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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the identities and discourses of 10 students who were completing their Literacy Education MS studies to gain certification as literacy specialists. More specifically, it asked: 1) What do beginning literacy specialists' discourses reveal about their evolving identities? 2) On what discourses do they draw? 3) How are situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated?

A sociocultural view that context, history, culture, discourse, power, and ideologies influence literacy, instruction, and teacher identity grounded this study. The analysis drew on Gee's (2000) notions of identity and discourse. It used critical discourse analysis to consider the oral and written texts produced by 10 graduate students. Data sources included interviews, field notes, and other documents that provided details about the context in which participants were situated.

These students' discourses revealed that they were somewhat (un)certain about their identities as teachers, literacy specialists, and people at an important life transition. (Un)certainty, with parentheses, represents individuals' simultaneous uncertainty and certainty. Participants seemed to be figuring out who they were and where they fit within these groups. Most participants were uncertain about how their affiliations within social groups may impact their work in schools. Yet they drew on race, class, gender, experience, and religion to measure their fit relative to others. Their discourses included helping and deficit perspectives. Such discourses could impede their ability to collaborate successfully with future students and colleagues and impact their overall effectiveness.

This study provides new insights about aspiring literacy specialists' identities and discourses at an important transitional juncture. At this point, as certified teachers, they were

completing advanced studies to earn additional certification as literacy specialists. These insights seem important given that (un)certainly, if left unaddressed, could result in negative identity constructions and continued reliance on deficit positioning, yielding lower quality instruction. The findings have implications for educators and researchers involved in designing literacy teacher education and ongoing professional development. It suggests teacher education may be an important context for offering support to teachers as they consider and critique the discourses they bring to their teaching and/or literacy specialist selves. Such insights may help literacy scholars to attend to the persistent questions, needs, experiences, and insights of those who pursue certification as literacy specialists for any number of reasons.

ASPIRING LITERACY SPECIALISTS' (UN)CERTAINTY:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Reading Education

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May 2014

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There are two ways to shine: You can be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

(Fortune Cookie, May 8, 2013)

One day, my five-year-old daughter and I were talking about legacies as a lifework one leaves for others to enjoy. I asked her, “What do you think my legacy will be?” She replied, “Your work.” In the eyes of a five-year-old whose lifetime included “Mommy’s work,” this dissertation is the candle. However, I see it as simply the mirror that reflects it. This work reflects so many who have shaped my identities in so many ways.

For one, I thank my early teachers. I am grateful for my sixth grade teacher, Heidi Clarke. She taught me most of what I know about grammar which made it possible to complete the analysis in this dissertation. I thank my undergraduate professors, Drs. Nancy and Patrick Casey who inspired me to pursue my doctorate. Each of these teachers pushed me to my cutting edge and, therefore, taught me to persevere through the hard parts—a skill I needed to complete this work.

I thank my most recent teacher, my dissertation chair, Dr. Kathleen Hinchman. Kathy, like those above, always pushed me while making every task purposeful—every draft was better than the last. Kathy always knew when I needed a “good work” compliment to motivate me to keep going. Outside of this dissertation, she provided me with incredible opportunities to grow as a scholar and teacher educator. It’s been a pleasure to be her, “Radar O’Reilly,” a name I am so flattered to have earned through our many years of work together. I will always be grateful for all of her time and effort towards this project.

I thank my dissertation committee member, Dr. Kelly Chandler-Olcott. Kelly was always available when I popped into her office, offering encouragement throughout the process. Kelly was also one of the first professors that I encountered in my studies at Syracuse University.

So much of what I learned from her I have tried to emulate in my own pedagogy. She is an incredible teacher.

I also thank my dissertation committee member, Dr. Marcelle Haddix. Marcelle was especially available for me in person and on the phone. I am grateful for the time that Marcelle spent with me talking about jobs, children, and life in academia. She always made me feel like whatever I was going through was “normal,” a sense I needed to know I could belong. She made me feel like I could complete this task.

I am thankful for my critical friends. I am grateful for those that have been constants in my life as well as those I met along the way during my studies and the writing of this dissertation. Their support and feedback has meant the world to me. They are lifelong friends.

Finally, I thank my family. I am thankful for my grandparents, Becky and Tom Wells, who encouraged me from a very young age to pursue my PhD. I am grateful for their interest in my identities as a scholar, teacher, and mother. I am grateful for all of the financial support they offered—whether it was for textbooks or parking in the garage. I hope that I have made them proud.

I thank my mom and dad, Kim and Bill Years, for their support. My mom and dad have always believed in me. They are the roots of my confidence that was required to complete this dissertation. They have listened to me talk about this study for a long time—my mom probably knows more about identity, discourse, and critical discourse analysis than most. She truly heard every detail. My parents often put their own lives on hold, when I came up on a deadline, to provide the utmost care for my daughters. Through this, they showed me parents’ devotion lasts a lifetime. I will be forever grateful.

I thank my husband, Matthew Stevens, for his continued support. From the time that we met, he knew that I wanted to pursue my PhD, and he helped make that dream a reality. He epitomized what it meant to be a partner throughout this project. Foremost, he took wonderful care of our daughters when I had lots of work to do, and it was always his pleasure. I am grateful for the ways he loved me during this project, even when I was perhaps not so lovable, and the ways that he, of course, loved our girls. We are so lucky to have such a selfless, committed individual in our lives.

I thank my loving daughters, Adelynn and Lyla. They both are the light of my life. I am so fortunate to have had their love and support while I did, “Mommy’s work.” My daughters made me smile a lot because the work of a dissertation became a common discourse in our house. Adelynn wrote her own dissertation and Lyla, too, would frequently pull up the VTech computer and type alongside of me. Addy and Lyla, I hope that I have exemplified what it means to be dedicated to you and my work, and my wish for you is that you also achieve your dreams.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. This work has truly been a family affair. We have teased that they have each earned a P-h-or-D in PhD. I am grateful for your unwavering support. In so many ways, I am the mirror that reflects all of you.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

And=and in leaving here and going to a new job, whatever it may be whenever it may be, um I really don't know what I want to do (.) any longer. I don't know if I would like to return to teaching kids like me or if I would like to be in the city. I don't know if I want to teach high school, which I taught, or stay at middle school. I don't know if I want to do reading or English ((laughs)). I just have so many more options (.) um and things that I really *do* love. Like I don't know where I fit best anymore. (Angela, July, 26, 2010)

The purpose of this study was to explore the identities and discourses of 10 graduate students, including Angela (all names are pseudonyms), who were studying in a Literacy Education MS program. I begin this chapter with a transcribed quotation from Angela, the most experienced teacher who participated in this study. This transcription includes the inflectional notation codes that allowed for detailed critical discourse analysis (CDA), the analytic method used for this study¹. Angela presented an interesting case within this research because she drew on many years of teaching experiences to articulate the ways her identities had evolved and were continuing to change. Angela explained that she was figuring out where she might fit after completing graduate school and relocating to a new state. She described herself as becoming more aware of the implications of her social affiliations as a White, middle class, female because of her teaching experiences in both suburban and urban contexts.

