects as participants or collaborators, making the researcher and the participants co-equals in the "telling of the story." In addition, these assumptions honor participants' voice and the realization that reality is constructed by the participants in any social setting, especially in research settings where there are multiple voices and

discourses. Interpretive fieldwork consisted of careful recording of field notes and collection of artifacts (LeCompte, 1972; Hymes, 1972).

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at Southwest High School in Los Angeles, California. Southwest is located in south Los Angles in a multiethnic community with an estimated half-million residents [demographics here]. Of these residents, about a third are below the national poverty level. While the area was once all African-American, now, it is more than half Latino; however the neighborhood surrounding Southwest, and the composition of the school, is mostly African-American. Southwest opened its doors as an experimental school in 1968 and houses one of two gifted and talented programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District. While Southwest may be known for its gifted and talented program, it is also known for gang violence, high dropout rates, and poor college attendance. Southwest's High's population is about 3,000 students, which is about 1,000 more students above capacity, leading to severe overcrowding and a high student to teacher ratio (California Department of Education, 2003).

As a participant observer, I chose this particular classroom and participants because of its diverse population in terms of racial, social, and economic factors and because of the teacher. After meeting and talking with this teacher, I realized that his pedagogy was reflective of the pedagogy in which I based my research, in particular, a pedagogy that was grounded in critical theory. The setting was a 12th grade English expository composition classroom with a total of 40 students, designed by the district to cover the California State Language Arts standards of reading, writing, analyzing, and communicating. However, the instructor for this course also emphasized working

towards mastering literacy skills through the critical analysis of various texts that would enhance thinking, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Another main goal of this class, according to the instructor, was the pursuit of self and social change through literacy and multiple forms of literature.

Data Collection and Analysis

Over the course of nine months beginning in September of 2004, I conducted observations for four hours a day, three times per week. I observed one 11th grade English literature class and two 12th grade expository composition classes. The data collected was used to operationalize and define critical literacy and critical pedagogy within the events, curriculum, and activities that occurred within the classroom. Unit analysis (Bogdan and Biklen, 2005) was used in order to interpret the data. Unit analysis provided "units of data" from field notes, transcripts, and documents. Specifically non-linguistic units (content analysis, thematic analysis), sociolinguistic units (discourse analysis) and inductive analysis (thematic analysis) were used to open code and organize the data for this study. For data analysis there were several categories and themes used in order to organize these specific units of analysis. The categories for this study correlated to my overall research questions. Findings were divided into the following categories: a) Findings that demonstrate critical literacy as a crucial component of the English curriculum, b) Pedagogical methods considered themes of critical literacy, c) Pedagogical methods considered themes of critical pedagogy, and d) Counter discourses that lead to improved academic literacy.

Two major themes emerged from analysis.   The themes are the connectedness of a teaching philosophy related to critical literacy and critical pedagogy and the notion that what we teach is who we are as educators.

Theory and Practice: You Can't Have One without the Other

The teacher, Mr. Cruz, had taught English at Southwest for six years and was a graduate of the Los Angeles public schools. After spending an entire academic year with this English teacher and his 11th and 12th grade students, I came to truly understand how a teacher develops and enacts a philosophy about teaching.

Mr. Cruz's classroom bungalow, situated behind Southwest High School, was given the name D-4. The outside seemed ordinary. In fact, it looked similar to the rest of the classrooms located behind the high school. My initial impression was that the inside appeared conventional as well. Posters aligned the walls, routine in a traditional classroom set-up. However, these posters were not ordinary or commonplace. The content of these posters spoke of revolution and political action. In particular, three posters adorning Mr. Cruz's classroom space caught my attention: Talib Kweli a rapper, Erykah Badu a neo-soul singer, and Che Guevara the revolutionary, with one of his most famous quotations, "When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food they call me a communist."

How this teacher's classroom was organized provided insight into his philosophy. However, it was through observing his lectures and conducting interviews that I discovered how this teacher's philosophy was produced, the knowledge he used to develop it, and how he enacted it in his classroom.

For Mr. Cruz, the underpinnings of what kind of teacher he wanted to be were strong. This foundation was formed by his earlier experiences as a student within the Los Angeles Public Schools and his exposure to different educational philosophies as a graduate student. Just as theorists discuss how teachers rely on "unexamined habits" (Hansen, 2007) and "earlier impressions, ideas and orientations" (Lortie, 1975), Mr. Cruz expressed how his earlier notions about teaching guided his philosophy:

> [I always wanted to] be that type of teacher I wish I always had. [I wanted a teacher] who helped me understand my reality in ways that Paulo Freire talks about. I didn't know about Paulo Freire at the time. I wish [I had] somebody who understood and knew the conditions of the community especially the way that we felt.