Angela's discourses reflected the nuanced ways individuals can be both certain and uncertain at the same time, which I call (un)certain. I use the parenthesis to represent the

¹ See appendix A for transcription coding system adapted from Tannen (1984/2005). This system of recording required capturing "ums" and "likes" and other incomplete or repeated words as an indication of how people see themselves and their ideas.

simultaneousness of certainty and uncertainty. Angela was certain about her identities as a wife, mother, and English teacher. Above, Angela's repetition of "I don't know..." pointed to her uncertainty. She was unsure about the grade level she would teach and whether she would best fit as an English teacher or literacy specialist. Despite many years of teaching experience, Angela's discourses suggest how she was in a state of (un)certainty. Britzman (2007), a distinguished researcher and professor of education, theorized about the study of teaching and learning and argued that, in fact, we are all always in a state of uncertainty: "Our work, after all, like the world where we live, is always out of joint" (p. 11). One might expect such (un)certainty may be even more typical to folks who choose to go to graduate school rather than enter the job market.

Angela's (un)certainty was enacted in institutional and societal discourses, like all of the participants in this study. She weighed whether, when she returned to teaching, she would teach "kids like me," a reference to her White, middle class, suburban upbringing, or teach in an urban context, where she was most recently an English teacher. Her use of "in the city" conflated geography with race and class. Angela reported later, teaching in the city fulfilled her desire to "help" those "disadvantaged" by socioeconomics, race, and language (Angela, January 4, 2011). Angela's, and her colleagues', discourses sometimes reflected usage associated with cultural deficit terminology. Cultural deficit terminology can suggest that students of color are culturally deprived and should assimilate to the dominant White middle class culture to succeed in and out of school (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Participants in this study were members of a cohort participating in a practicum at the conclusion of their program to fulfill one of the requirements for them to be certified as literacy specialists. This study employed critical discourse analyses of a variety of oral and written texts

produced by these individuals. A close look at aspiring literacy specialists' discourses revealed tacit ways the rhetoric of society was embedded in the discourses the students used when they seemed (un)certain about who they were and where they best fit. It recognizes that becoming a literacy specialist is a complex process complicated by the fact that many who study in this area have limited teaching experience and then face expanded job possibilities. Insights from this study may help literacy scholars to attend to the specific needs of those who aspire to work in schools as literacy specialists.

Rationale

I became interested in the university classroom as a site for studying discourse while serving as a graduate assistant in a literacy education practicum in the summer of 2009. Over the course of the six-week class, and as the students approached graduation, much about their discourses seemed to show new understandings about literacy theory and practice. In her work, Alsop (2006) described teachers' complex and sophisticated embodiment of identity, which "happens through a new teacher's participation in various genres of discourse that facilitate a dialogic engagement with students, mentors, teacher educators, family, and peers, and even internal dialogues with other personal subjectivities or ideologies" (p. 27). The practicum students' discourses suggested the site of their final studies may be an important site for understanding how individuals' evolving identities related to their studies and their teaching.

The following semester, I completed a class project that lay the groundwork for this dissertation study. I explored how three practicing teachers, with varying years of teaching experience who were also enrolled in a Literacy Education MS program, defined literacy and talked about experiences that shaped their teaching. I began thinking and reading about teacher beliefs and teacher identity. I discovered researchers who employed theoretical frames on

language, learning, and identity that helped me understand how these constructs tied to the social world (e.g., Assaf, 2005; Rogers, Marshall, & Tyson, 2006).

The studies I found recognized learning to teach reading is an “identity-shaping process” while highlighting complexities of preparing literacy teachers in the context of teacher education (Assaf, 2005, p. 202). They highlighted the tensions and negotiations preservice teachers experienced about language, literacy, diversity, and past learning experiences. The studies also reported that participants’ group membership and sense of belonging to these groups (e.g., literacy specialization program, graduate seminar) shaped their identities in positive ways. Assaf (2005) suggested membership in a literacy specialization program eased the way for new learning and allowed for a smooth transition into becoming a teacher. Rogers and colleagues (2006) reported a graduate seminar group created a discursive space intended for participants to broaden their own and their peers’ social and cultural perspectives.

At the same time, I found the complex roles of literacy specialists intriguing, a regular topic of discussion during the graduate seminar of the literacy education practicum. The literature refers to literacy specialists as reading specialists, reading teachers, reading coaches, and literacy coaches. A single endorsement or teaching certificate allows individuals to take jobs with any of the preceding titles (International Reading Association [IRA], 2000). Consistent across the literature and as indicated by the IRA’s *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist* (2000), specialists may provide instruction, assessment, and program leadership, as well as professional development for other teachers. I realized how aspiring literacy specialists perceive this complex work is not well understood (Anders, Hoffman, & Duffy, 2000; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009).

As I continued to refer to the research literature, I learned one way to study literacy specialists' perspectives is through the study of identities. Studies of teachers' identities, more generally, show how teachers' negotiations at a local level are situated in larger ideologies and power structures (Rex, Bunn, Davila, Dickinson, Ford, Gerben, Orzulak, & Thomas, 2010). Few studies, though, explored literacy specialists and the ways they build identities as they complete preparation and embark on instructional careers (e.g., Assaf, 2005; Rogers et al., 2006). I thought such work may provide insight about how individuals juggle the complex expectations and relationships of anticipated work.

I found I could study identities through a close look at the language people use to talk about their ideas (Rainville & Jones, 2008; Risko, Roller, Cummins, Bean, Block, Anders, & Flood, 2008). What people say and write shapes and is shaped by their ways of seeing themselves. Gee (2005) stated, "Speakers and writers use the resources of grammar to design their sentences and texts in ways that communicate their perspectives on reality, carry out various social activities, and allow them to enact different social identities" (p. 5). Language encapsulates shared meaning enacted by social groups (Gee, 2012). Critical discourse analysis is one method used to study such language use, exploring relations between language and context to examine social processes and power (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Madrid, Otto, Shuart-Faris, & Smith, 2008).

CDA offers a way to examine individuals' personal knowledge, beliefs, values, and assumptions in situational contexts while drawing on connections to institutional and societal contexts (Young, 2000). Critical discourse analysis provides insights into how and why people understand themselves the ways they do through microanalysis of words used to express ideas

and macroanalysis of institutional and societal contexts (Bloome et al., 2008; Gee, 2005). CDA also provides insights about how people's understandings influence their interactions with others.