Mr. Cruz's sentiments displayed two key epistemological ideas. First, he realized that he wanted to become, "that type of teacher I wish I always had." He realized there were things about his own education that were lacking, and that many of his teachers never understood him or the needs of his community. Second, he considered philosopher Paulo Freire as key to understanding the kind of teacher he wanted to be. Freire, a Brazilian educator, challenged the conditions of Brazil with what he called, "a pedagogy for the oppressed" (Freire, 1970 p. 12). This pedagogy was a revolutionary way to create a new school grounded in a new educational praxis. Freire's work required that questions be asked regarding power, culture, and oppression. For Freire, education was about social agency, voice, and participation in the democratic system. Epistemologically, Paulo Freire was a key theorist for Mr. Cruz, influencing his philosophy. Similar to how Peterson (2003) examined how he became a proponent of

the Freirean Method, Mr. Cruz also realized how Paulo Freire's theory of critical

pedagogy was significant to his practice.

> I think when it comes down to it; critical pedagogy is really about the distribution
>
> of power. It's about the powerful and the powerless. And when someone is
>
> critical, they understand how history is always present in the moment. And by
>
> understanding that, [we] recognize the privilege that certain histories have over
>
> others and [we] work to decentralize people's privilege and make it more
>
> inclusive to those that are usually marginalized. I don't mean that in an abstract
>
> sense I actually mean that in an economic, cultural and political sense. So
>
> critical pedagogy in many ways is trying to seek out what is not there and always
>
> questioning what we assume to be true. [We have to] be more inclusive of those
>
> who don't have voices and ultimately rethink and redistribute who has power
>
> (Author's field notes, 2004).

The above quotation, culled from interview data, defined a core principle of how Mr.

Cruz understood theory, in this case, critical pedagogy. Additionally, this quotation

revealed crucial epistemological tenets central to his pedagogy. Mr. Cruz articulated

what he knew and how he acquired the knowledge that ultimately drove his teaching.

However, how was this philosophy enacted in his classroom?

Prior to the first day of class, I asked Mr. Cruz to further discuss how he enacted

what he believed about Paulo Freire in his classroom. Mr. Cruz stated:

> Like television, music, and films were infiltrated by marginalized folks, we're
>
> [teachers] slowly taking over education. Everything I hope to look at focuses on
>
> progressively transforming Southwest High School and serving the needs of our

students. Basically, trying to re-think a school-wide curriculum working

towards self and social change.

Additionally Mr. Cruz sent me his course syllabus, which he interpreted as being his first

step at implementing Paulo Freire's philosophy in his classroom. Examining the

syllabus, I noticed in bold letters the D-4 core responsibilities which incorporated Mr.

Cruz's philosophy in to his practice.

Figure 1Expository Composition Classroom Responsibilities

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS CLASS:

1) HAVE EACH OTHER'S BACK (Respect others & their property; be supportive)!

2) COME TO CLASS ON TIME & BE INVOLVED IN THE LEARNING!

3) CHALLENGE YOURSELF BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE!

4) KEEP *OUR* CLASS CLEAN

5) STAY TRUE TO OUR ACADEMIC, COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL OBJECTIVES.

According to Mr. Cruz, each "responsibility" is a glimpse into how he enacted his

philosophy in his classroom. Mr. Cruz saw the first responsibility as an example of

Paulo Freire's theoretical idea of critical pedagogy. "Have each other's back," according

to Mr. Cruz, displayed a unique language that was both familiar and comforting to the

students but also displayed Freire's notion of solidarity, social responsibility and

discipline (Freire, 1970). Another responsibility pointed out by Mr. Cruz was,

"challenging yourself beyond your comfort zone." Mr. Cruz believed that this rule spoke

to Freire's idea of challenging the status quo in an effort to discover alternative paths for self and social development (Freire, 1970). He felt that within his classroom it was important for his students to think outside the box. Finally, with the last rule, Mr. Cruz introduced the core meaning of his class. The idea of staying true to academics, community, and cultural objectives became the central focus of his classroom. Through this last responsibility, Mr. Cruz wanted to provide a lens for connecting what students learn to who they are.

Through "classroom responsibilities" Mr. Cruz revealed what he believed about education. What he esteems about Paulo Freire was not just empty sayings, but brought to fruition through his "classroom responsibilities." His philosophy about education is comprised of a statement of values, a moral compass and an abiding engine of ideas, all the essential components that Hansen (2007) believes should be a part of a teacher's philosophy. However, the final piece to developing his philosophy was not just how he enacted his philosophy in his classroom but how he was able to examine the unexamined.

The Self-Actualized Teacher: What We Teach is Who We Are

The idea of self-actualization presents many possibilities for teaching. According to hooks (1991), teachers who are self-actualized are able to teach in a manner that empowers students and moves beyond the boundaries of compartmentalized bits of knowledge and narrowed perspectives. Further, hooks believes that teaching can become a career that engages not only the student, but the teacher as well. When teachers are self-actualized they consider teaching as a practice of understanding students and themselves. Mr. Cruz was a teacher who I considered to be self-

actualized. His history and experiences in and out of the classroom demonstrated how this could be done.