Other researchers also inspired this project. For instance, Tucker-Raymond (2010) presented a study on teacher identity and noted, "Identities are organized by language. Identities are organized by stories." He referenced Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of dialogue, explaining, "Talk is a reflection of values and beliefs through the lens of others." I, too, wanted to be able to examine and articulate social processes and power relations represented in teachers' language and context (Bloome et al., 2008).

I aimed to use this study of literacy teacher education to convey my commitment to teaching and learning. As I prepared to complete it, I became increasingly sensitive to two dichotomies. The first was the media's attention to the "good" and "bad" teacher (Green, 2010; Green & Thomas, 2010; Thomas & Wingert, 2010). Such attention sometimes suggests good teachers have an innate ability or classroom management skills that ultimately lead to positive student academic performance on formal assessments, and bad teachers might not lead students to positive outcomes. Social and political pressures on teacher preparation permeate the news because of disparities in teacher quality and student achievement, making research that contributes to teacher education important (Barr, Watts-Taffe, Yokota, Ventura, & Caputi, 2000). The second troubling dichotomy was that emphasis on teaching methods, skills, and techniques often excludes attention to teachers' identities, which would seem important to pedagogical decisions (Clarke, 2009).

Definitions of Key Terms

Literacy Specialist

In this study, I use the term *literacy specialist* because that is the language used by the program and certification in the context in which my study is situated. Much of the literature, however, uses the term *reading teacher*, *reading specialist*, or *literacy coach* interchangeably with *literacy specialist*. At the time of the study, the program overview suggested students who completed the Literacy Education MS program and passed required state exams were eligible for state certification to become *literacy specialists* (University, 2009). State certification requirements include teaching experience and successful completion of a literacy content assessment. At least one state holds literacy specialists accountable for expertise in teaching all the language arts (State Education Department, 2006) even while some of its literacy specialist programs are accredited, according to the International Reading Association's (IRA) *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2004).

The 2003 *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2004) criteria used *reading* and *literacy* interchangeably in the description of reading professionals (revised August 2007). Many in the United States use these standards (IRA, 2004, 2010) for developing and evaluating literacy programs and their candidates as well as for accreditation purposes. The document stated, "For example, a reading specialist can serve as a teacher for students experiencing reading difficulties; as a literacy or reading coach; or as a supervisor or coordinator of reading/literacy" (IRA, 2007, p. 6). In this view of the position, the responsibilities of the specialist are multifaceted and may range from providing intensive instruction to struggling readers, providing professional development to teachers, to developing, leading, and evaluating K-12 school reading programs. I elaborate further on what research shows about literacy specialists' work in the next chapter.

discourse and Discourse

I draw on Gee's (2011) notions of discourse and Discourse. Gee defined little "d" discourse as literal stretches of oral or written language-in-use. I use the lower case *discourse* to represent stretches of participants' oral and written language-in-use. Gee (2011) defined big "D" Discourse as distinctive ways of using discourse, that is, speaking/listening and/or reading/writing coupled with ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, and believing. Gee (2012) added, "Discourses are all about how people 'get their acts together' to get recognized as a given kind of person at a specific time and place" (p. 152). Discourses allow people to be socially recognized in specific ways (e.g., teacher, bird watcher, doctor). I use *Discourse*, with an uppercase D, to describe participants' distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, and believing. For example, some participants enacted "good" teacher Discourses that included ways of being outgoing, passionate, and determined for recognition as good teachers. I detail this in Chapter Four.

Identities

I use the term *identities* to represent the idea that identities are multi-layered, ever changing, and shape and are shaped by contexts (Assaf, 2005; Gee, 2005). This use is grounded in Gee's (2000) notion of identity as, "The 'kind of person' one is recognized as 'being' at a given time and place" (Gee, 2000, p. 99). Gee (2012) added, "Each of us is a member of many Discourses and each Discourse represents one of our ever multiple identities" (p. 4). People use Discourses, ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, and believing, to be recognized according to their identities. All participants in this study enacted multiple identities. They were students in a literacy specialist graduate program, and they were teachers across content areas with a range of experience. I refer to participants according to these identities.

Current contexts and prior experiences influence identities (Fairbanks, Duffy, Faircloth, He, Levin, Rohr, & Stein 2010). Identities are closely, “Tied to the workings of historical, institutional, and sociocultural forces” (Gee, 2000, p. 100). Fairbanks and colleagues (2010) added, “Contemporary theories of identity explain that teacher candidates may maintain, resist, or transform teaching practices because context, history, culture, discourse, power, and ideologies influence their work” (p. 166). Thus, aspiring literacy specialists’ discourses are an important site for exploring identities and how situational, institutional, and societal contexts are implicated in their Discourses (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 2011).

Social World

In this study I refer to *social world* as the ways people are bound by social affiliations rather than actual physical location. Social affiliations are groups with shared cultural models, social languages, and Discourses (Gee, 2005). Social affiliations include constructions of race, class, gender, experience, and religion. Participants drew on these constructs to describe where they did or did not fit in the social world.

Belonging

I discovered that the construct of *belonging* or fit was important to participants in this study. I use the term in this study to describe the sense of ease one has with oneself and one’s surroundings (May, 2011). May (2011), a sociologist, stated,

Belonging plays a role in connecting individuals to the social. This is important because our sense of self is constructed in a relational process in our interactions with other people as well as in relation to more abstract notions of collectively held social norms, values, and customs. (p. 368)

Belonging is a useful conceptual frame for understanding how individuals position themselves and others.

(Un)certainty

In this study, I use the term *(un)certainty* to represent participants' moments of uncertainty and certainty that, I found, often occur at the same time. I define uncertainty as a state of being unsure or not knowing (Helsing, 2007). Certain means the opposite: sure, knowing, or confident. In the literature review, I reference a body of work that suggests teaching is inherently uncertain. Researchers understand teacher uncertainty as a dilemma or pedagogical construct (Helsing, 2007). Like Britzman (2007), I argue individuals are always in a state of uncertainty. Uncertainty is unavoidable. Some graduate students in this study were (un)certain about their identities as teachers. These participants used language that suggested they would be good teachers, yet they also questioned their ability to handle the politics of teaching. I detail these findings in Chapters Four and Five.

Significance

This qualitative study used critical discourse analysis to explore the identities and discourses of 10 graduate students completing their studies to be certified as literacy specialists. It asked: 1) What do beginning literacy specialists' discourses reveal about their evolving identities? 2) On what discourses do they draw? 3) How are situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated?