During an interview, Mr. Cruz shared with me how, as a student of the Los Angeles Unified School District, by the tenth grade he dropped out of high school. He explained to me that his attitude about school was like many of the students he taught, and he understood the positions of many of his students who were on the verge of dropping out. His experiences and understanding translated to practice. Often in his class he stated, "Don't punk out now. I've been where you are and I know how hard it is." His narrative also included how he obtained his GED, graduated from a state university, and eventually, went on to teach high school. Additionally, it was through his narrative that he articulated what teaching meant to him:

> This is not a job to me; it's a life style. It's not something I do and not go home and think about.   It's something I do that makes me- me. And none of it ever feels like work because it's just what I do. I know that I'm not doing it for me. Then when I'm tired and I don't want to do an assignment, I think of some of my former students and I know that I need to work hard and not [just] for me. It's not something we can wait to happen, it's something we have to make happen. And I don't care what color you are. I don't care where you come from. You can be a critical pedagogue, but part of that responsibility means reflecting every day through theory about your practice. Make adjustments. Make critical adjustments to your practice.

Mr. Cruz demonstrated how he is self-actualized by realizing that change does not always fall on students changing who they are. He admitted that change happened

for him because he was part of a daily struggle to change his teaching. Mr. Cruz's statement spoke to the purpose of an educational philosophy when he revealed, "it's not just a job; it's a lifestyle." He realized that in order for students to reach their academic goals, he had to unpack his discursive practices and understand his ideological positions about education.

Conclusion

Mr. Cruz's educational philosophy, enacted through his teaching practices, speaks to the notion that what we teach is who we are. He provided concrete demonstrations of philosophy development and the effort it took to have it manifested in every aspect of teaching. Mr. Cruz's educational philosophy was not just sayings on paper or words on a page, rather, it was actualized by what he did in the classroom and his understanding of the decisions he made.

Theoretical Knowledge

Mr. Cruz had an articulated belief about what he esteems about education. The theoretical knowledge that guides Mr. Cruz is his understanding of philosopher, Paulo Freire. While a teacher's practice is important, nothing can happen unless a teacher understands why they do what they do. Mr. Cruz's practice is not just developed by what he does in the classroom, but happens because he was able to talk about his practice through a theoretical lens.

Pedagogical Knowledge

Mr. Cruz was able to state what he believed about education and enact it in his classroom. Mr. Cruz, through his "classroom responsibilities," demonstrated how his theoretical knowledge of Paulo Freire informed his practice.

Self-Actualization

Mr. Cruz unpacked his ideological positions. He realized in order to be an effective teacher, part of his responsibility was to "reflect every day through theory about his practice" and to "make critical adjustments."

Conclusion

Through philosophy development, teachers can begin to expand their current practices and beliefs in order to become better educators. As teachers, we pride ourselves in knowing our students, but what we lack, is knowing ourselves. While one goal has been to find commonality with our students, we must do so with discovery and honest dialogue of not only our strengths, but also our weaknesses.

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Does it *Really* Matter if Mommy and Daddy Can't Read? A Position Paper on Social Responsibility

Gerlinde Grandstaff-Beckers and Earl Cheek, Jr.

Keywords: social responsibility, adult literacy, struggling readers, cycle of illiteracy

Literacy levels of individuals are often perceived as indicators of the health and well-being of a society. Low levels of literacy have been linked to numerous social issues such as low productivity, high unemployment, low earnings, high rates of welfare dependency, incarceration, and teenage parenting (Drakeford, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Burgess, 2005; Greenburg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007; Nabozny, 2007; Web, Metha, & Jordan, 2010). Specific literacy skills are essential for functioning in United States (US) society. For instance, reading and writing skills are keys to lifetime learning and enable active participation where many transactions are based on the written word (ACT, 2010; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). The number of individuals with inadequate levels of literacy for active participation in an advanced technological society (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 2002; Chapman, Laird, & Kewal Ramani, 2010), coupled with the inequality in literacy achievement of various subgroups as defined by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) [U.S. Department of Education], add to what many perceive as the literacy crisis.

It is our position in this paper that literacy acquisition rests as a social responsibility across an individual's life time. We believe that it *really* does matter if

mommy and daddy can't read.

Literacy across the Lifespan

In the International Reading Association annual column, *What's Hot for 2011*, Cassidy, Ortlieb & Shettel (2011) [Survey results 2011] identified Adult Literacy, although hotter in 2011 than in 2010 [What's Hot for 2010 chart], as a "Not Hot" topic. Despite the rating for Adult Literacy as a "not Hot" 2010 topic, 75% of the respondents for the annual poll were in agreement that Adult Literacy should be hot (Cassidy, Ortlieb & Shettel, 2011). Should Adult Literacy be a "Hot Topic" in reading education?