This study is important because it calls attention to the (un)certainty of individuals who were building identities as teachers and literacy specialists. It adds to a body of literature that suggests uncertainty is a part of being a teacher, literacy specialist, or even a human being (Britzman, 2007; Helsing, 2007; Farnsworth, 2010). This is important because when teachers'

uncertainty is unaddressed it may have impact on teachers' or literacy specialists' work with students and colleagues. Research suggested that uncertainty can result in heightened reflection and improved instruction or instruction that perpetuates the status quo and inequality in schools (e.g., Floden & Buchmann, 1993; Floden & Clark, 1987; Hansen, 1995; Lortie, 1975; Munthe, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1989).

This study provides new details about the ways aspiring literacy specialists gauged their fit as teachers, literacy specialists, and people in general. Also important is that, as the participants figured out their fit, they drew on discourses tied to race, class, gender, age, and religion. Their language included helping Discourses and deficit oriented terminology, as Angela unintentionally did in the opening quotation. This study suggests that teacher education may be a ripe context for offering explicit support to teachers as they consider the discourses they bring to their teaching and/or literacy specialist selves. This seems significant for such individuals as they build their identities and prepare for "learning to live in this time that is out of joint, in discontinuous time and the disjuncture of self/other relations" (Britzman, 2007, p. 11).

Overview of Chapters

I organized this dissertation into five additional chapters. In Chapter Two, Literature Review, I review three bodies of literature that relate to my research. I begin the chapter with a review of the history of literacy specialists' work, including an exploration of the roles of literacy specialists to date. Next, I discuss the literature on literacy specialists' preparations, including research on the literacy practicum and the graduate seminar, namely the contexts of this study. I also review studies on teacher identity that most closely relate to my inquiry, including research on preservice literacy teachers, teacher uncertainty, and inservice literacy specialists. Finally, I

explain the theoretical perspectives on which I draw for this study, including theories related to identity, Discourse, belonging, and critical discourse analysis.

In Chapter Three, Method, I describe the qualitative research method I used to conduct this study. I begin with a brief overview of critical discourse analysis to describe what makes this analysis “critical.” Then I detail my research design including the participants and setting, data collection, data analysis, and my perspectives as a researcher. I included samples from my analyses in an effort to make my research methods transparent (see Tables).

In Chapter Four, Participants Weigh Their Fit as Teachers and People: “You’d Think That I Would Fit in Just Fine,” I detail the ways participants gauged their fit as teachers and people in general. First, I explore participants’ reasons for becoming K-12 teachers. I explain participants’ (un)certainly about their fit as teachers. I also describe the ways participants were figuring out their fit in the world. Some participants expressed awareness of many of their social affiliations, and some described themselves as exploring their affiliations. However, most participants were uncertain about many of their social affiliations and the ways these affiliations may be enacted in their work with students.

In Chapter Five, Participants Weigh Their Fit as Literacy Specialists: “I’m Not Too Confident as a Literacy Specialist,” I describe participants’ varying levels of (un)certainly about their fit as literacy specialists. Most participants seemed unsure about their fit as literacy specialists, while those who were more certain drew on Discourses as helpers and/or leaders. I report the ways that participants seemed to measure their fit against students and other aspiring literacy specialists in the cohort. I describe how participants’ discourses tied to race, class, and gender in ways that hinted of deficit perspectives toward those who were not “like” themselves.

In Chapter Six, Conclusion, I conclude with a summary, discussion, and implications of this study. I begin with a summary of the findings reported in Chapters Four and Five, respectively. I discuss my interpretations of the findings, connecting this work to the literature. Finally, I share implications that these findings have for research, literacy teacher education specifically and teacher education generally, and teaching.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review three bodies of literature to demonstrate how this study builds on previous research. First, I consider the history of literacy specialists' work leading up to the roles literacy specialists assume today. Next, I describe the literature on literacy specialist preparation, particularly related to the literacy practicum and graduate seminar, the contexts of this study. Finally, I also summarize studies on teacher identity that attend to literacy, including the review of the literature on teacher uncertainty. This chapter also explains how this study is grounded in Gee's (2000, 2011, 2012) notions of identity and Discourse and extends Assaf's (2005) study of teacher's identities to literacy specialists.

Literacy Specialists' Work

The history of literacy specialists spans many decades, with shifts in the role along the way. Throughout these shifts, there has been a concerted effort to define the role and responsibilities associated with the position. Researchers defined the role by conducting reviews of existing research as well as administering surveys of practitioners. The role of the literacy specialist is diverse and complex, and it varies by context (Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001). Not much is known about the identities and discourses of those who study literacy education to improve their teaching and to garner the additional expertise needed to be literacy specialists.

Literacy specialists' work shifted over time in response to government initiatives and criticisms of the role (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003). In the 1960s, remedial reading teachers provided specialized instruction to meet the needs of struggling readers. When the federal government instituted Title I in 1965, a funding source to improve reading achievement in schools with students living in poverty, the government's guidelines influenced the work of

reading specialists in important ways (Bean et al., 2003; Dole, 2004). Title I took the form of a pullout program, that is, teachers pulled students from other instructional activities to receive specialized reading instruction (Dole, 2004). Criticisms about the effectiveness of the pullout method in the 1980s prompted specialists to move toward working in classrooms with teachers (Bean et al., 2003; Dole, 2004; Quatroche & Wepner, 2008) (for a review see, Allington & Walmsley, 1995). The role of the reading specialist shifted from remedial reading teacher to diagnostician, consultant, or resource to the classroom teacher and larger school community (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002).

The International Reading Association (IRA) initiated a Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist, in the early part of this century, to understand the role of the reading specialist in more detail. This Commission was established after the National Research Council reported that schools should have, “reading specialists who have specialized training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to classroom teachers” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, p. 333). At the same time, schools employed fewer reading specialists, and there were increased concerns about students’ reading achievement (Quatroche et al., 2001). As part of the initiative, in 2001, Quatroche and colleagues reviewed the literature in this area. The group defined “reading specialist” as a “specifically prepared professional who has responsibility (e.g., providing instruction, serving as a resource to teachers) for the literacy performance of readers in general or struggling readers in particular” (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 282). Like others, they found the role of the reading specialist was diverse and complex. A single endorsement or teaching certificate allowed individuals to focus on multiple and sometimes conflicting tasks in schools.

As noted in the literature, aspects of reading specialists' work varied by context (Bean et al., 2002; Quatroche et al., 2001). Most often, consistent responsibilities included instruction and assessment. Other aspects of reading specialists' work entailed communicating with teachers and students, administering a school-wide reading program that drew on time needed to provide consistent instruction and professional development, along with other administrative duties. Reading specialists' work varied according to their teaching model (pull-out versus push-in), which was constrained by state and school policies. For example, reading specialists who worked in classrooms served as aides, monitors, and co-instructors: "The researchers noted that the reading specialists had to find ways of working with the classroom teachers and had to accommodate their teaching to the approaches of the classroom teacher" (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 288).