We believe it is a very hot topic given the societal ramifications of adult illiteracy. Researchers such as Oxenham (2004) have long recognized that poverty and illiteracy are closely related and that illiteracy is a hindrance to economic and social development. As an example, researchers at the Rand Institute on Education and Training found that students who came from homes with lower incomes and whose parents who did not graduate from high school, had significantly lower achievement levels (Grissmer, Kirby, Berends, & Williamson,1994). Similarly, Kortering, Haring, & Klockars (1992) identified reading ability and family socioeconomic status as two of the major variables differentiating between individuals dropping out of school or those graduating. Social class, as measured by the educational and occupational levels of parents, has been identified as the most significant predictive indicator of educational attainment. Regardless of race or ethnicity, Webb, Metha & Jordan (2010) reported that students from families in the lowest 20% of family income were six times more likely to drop out of school (p.198). Thus, several researchers have posited that parental income is highly correlated with

school readiness.

Early Literacy

Evans reported that kindergarteners from low-income homes start school approximately one full year behind middle-class peers in reading (2005). Children hailing from low-income backgrounds are less likely to attend pre-school and on average, compounding the issue, parents from low-income households tend to read and speak less to their children (Evans, 2005). Waiting rarely works; late bloomers, such as those who begin formal school behind their peers and do not receive home support for literacy development, usually just wilt. According to Juel, (1988) the probability that child who was a poor reader at the end of 1st grade would remain a poor reader at the end of 4th grade, is *.88.* Thus, literacy is critically important. The development of reading skills, the ability to obtain an education, and the ability for persons to learn throughout life (National Reading Panel (NPR) (2000) [http://www.nationalreadingpanel.org/] are interrelated.

Adolescent Literacy

According to some researchers, approximately 75 % of the students who had reading challenges in elementary school will continue to struggle and will have reading challenges in high school. The gap between good and poor readers actually widens in later grades (Swaywitz, Fletcher, Holahan, & Shaywitz, 2001; Diamond, 2006). By some estimates, there are eight million struggling adolescent readers in schools across the US. Sixty percent of 12th graders can be considered to be reading below grade level (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). The report, *The National Assessment of Educational Progress Trends in Academic progress: Three Decades of Student Performance*

(NEAP) reported only 37% of high school students score high enough on reading achievement tests (NCES, 2000). Furthermore, the percentage of 12th graders reading below grade level has remained remarkably stable over the years (NCES, 2010). For instance, between 2006 and 2010, ACT benchmark attainment percentages remained relatively stable in reading with approximately 53% of ACT-tested graduates meeting the reading benchmark (ACT, 2010 [visit Full Report]). Even more alarming, in 2010, only 34% of ACT-tested students of Hispanic origin and 21% of African-American high school graduates met readiness benchmarks in reading.

Young people should be able to read and write when they graduate from high school so they will be able to continue their education and/or earn an adequate living after graduation. Unfortunately, across the US, 42% of community college first year students and 20% of first year students in four-year institutions enroll in at least one remedial course (Wirt et al. 2004, p. 169). Of the almost one-third of all freshmen taking remedial courses, 20% were enrolled in remedial reading courses (Wirt et al, 2004, p. 169). Clearly, struggling beginning students appear to continue to struggle as they matriculate through school and as indicated above, many students who do enroll in post-secondary schooling who struggled early in their education exhibit difficulties with literacy as well.

In the era of NCLB, high stakes such as district-and state-wide assessments, retention, and ultimately, withholding of high school diplomas, are associated with performing below grade level in reading and writing (Grigg, Daane, Jin, & Campbell, 2003). The Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington, D.C. based advocacy group, released a report titled, *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in*

Middle and High School Literacy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). *Reading Next* [See **publications & materials**] was designed to expand the reading improvement efforts of *Reading First* [Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, viewed by some as a failed effort, but perceived by others as an attempt to address struggling readers nation-wide*.* In theory, *Reading First* was a focused, nationwide effort designed to provide more students with effective reading instruction in the early grades. Its aim was for all students to acquire grade-level reading skills by the third grade.

Despite the original intent of both NCLB and *Reading First* to improve literacy rates by offering a long-term strategy for improving adolescent literacy rates, unfortunately, many struggling adolescent readers have a more immediate need (Hock & Deshler, 2003). Lacking in the *Reading First* efforts was an emphasis on reading comprehension, learning while reading, reading in the content areas, and reading in the service of secondary or higher education. Because of the rapidly accelerating challenges of modern society, there is clearly a need to improve adolescent literacy (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). According to *Reading Next*, for a variety of reasons the majority of older students who struggle with reading can accurately read (decode) words, but they cannot comprehend what they have read. Further, some students lack the strategies to help them comprehend what they have read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004). Specifically, these students may not be able to generalize their strategy use to content-area literacy tasks. Moreover, these students lack instruction in and knowledge of strategies specific to particular subject areas. According to Alliance for Excellent Education (2006), failing to acquire the adequate literacy skills required to keep up with

expectations in high school, is one of the most commonly cited reasons for dropping out.

The Predicament of Struggling Readers who Continually Experience Failure

A dropout is defined as a student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of study. *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2008,* identified approximately 3 million civilian non-institutionalized 16- through 24-year-olds were not enrolled in high school and had not earned a high school diploma or alternative credential (Chapman, Laird, & KewalRamani, 2010). Socially, those who drop out are stigmatized but the economic impact is even more significant. In their lifetime, dropouts earn approximately $300,000 less than high school graduates, they are twice as likely to need health and welfare services, and a significant percentage are incarcerated (Kidder, 1990). Each class of dropouts costs the nation more than $200 billion in lost wages and tax revenues and billions more for welfare benefits and social support programs (Nabozny, 2007). In this context, it makes sense for educational practitioners and researchers to be wholly engaged in ongoing efforts to improve the literacy skills of struggling adolescent readers.

Adult Literacy

Literacy issues, especially difficulties with reading that involve comprehension, content material, and struggles with strategies specific to particular subject areas, extend beyond the school years, permeating the adult years in a variety of ways. The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) is a nationally representative assessment of English literacy among Americans. Over 19,000 adults participated in

the national and state-level assessments, representing the entire population of US

adults who are age 16 and older, most in their homes and some in prison from the 50

states and the District of Columbia. Both NAAL (Kutner, Greenberg, & Baer,2005)

defined literacy as the following:

>Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's
>
>goals and to develop ones' knowledge and potential (p. 2). Prose literacy is the
>
>knowledge and skills needed to perform prose tasks, (i.e., to search,
>
>comprehend, and use continuous texts). Examples include editorials, news
>
>stories, brochures, and instructional materials. Document literacy is the
>
>knowledge and skills needed to perform document tasks, (i.e., to search,
>
>comprehend, and use non-continuous texts in various formats). Examples
>
>include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables,
>
>and drug or food labels. Quantitative literacy is the knowledge and skills required
>
>to perform quantitative tasks, (i.e., to identify and perform computations, either
>
>alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials). Examples
>
>include balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or
>
>determining the amount (p.2).

Thirty million or 14% of adults aged 16-24 were found to function in the Below Basic

prose literacy level. Below Basic indicates no more than the most simple and concrete

literacy skills. The reading capacity of adults at the Below Basic level ranged from

being non-literate in English to having the ability of locating easily identifiable

information in short, commonplace text (Kutner, Greenberg, & Baer, 2005). Fifty Five

percent of adults with Below Basic prose literacy did not graduate from high school,

compared to 15 % of adults in the general population. NAAL concluded that literacy levels increased with the completion of more education.

Adult Illiteracy: A Common Incarceration Factor

Included in the representative sample, NAAL (Kutner et al, 2005) assessed approximately 1,200 inmates of federal and state prisons in order to provide separate estimates of literacy for the incarcerated population. NAAL found that a very low percentage of prisoners were considered proficient when assessed in the area of prose literacy (3%), document literacy (2%) and quantitative literacy (2%) respectively (p.13). Even more illuminating are the percentages of prisoners that perform at the below basic level, no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills, across the three categories. For example, 9% of women and 17% men perform below basic in the area of prose literacy, 15% of both women and men perform below basic in document literacy, and an alarming 47% of women and 39% of men perform below basic in the area of quantitative literacy (p. 19). Fifteen percent of incarcerated African Americans perform in the below basic category in prose literacy, 19% in document literacy, and 49% in quantitative literacy. The percentages of below basic are even higher for the Hispanic population. Thirty-five percent of the incarcerated Hispanic population score below basic in prose literacy, 23% score below basic in document literacy, and an overwhelming 53% score below basic in quantitative literacy (p.32). NAAL data make clear the low literacy levels among all African Americans regardless of whether they are incarcerated or not and the percentages are even more dismal among the Hispanic population (Greenberg, Dunleavy, & Kutner, 2007). The strongest common denominator among individuals in correctional facilities is illiteracy (Kidder, 1990).

Evidence suggests a correlation between low literacy levels and high levels of crime

and recidivism (Drakeford, 2002). Approximately 70% of the incarcerated population is

believed to be illiterate (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). Poor reading skills are not

direct causes of criminal activity, but persons who have deficits in these areas are

disproportionately represented in correctional institutions (Drakeford, 2002). According

to *Literacy Behind Prison Walls* (NCES, 1994) prisoners who have not received a high

school diploma or GED demonstrate lower levels of proficiency in literacy. It is often

asserted that prisoners with higher literacy levels are less likely than prisoners with

lower skill levels to be repeat offenders. Prisoners who can read comprehensively, fill

out forms, and analyze numbers are more likely to develop high self-esteem, find

employment, and be able to avoid criminal behavior when released than those without

those skills (NCES, 1994).