Important survey results provided details about the demographics of literacy specialists. Developed and administered by IRA's Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist (Bean et al., 2002), the survey was sent to all members of IRA who self-identified as reading specialists. Specifically, 1,517 individuals completed the survey with a return rate of 38%. Respondents were 97% White and 98% female, and worked in suburban (47%), urban (27%), and rural (26%) schools. These results seemed significant because they highlighted the homogenous population that work as literacy specialists. This raised questions about why smaller percentages of respondents worked in urban and rural contexts where the need for literacy specialists may be greater (Bean et al., 2002).

The survey revealed that the roles of reading specialists fell under four categories: instruction, assessment, resource, and administration. Respondents suggested they spent the majority of their time providing instruction, both in the classroom and by pulling students out of

class for specialized instruction. Reading specialists also shared that assessing students, both formally and informally, was a main part of their responsibility. A large number of respondents indicated that they served as a resource, by providing materials and ideas, to classroom teachers planning reading instruction. Reading specialists' final responsibility included documenting students' progress and completing related paperwork.

An additional survey's results provided more detailed insights about the instructional and leadership roles of reading specialists (Bean et al., 2003). Bean and colleagues (2003) sent an additional survey to 111 schools with exemplary reading programs, as recognized by IRA (1996-1999), across the United States. As a second phase of the study, the researchers interviewed 12 specialists, referred by their principals, from the surveyed schools in 12 different states. Participants were all female, with 10-39 years teaching experience, all holding advanced preparation in the teaching of reading. Results from the interview data indicated reading specialists shared five roles: resource to teachers, school and community liaison, coordinator of the reading program, contributor to assessments, and instructor. Unique to this study, researchers found that the reading specialists took on both instructional and leadership roles. The results implied, "Those aspiring to be reading specialists must not only be knowledgeable about literacy teaching and learning; they also must have experiences that enable them to develop the leadership and communication skills necessary for their positions" (Bean et al., 2003, p. 453).

Changes to IRA's (2004) *Standards for Reading Professionals*, along with new demands nudged along by No Child Left Behind, Reading First, and Striving Readers funding, shifted the education for reading specialists to include coaching. These changes required candidates preparing to be reading specialists to demonstrate their ability to support and collaborate with

classroom teachers through a process called literacy coaching (Shaw, Smith, Chesler, & Romeo, 2005). Literacy coaching borrowed ideas from Calkins (2000), Costa and Garmston (1997/2002), Fountas and Pinnell (2001), Reading First, and others. Reading specialists were positioned as suitable reading coaches, though not all reading specialists assumed this role (Dole, 2004). A literacy coaching job description may include such responsibilities as:

Demonstrating lessons, assisting teachers in selecting best practices, designing programs that motivate all students, training classroom teachers to administer and interpret assessments, presenting professional workshops, conducting study groups, assisting classroom teachers in preparing curricular materials (including technologically based information), assisting with assessment, and coplanning appropriate instruction (Shaw et al., 2005, p. 6).

The 2010 revisions to the *Standards for Reading Professionals* maintained this attention to coaching in ways that addressed the preceding aspects of the job description, including adult learning theory, professional development models, and building-level program development.

A more recent survey provided new demographic data about literacy specialists (Bean, Cassidy & Goatley, 2012), an update to the Bean and colleagues' earlier (2002) study. Researchers sent an electronic 46-item questionnaire that was completed by 2,078 reading specialists and literacy coaches nationwide. About half of the respondents (53.3%) held certification as reading specialists. This result may reflect different state requirements and certification pathways, despite IRA's (2004, 2010) recommendation for a graduate degree. Respondents were also 89% White and 97% female, all with classroom teaching experience. Although the study reported more ethnic groups were represented in this recent survey population, researchers recognized the need for more diversity of those in such positions.

Researchers suggested this might include non-Caucasian and male teachers to serve as reading specialists to reflect the changing demographics of students in K-12 schools.

These survey results also delineated the roles and responsibilities of literacy specialists into four groups: coaches, reading teachers/interventionists, literacy/reading specialists, and supervisors, each with varying though overlapping primary responsibilities. Coaches and supervisors indicated that they spent most of their time supporting teachers. Reading teachers/interventionists and literacy/reading specialists spent most time instructing students.

While the history of literacy specialists spans many decades and their work shifted over time, today's literacy specialists assume a number of roles and responsibilities. They may instruct students or support teachers and administrators, sometimes requiring them to serve in a leadership capacity. What we do not know from research, however, is why teachers decide to take additional coursework to gain a literacy specialist certification. Beyond basic demographic data, we do not know who these teachers are. We also do not know about the dispositions they bring to their studies and later work, or how these attributes shape their work with students and colleagues.

Literacy Specialists' Education

Literacy specialist education is achievable through a number of pathways. Researchers have noted variations in program characteristics and quality. Most consistently, researchers cited practical experience as an important characteristic of literacy programs (Lacina & Block, 2011; Sailors, Keehn, Martinez & Harmon, 2005). Sometimes practical experience takes the form of a practicum in a literacy clinic or center accompanied by a seminar, while at other times it takes place in a school. Research explored the history, purposes, critiques, and benefits of training that occurs in such clinics or centers (Johnston & Allington, 1991; Kibby & Barr, 1999). Research

has not looked extensively at the effectiveness of these training models, perhaps, in part, because outcomes are unclear as a result of the wide ranging roles literacy specialists assume in schools. We also do not know about the ways aspiring literacy specialists' identities shape or are shaped in the context of such work.

Across states, universities, and programs, there are variations in requirements and pathways to certification (Maloch, Flint, Eldridge, Harmon, Loven, Fine, Bryant-Shanklin, & Martinez, 2003). Some states have literacy specialist certification through extended graduate studies or degrees. One report suggested that only about 33% of reading specialists have earned graduate degrees with specialization in reading (Allington, 2006). Others have literacy teacher endorsements achievable through undergraduate reading specialization programs.

Undergraduates in these programs may earn endorsement by completing at least 15 credit hours in reading and language arts (Maloch, et al., 2003).

Some research provided insight into characteristics of distinguished literacy education programs at the undergraduate level. In 2008, Risko and colleagues completed an analysis of research on reading teacher education that included 298 studies from 1980 to 2006. Four of these studies described notable characteristics of literacy education programs (e.g., Grisham, 2000; Hoffman, Roller, Maloch, Sailors, Duffy & Beretvas, 2005, Maloch et al., 2003; Sailors, et al., 2005). Together they suggested notable programmatic features included cohesiveness of content across the program and early practical experience. A recent study of IRA's distinguished programs added, the top three literacy education programmatic features included: relevant practical experience, learning to teach and assess children using a variety of strategies and assessment instruments, and learning how to integrate literacy throughout the curriculum (Lacina & Block, 2011). The analysis of research noted above recognized that majoring in reading led to

teachers' effectiveness in creating a literate environment, teaching literacy, and meeting students' needs (Risko et al., 2008).