Cyclical Literacy Issues

Literacy challenges are encountered by children growing up in household where

adults lack basic literacy skills; consequently, these poor literacy skills are passed from

generation to generation. Cooter (2006) defined intergenerational illiteracy as, "a socio-

cultural phenomenon whereby illiterate parents inadvertently sponsor home conditions

that may seriously hinder their children's reading and writing development, thus

perpetration a cycle of illiteracy" (p.698). Lack of appropriate language models, little

child-parent interaction, and limited quality print materials are contributing factors of

intergenerational illiteracy when it is common to find three or more family generations of

low literacy skills (Cooter, 2006). Intergenerational illiteracy often exists in rural and

high-poverty – high crime urban settings. Teenage parenting is a subculture within the

intergenerational illiteracy cycle. Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund (1990) reports that girls who are consistently in the bottom of their class in basic literacy skills are much more likely to become pregnant, and if they are also living in poverty, the likelihood increases still further. Bennett, Weigel, & Martin (2002) state educational attainment of parents, specifically mothers is the most important predictor of children's future success. In general as a group, teenage mothers provide less oral language stimulation for their children and need significant support and education to positively affect their children's literacy development (Burgess, 2005). Further, there is overwhelming evidence to show that the establishment of strong literacy skills reduces the risk of teenage pregnancy (Low, 2002). Given the statistics and research results available for literacy attainment across the lifespan, we return to our original question: Does it *really* matter if Mommy and Daddy can't read? Overwhelmingly, the response is yes; literacy counts across all age groups and cuts across cultural and economic lines.

Perpetuating the Cycle of Illiteracy

The family, often the student's first teachers, plays a key role in children's success in school. According to Epstein (1990) parents contribute to their children's intellectual growth in a number of ways such as placing a value on education, preparing their children for school, encouraging language development, and promoting comprehension through reading. Parental involvement in children's reading, and parental belief about reading, both correlate with and have causal impact on reading motivation and achievement (Baker, Scher& Mackler,1997; Baker, 2003; Senechal & Young, 2008). Results from studies have shown that early readers come from home environments where adult caregivers read to them regularly and where books and

reading materials are readily available (Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1985; Morrow, 1983; Newman, 2006). The meta-analysis conducted by Bus et al. (1995) indicated that 64% of the children who were read to will be more proficient in reading compared with only 36% of children who are not exposed to books. Although the majority of the research surrounding family involvement and engagement in literacy activities has examined the role parents play in early literacy, Klauda (2009) examined the parent's role in reading fourth through 12th grades and concluded that parent's support for their children's reading continues to relate positively to children's motivation to read in adolescence. Several researchers have demonstrated that parents' literacy practices and beliefs have a profound effect on their children's literacy skills even prior to formal schooling. Furthermore, in the results of these studies, researchers hav demonstrated that children's literacy skills increase as a direct result of increasing parents' awareness and ability to develop literacy skills despite socioeconomic background (Cronan, Cruz, Arriaga, & Sarkin, 1996; Ponzetti & Dulin, 1997; Leseman, & deJong,1998; DeBaryshe, Binder & Buell, 2000; Storch, & Whitehurst, 2001). The evidence is clear. Failure to learn to read places children's futures and lives at risk for highly deleterious outcomes. Helping adults improve their literacy skills has a direct and measurable impact on both the education and quality of life of their children.

Literacy and Social Responsibility

In a general sense, social responsibility is advocacy for the needs of others and program implementation that reflects a focus on social issues affecting contemporary global societies and communities. By this definition, we, as a society, are socially responsible for the outcomes of adult literacy. In 1990, members of the National

Governors Association adopted six goals, the fifth of these goals states: *By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship* (Irwin, 1991, p. 7)*.* The following year, Congress passed the National Literacy Act of 1991[ERIC Full Text], the purpose of which was, "to enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the US acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs," (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 2002, p. xiii). In an attempt to count the number of individuals lacking basic literacy skills in the past, researchers treated illiteracy as an individual condition in which a person either had the ability to read and use printed materials or not (Irwin, 1991).

As we progress through the 21st century, many past theories fail to acknowledge the complexity of the literacy problem and the range of solutions needed to correct it with implications for employment opportunities, welfare dependency, incarceration, and teenage parenting. Adolescent and adult literacy is a national problem in the US that extends far beyond the individual. Illiteracy is a community problem; it is *our* problem.

Literacy is our social responsibility in the simplest sense as everyone needs to be concerned about the human cost of limited literacy. Or, has this issue been overshadowed by the economic and social costs to adequately equip all citizens to read and write proficiently? Under the current practices, we as a society just continue to facilitate intergenerational illiteracy and possibly contribute to creating an entire illiterate

population. The future success of children, families, and communities demands that we make certain that we have a literate population and this initiative should affect us all.

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Literacy and Social Responsibility, **an electronic journal
of the Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG of the IRA
Submission Requirements**

Independent, peer-reviewed ejournal providing an international forum for educators, authors, and researchers at all levels presenting practices promoting literacy development that reflects social responsibility among all learners. Manuscript focus should highlight quality programs advocating community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and stewardship reflecting an appreciation for all forms of diversity. As an electronic journal, interactive submissions with active links are particularly sought.

Full-length manuscripts should not exceed 4,000 words including all references, figures and appendices (approximately 15 pages). Submissions should be blinded 1) remove author names and affiliations from bylines, 2) replace references to your own and to coauthors' published work simply with "Author (year)" in text and in reference list [delete all publication titles], 3) mask any city, state, institutional affiliation, or links to personal websites. All submissions should conform to the style outlined in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Text should be presented double-spaced in 12 point font, in Microsoft Word; images should be submitted in jpg format. Authors of accepted manuscripts must also provide written permission releases for use of material from another source (including student's writing samples, text or figures excerpted from another published work, etc.). Releases must also be provided for use of any person's words, likeness or images.

Book reviews of professional literature and children's literature are typically 1,500 words and can focus on a single text or multiple, related texts. Reviews of children's literature should suggest themes relating literacy instruction to community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and stewardship, reflecting an appreciation for all forms of diversity.

Relevant poetry submissions will be considered.

**Submit electronically, attaching file to:
Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell @ sdowell@lsu.edu**

For more information about Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG of IRA, visit our website @ http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Literacy and Social Responsibility, a special interest group of the International Reading Association, is accepting submissions for their electronic journal, *Literacy and Social Responsibility*.

This independent, peer-reviewed ejournal provides an open forum presenting practices promoting literacy development that reflects social responsibility among all learners. Editor seeks manuscripts highlighting quality programs advocating community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and stewardship reflecting an appreciation for diversity. Book reviews of professional literature and children's literature and relevant poetry submissions will also be considered.

Deadline for next issue is March 15, 2012; publication August 2012. Submit electronically, attaching Word file to: Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell @ sdowell@lsu.edu

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The Literacy and Social Responsibility
Special Interest Group Announces the:

Literacy and Service Recognition Award

CELEBRATE THE WORK OF OUR YOUTH ACTIVELY SERVING THEIR COMMUNITIES. NOMINATE YOUR STUDENTS!!

<u>WHAT IS IT?</u> Given annually, this award will honor students for exemplary service that addresses the purpose of the Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (L-SR SIG) of the International Reading Association (IRA). A presentation will be made at the L-SR SIG session of the IRA annual convention announcing and featuring the award winners.

<u>*L-SR SIG Purpose*</u>: *To study, understand, and promote high-quality programs which foster community service, participatory citizenship, social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, environmental stewardship, and caring behavior that occurs within the development of literacy across the curriculum.*

<u>*Service projects might relate to*</u>:   *Literacy & Respecting Diverse Cultures*
Classroom Communities of Inquiry   Literacy and Character Education & Service Learning
Community-Based Writing   Fostering Social, Emotional, & Academic Growth
Language Arts & the Natural World   Literacy & Civic/Social/Environmental Engagement

<u>HOW DO I APPLY FOR IT?</u> Guidelines for submission for the *Literacy and Service Recognition Award* can be found at our website: http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/
You will be asked to submit contact and program information, including as essay that describes the program and particularly the impact the nominee has made.
Visit our website where you can learn about us, view the newsletter and e-journal, access resources, peruse our programs and consider ways to get involved.

****Many thanks to Alma Flor Ada and Isabel   Campoy for generously providing seed funds to launch this award.

Guidelines for submission for the
Literacy and Service Recognition Award

WHAT IS IT?

This recognition is awarded annually to students for exemplary community service that relates to the purposes of the Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (L-SR SIG) of the International Reading Association (IRA):

To study, understand, and promote high-quality programs which foster community service, participatory citizenship, social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, environmental stewardship, and caring behavior that occurs within the development of literacy across the curriculum.

Service projects might relate but are not limited to the following areas.
> Classroom Communities of Inquiry
> Literacy, Character Education & Service Learning
> Language Arts & the Natural World
> Community-based Writing
> Fostering Social, Emotional & Academic Growth
> Literacy & Civic/Social/environmental Engagement
> Literacy & Respecting Diverse Cultures

HOW WILL AWARD WINNERS BE RECOGNIZED?