As noted earlier, IRA's *Standards for Reading Professionals* established criteria for accrediting reading specialist education and certification programs (IRA, 2004, 2010). IRA's most recent *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2010) recommend that reading specialists possess a valid teaching certificate, previous teaching experience, and a master's degree with concentration in reading and writing education. The master's degree recommendations include an equivalent of 21-27 graduate semester hours in reading and language arts instruction and coaching of adult learners and six semester hours of supervised practicum experience with some "hands on" coaching experience.

The Literacy Practicum

Practical experience has long been central to reading specialists' education (Freppon, 1999), especially given that it may account for 20% of reading specialists' training. The practicum typically includes supervised practical experience teaching literacy coupled with a seminar to discuss instruction. While there is not an overarching literacy practicum model, this aspect of literacy specialists' training shares common characteristics.

The first reading clinic was established in 1921 and since then clinical experiences serve an important purpose at universities with literacy education programs across the United States (Kibby & Barr, 1999; Laster, 1999; McCormick, 1999). An on-campus or school-based reading or literacy clinic is a place where certified teachers, seeking advanced degrees in literacy, provide services to young people from a community who struggle with literacy (Blachowicz, Fisher, McAvoy, Owens, Anderson, Ivy & Harper, 1999; Freppon, 1999). The clinic serves as a

space for certified teachers to gain supervised experience in the teaching of literacy. Teachers employ many of the instructional techniques they learn during their coursework (Freppon, 1999).

Some researchers critiqued the use of the word “clinic” to describe such settings. By definition, sites known as clinics treat the ill, deficient, or those in need of remedy (Johnston & Allington, 1991). Many reading clinics across the country were renamed as centers to combat the negative “medical model” connotations that “clinic” may impart. Current clinics and centers include literacy assessments that involve teachers in designing instruction based on students’ strengths and needs. Such assessments are typically not a search for causes of reading difficulty and do not follow the more deficit-oriented traditions associated with the so-called medical model of early clinics (Kibby & Barr, 1999).

Sample reports, prepared by postsecondary literacy education programs seeking National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accreditation and posted several years ago on IRA’s website, provided examples of the workings of current literacy practica. Both reports indicated that students pursuing a master’s in literacy participated in practical experiences in all semesters (IRA, 2005; NCATE, 2008). One capstone practicum included, “Supervised on-site assessment and teaching of students with literacy difficulties in the college reading clinic” (IRA, 2005, p. 2). The initially certified teachers/graduate students implemented assessments and used these measures to develop individualized instructional goals and plans. The teachers taught these plans and assessed students on an ongoing basis. This instruction took place over 16 days for three hours per day. Other aspects of the experience included individual and small group teaching, literacy coaching by collaborating with colleagues, and participation in a seminar. The experience concluded with teachers conducting end-of-class assessments and preparing a written report with instructional recommendations (IRA, 2005).

A second example of a practicum in literacy (NCATE, 2008) had similar features or requirements. Initially certified teachers/graduate students participated in a four-week summer literacy program. They administered informal and formal assessments to determine students' strengths and areas of instructional need. The teachers then planned and implemented individualized instruction for the students. Other requirements included keeping anecdotal records and participating in small group instructional periods with centers focusing on word study, patterns in language, and comprehension. They planned instruction for the centers based on assessments and observations made during the four weeks in the individual and small group settings. IRA posted similar examples on their website that align with their 2010 standards and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (formerly NCATE).

Literacy practica models take similar shapes and share common benefits (Kibby & Barr, 1999). In this setting, teachers typically provide individualized, one-to-one instruction to a K-12 student, informed by formal and informal assessments (Morris, 1999). The instructional format benefits teachers by offering "close looks" into literacy teaching and learning (Bear, 1999, p. 213). "Providing instruction in clinical programs extends teachers' range of perceptions and helps them to restructure their present understandings, thus promoting teacher expertise" (McCormick, 1999, p. 282). Teachers may take away a heightened sense that individuals have varying needs. Research suggests that one-to-one teaching is most beneficial for improving students' reading achievement (e.g., Farstrup & Samuels, 2002, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Studies that cited the benefits of literacy practica often drew on surveys of class participants. Blachowicz and colleagues (1999) collected 44 surveys, with a 37% return rate, from former and current students enrolled in a reading education program. Researchers sought

to understand the value of one-to-one reading instruction to reading specialists. Survey results showed that teachers felt that their practical experience changed their thinking about instruction in many areas. These areas included thinking about the reading process, reading instruction, assessment, and working with students in groups. Researchers concluded, “One-to-one instruction allowed teachers to look closely at one student and see the process of reading develop. It gave them time and space to analyze the differing characteristics of individual readers to match instruction with each student’s needs” (Blachowicz et al., 1999, p. 114). The researchers also conducted informal observations and interviews with six students who completed the same practicum. From the graduate students’ perspectives, they felt more observant in diagnosing children, gave more credence to organization and planning, and had a better understanding of reading instruction. The graduate students interviewed identified the practical experience as the most productive part of their program of study (Blachowicz et al., 1999).

Similarly, additional self-reported survey results indicated the literacy practicum was beneficial to classroom and reading support (e.g., Title I, Reading Recovery, reading skills, special education K-12) teachers. Carr (2003) conducted a survey of 109 teachers who participated in a graduate-level literacy practicum at one university. The survey yielded a 62% response rate. Eighty-eight percent of respondents replied that they taught differently as a result of the practicum experience and that it had a positive impact on their teaching. This study aligned with results of earlier informal inquiries (e.g., Gioia & Johnston, 1999; Kibby & Barr, 1999; Morris, 1999).

The graduate seminar. An important part of the practicum experience is the graduate seminar, which is scheduled in conjunction with the practicum. The seminar provides a space

for teachers to reflect on and theorize about their practicum teaching with attention to learning and literacy (Gioia & Johnston, 1999). Teachers, through discussion, share experiences and ideas related to instruction (Kibby & Barr, 1999). The seminar is grounded in the idea that, “Thinking is tied to the conversations in which individuals are immersed” (Gioia & Johnston, 1999, p. 179).

Along these lines, Jensen and Tuten (2007) found graduate students’ discussions on Blackboard, completed as part of a clinical course requirement, provided an important space for this community of learners. Participants included 27 females and one male. Two themes emerged from the data. Participants expressed that motivating struggling readers in clinic was a personal challenge, and prioritizing individualized instruction was another challenge. Researchers found that Blackboard facilitated an online community where graduate students supported each other’s learning. Teachers drew upon each other’s areas of expertise when they asked for and gave instructional strategy suggestions. They incorporated new learning from discussions into their teaching.

We know a fair amount about the context of literacy specialists’ education. The state requirements and certification pathways vary widely across the United States. Research noted how programs’ characteristics and qualities also vary. Practicum experiences, set in reading clinics or centers, are an important part of literacy specialists’ education. Such sites have a history of providing a space for teachers to gain closely supervised practical experience teaching literacy. In conjunction with the practicum, the graduate seminar provides a context for teachers to reflect and theorize literacy teaching and learning in a shared experience with colleagues. However, we do not know about the ways aspiring literacy specialists’ identities and discourses evolve in these educational contexts. Dunston (2007) called for more research in this area given

that the literacy practicum promotes a process of, “self-examination, experimentation, questioning, learning, and change” (p. 335).

Teacher Identity Studies

A small number of studies have explored literacy teachers’ identities. Preservice teacher studies suggested that students experience tensions and negotiations with regard to their new identities as teachers which often results in a blending of discourses of self and those of the teaching field (Alsup, 2006; Assaf, 2005; Haddix, 2010). Inservice literacy specialist studies showed literacy coaches continue to negotiate their identities, power, and positioning once they assume school employment (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008). These studies that highlighted teachers’ tensions and negotiations related to a body of research on teacher uncertainty, which suggested teaching is inherently marked by uncertainty often yielding positive and negative outcomes (Britzman, 2007; Helsing, 2007; Farnsworth, 2010). We know little about the identities of those majoring in literacy education who may decide to continue in or apply for a variety of teaching jobs, including positions as literacy specialists. We do not know about the propensities and discourses that influence aspiring literacy specialists’ identities and, therefore, their work with students and colleagues.

Preservice Teachers

I include a review of preservice teacher identity studies because while participants in the present study were certified teachers, many did not have teaching experience beyond undergraduate student teaching, much like preservice teachers. Several studies examined literacy-related identity construction in beginning teachers, revealing negotiations of their “student” and “teacher” selves (Alsup, 2006) and racial, linguistic, and cultural affiliations (Assaf, 2005; Haddix, 2010). Alsup (2006) defined negotiations as the integration of personal

ideologies and perceived professional expectations. This body of literature suggested that teacher education courses can provide a discursive space for preservice teachers to explore language, literacy, identity, and diversity (Assaf, 2005; Hall, Johnson, Juzwik, Wortham, & Mosley, 2010; Rogers, et al., 2006).

Alsup (2006) examined six White, female preservice English teachers' borderland discourses as they formed (or failed to form) teacher identities. Alsup extended Gee's (1999) notion of borderland discourse, also discussed in the literature by Anzaldúa (1987/1999). She defined borderland discourse as a discursive space between two conflicting subjectivities. Alsup employed discourse and content analyses. She observed tension in the preservice teachers' narratives in the borders between their "student" and "teacher" selves, between their personal beliefs and what they were learning about their future work, and between ways of thinking about teaching in academia versus in practical applications. Alsup noticed teachers are often expected to conform to a narrowly defined identity corresponding to what they have observed and understand as characteristics of good teachers. As one example, good teachers know how to engage and manage students (Alsup, 2006). Other researchers have also noticed how new teachers referenced societal notions of the good teacher (e.g., Larsen, 2010; Moore, 2004; Ng, Nicholas, & Williams, 2010). Alsup found those who allowed themselves to experience discursive tensions between the personal and professional, and who engaged in a transformative type of teacher identity discourse she called borderland discourse, were more likely to pursue jobs as teachers and remain teachers.

Haddix (2010) explored the ways two preservice teachers reconciled dissonance between their racial and linguistic identities and teacher identities. Her two focal participants included one Black woman, African American Language (AAL) speaker, and a Costa Rican woman,

bilingual Spanish and English speaker. Haddix's ethnographic study drew on theories of Anzaldúa (1987/1999) and Bakhtin (1981) to construct a hybrid analytic framework. She used critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Rogers, 2004) to analyze the language and literacy practices of participants. Haddix found that the preservice teachers' discourses represented a mixing of their racial and linguistic backgrounds with dominant discourses of their teacher preparation program. She observed participants take on hybrid identities as they shifted their performance based on context (e.g., a teacher education literacy methods course, classrooms in local schools, and social settings outside the university and practicum). Haddix suggested that welcoming hybrid discourses, a blending of teacher discourse with individuals' cultural and linguistic identities, could challenge the marginalization that happens as a result of preparing a homogenous teacher population. Hybrid discourses could give "othered" preservice teacher identities a greater sense of belonging (Haddix, 2010, p. 120). Haddix recommended that teacher educators should emphasize and value the complexities of teachers' identities including their cultural, racial, and linguistic perspectives.

Rogers and colleagues (2006) explored how two preservice teachers authored their identities as literacy teachers in the context of a teacher education seminar that emphasized literacy and diversity. Their focal participants included one male and one female enrolled in a graduate teacher preparation program. Both participants were White, middle class, and in their early 20s. Rogers and colleagues conducted an exploratory case study that used Bakhtin's theory of language (1981) as a theoretical framework. They framed their study with the idea that, "The process of constructing professional identities is influenced by larger discourses made available to preservice teachers in their preparation programs" (Rogers et al., 2006, p. 206). Rogers and colleagues analyzed the data by identifying topics related to literacy and teaching and by coding

participants' utterances drawn from the context of seminar conversations, including both internally persuasive and authoritative discourses (Bakhtin, 1986). Internally persuasive discourses are one's own words interwoven with the words of others and authoritative discourses are the opposite. Rogers and colleagues reported that the seminar provided a space for dialogue about complex issues related to social and cultural perspectives, and the community-based practicum also provided a space for students to begin to construct professional identities. Findings suggested that participants assimilated or partially assimilated pedagogy that addressed the politics of literacy. For these two new teachers, the seminar and community-based literacy experiences provided important discursive spaces to explore how their ideas about language, literacy, and diversity related to their work with students.