- First prize winners receive an engraved plaque (name of award, name of project and student leader/s, year) and certificate of recognition; second and third place winners receive certificates of recognition.
- Award winning student leaders are recognized and invited to present their work (live or through video) at the L-SR SIG meeting at the annual convention of the International Reading Association and are included in the printed program.
- Information about the award and winning programs are available publicly on the L-SR SIG website http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/ and reported in our e-Journal.

WHO CAN SUBMIT FOR THE AWARD AND HOW?

A teacher/librarian (sponsor) may nominate individual students for the *Literacy and Service Recognition Award*. Submit a packet of application that includes the following (I) contact information and (II) project information:

I. **Contact Information for**
1. Sponsor/nominator (name, address, phone number, email address) (Note: Each sponsor may nominate only ONE project/program per year.)
2. **Student leader/s (name/s, address/es, phone number/s, email address/es, name/s of school/s, age/s of student/s)**
3. **Parent/guardian (name, address, phone number, email address) for each student leader**
4. Other **key** individuals involved in the program/project (name, address, phone number, email address, ages if college age or younger)
5. Name, address, phone number, and email address for: principal, superintendent, local newspaper, local radio station, local TV station

Guidelines for submission for the
Literacy and Service Recognition Award
continued

II. **Project information**
1. Name of project/program (please create a name if it did not have one previously)
2. A brief essay (written by the student leader/s, if possible) describing the project/program including numbers of students involved and individuals served and how, why and when the project/program got started. Tell how it relates to literacy and to an area of interest of our group (L-SR SIG). Tell the specific contributions the student leader/s made to the quality of the program.
3. Validating evidence of the extent and impact of the program – how do you know a difference was made (e.g., testimonials, letters of support from partners, letters of commendation, newspaper articles about the project and/or student leader/s, website URL, if one exists, which provides information about the program and the results of the program). Include photographs or a short video of the "project in action." Please identify each person in the pictures and provide *Release Information* for each which includes: a statement that the photo may be used publicly (on our website, eJournal, etc.), with signatures for each individual (also include signatures for each guardian for those 18 years of age and younger).
4. Strongly recommended: A short video clip in digital format on a CD or DVD (maximum of 5 minutes) which involves the student leader/s and information about the project (such as the students describing the program and its impact on the community and themselves). Also provide *Release Information* (see #3) indicating permission to use the video on our website if selected for the award.
5. Also please indicate the willingness of the student leader/s with their sponsor/guardians to attend the annual IRA convention, if selected, to receive the award in person and to describe the program to the audience in a 5-minute presentation. The videotape or a *Skype* correspondence may serve in lieu of attendance.

LSR Awards will be presented at the SIG presentation at IRA in Chicago, IL.

Send all materials (via email and/or regular mail) to the Award Chair of the IRA Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group by December 1, 2011 for the 2011 *Literacy and Service Recognition Award*. You will receive confirmation of receipt of materials via email. You will be notified about results of committee review by January 30, 2012. If you have questions, please contact the chair of awards via email.

Denise Stuart, LSR Award Chair
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Zook 10, The University of Akron
Akron, OH 44325-4205

A Little Lagniappe………..Helpful Resources

- www.fairtest.org The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) works to end the misuses and flaws of standardized testing and to ensure that evaluation of students, teachers and schools is fair, open, valid and educationally beneficial.
- www.rethinking.org   Founded in 1986 by activist teachers, Rethinking Schools is a nonprofit, independent publisher of educational materials. We advocate the reform of elementary and secondary education, with a strong emphasis on issues of equity and social justice.
- www.essentialschools.org   The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) is at the forefront of creating and sustaining personalized, equitable, and intellectually challenging schools. Essential schools are places of powerful learning where all students have the chance to reach their fullest potential.
- www.foxfire.org   "Foxfire" is a method of classroom instruction—not a step-by-step checklist, but an over-arching approach that incorporates the original Foxfire classroom's building blocks of giving students the opportunity to make decisions about *how* they learn required material, using the community around them as a resource to aid that learning, and giving the students an audience for their work beyond the classroom.
- www.forumforeducation.org   The Forum for Education and Democracy is a national education "action tank" committed to the public, democratic role of public education — the preparation of engaged and thoughtful democratic citizens.
- www.edchange.org   EdChange is a team of passionate, experienced, established, educators dedicated to equity, diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. With this shared vision, we have joined to collaborate in order to develop resources, workshops, and projects that contribute to progressive change; change in ourselves, our schools, and our society.
- www.t4sj.org Teachers 4 Social Justice is a grassroots non-profit teacher support and development organization. Our mission is to provide opportunities for self-transformation, leadership, and community building to educators in order to affect meaningful change in the classroom, school, community and society.
- www.tolerance.org   Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children.
- www.rougeforum.org The Rouge Forum is a group of educators, students, and parents seeking a democratic society.
- www.susanohanian.org   Susan Ohanian is a social critic with a web site updated daily on the status of education in the U.S.