Assaf's (2005) study explored how one preservice teacher drew on and negotiated multiple discourses that shaped her identity as a teacher. The focal participant, Adrianna, was a female immigrant enrolled in an undergraduate reading specialization program. Assaf's qualitative case study used Bakhtin's (1981) theory on language and learning and Gee's (2000) notion of identity as theoretical lenses. She analyzed the data using a constant comparative method paired with discourse analysis (Gee, 1999). Assaf reported that the ways Adrianna saw herself were shaped by how the group of learners in a practicum experience discussed teaching and learning and how she perceived herself as a future teacher. Adrianna's peers valued her identity as a multilingual speaker and immigrant as they turned to her for complex insights about teaching immigrant students. She, too, felt a strong sense of belonging among her peers. Her identity also provided a lens for understanding literacy instruction as Adrianna wrestled with ideas about language and literacy based on her own past learning experiences. Assaf found Adrianna's experiences were part of her discourses that informed her choices as a literacy

teacher. Assaf concluded future research should continue to study learning to teach as an identity-forming process.

Hall and colleagues (2010) explored the social functions of language and literacy teachers' identities. They presented three studies that drew on theories of language, literacy, and positioning (Davies & Harré, 1999; Bakhtin, 1981). One of these studies focused on Rachel, a European-American, female preservice teacher enrolled in an undergraduate elementary education program. The researchers analyzed the literacy stories Rachel told in an interview using narrative analysis. They found that negative literacy experiences can influence how preservice elementary teachers identify as teachers of literacy. Rachel, for example, discussed empowering students with new literacies in ways she was not. Her broader view of literacy encompassed her students' literate backgrounds. Together Hall and colleagues' (2010) found, "While teachers and students use language to position themselves and each other, they also use language to promote specific types of engagement with literacy practices and encourage or marginalize involvement with literacy in and outside of school" (Hall et al., 2010, p. 241). They recommended that teacher educators help preservice and inservice teachers learn how to examine the ways their language may influence their literacy instruction in helpful and limiting ways.

Research on preservice teachers' discourses, more generally, also suggested teachers should engage in examining their own discourses. Some refer to this as identity work. Comber and Kamler (2004) suggested having teachers examine their own discourses is the first step in examining their literacy pedagogy and unequal outcomes in schools. Comber and Kamler (2004) argued, "Disrupting deficit discourses requires serious intellectual engagement by teachers over an extended period of time in ways that foster teacher agency and respect, without celebrating

the status quo” (p. 295). A relative new line of inquiry in literacy research includes studies of such identity work (e.g., Vetter, Schieble, & Meacham, 2012; Rogers & Wetzel, 2014).

Teacher Uncertainty

As noted in the previous section, studies on preservice teacher identities described the tensions or negotiations that individuals experience as they build identities as teachers. These tensions or negotiations may be tied to these individuals’ uncertainty about their suitability for this kind of work. A growing body of research recognizes the uncertain nature of teaching (e.g., Britzman, 2007; Helsing, 2007; Farnsworth, 2010). This literature explains several reasons why teaching can be marked with various types of uncertainty that yield positive and negative effects. The research also linked uncertainty and teacher identity. This body of literature calls for greater attention to teacher uncertainty, suggesting otherwise teachers may feel alone in their experiences, a condition which may, in turn, affect the effectiveness of their work.

Researchers looking at teacher effectiveness cited three main reasons why teaching is marked with uncertainty: 1) There is a lack of knowledge base or technical culture resulting in a lack of consensus about what good teaching looks like (e.g., Elmore, 2004, Hatch, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Schön, 1983). 2) Teachers’ work involves human relationships with individuals that bring unique experiences to bear for both teachers and students alike. 3) Uncertainty is often a result of school reform (e.g., Friedman, 1997; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Ponticell, 2003; Villaume, 2000). Curriculum changes and restructuring in schools as an outcome of reform may force teachers to amend their beliefs and practices. Uncertainty can result when teachers no longer know what their job will entail or how their teaching will be assessed (Munthe, 2003).

Some researchers described uncertainty as a dilemma that occurs when a teacher’s values and work expectations may conflict, an uncertainty that relates to the tensions and negotiations

preservice teachers are said to experience (e.g., Alsup, 2006; Assaf, 2005; Haddix, 2010).

Scholars argued that teacher uncertainty and dilemma are conditions of teachers' work that can result in negative emotions and lower quality instruction (Helsing, 2007). Negative reactions to uncertainty may yield anxiety, frustration, burnout, and poor teaching. Other reactions included conservatism or conformity of practice, where teachers seek security in maintaining the status quo (e.g., Floden & Buchmann, 1993; Floden & Clark, 1987; Hansen, 1995; Lortie, 1975; Munthe, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1989). Helsing (2007) summarized findings in the literature, "Protecting themselves from their own uncertainty, these teachers do not consider alternative skills, procedures and methods which might prove more successful with low-achieving students" (1321). This kind of view led to oversimplified student learning tasks and lack of teacher professional growth. When students then failed to perform, uncertain teachers tended to attribute students' outcomes to a lack of effort, ability, or deficiencies in students' home environments (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Other researchers, those who study reflective practices and teacher inquiry, identified uncertainty as a pedagogical construct that prompts teachers to be reflective, yielding positive effects such as improved instruction. "For it is only when teachers allow for some uncertainty about the validity of their own teaching practices and beliefs that they can begin to imagine and construct new and more effective ones" (Helsing, 2007, p. 1322). Uncertainty, as these scholars see it, is a necessary ingredient of the lifelong learners because they understand the complexities of their work and seek to learn more and improve practice (e.g., Brookfield, 1995; McDonald, 1992; Schön, 1983).

Teachers' identities influence the ways they deal with uncertainty just as their uncertainty influences their identities. "Aspects of teachers' inner lives—their attitudes, personality

characteristics, and developmental capacities—may therefore influence teachers’ abilities to address their uncertainties and manage their dilemmas effectively” (Helsing, 2007, p. 1328).

Munthe (2003) argued that teachers’ personal stances (e.g., collaboration, job satisfaction, role ambiguity) have the greatest influence on how they respond to uncertainty.

Helsing (2007) emphasized the need to attend to positive and negative aspects of teacher uncertainty in research and practice:

Greater conceptual clarity and a more refined typology of uncertainties would allow us to distinguish between the particular kinds or instances of uncertainty that should be diminished and others that should be enhanced. It may also reveal the ways that different stances toward uncertainties can be interrelated or mixed in any one teacher. (p. 1330)

Moreover, if we do not attend to uncertainty in teacher education and professional development, teachers are likely to feel that the uncertainty they experience is anomalous or that they are ineffective (Helsing, 2007). In a time of educational reform across the United States, it seems important to address the kinds or instances of teacher uncertainty, especially on the influence of teachers’ work in schools. This may better prepare teachers to deal with potential discord between their identities and reform mandates.

This body of literature informed my understanding of teacher uncertainty and motivated my use of (un)certainty, where I use parentheses to emphasize the ways certainty and uncertainty occurs at the same time in any one individual. My use of (un)certainty is distinguished from other researchers’ definitions because they suggest teachers respond either psychologically or pedagogically (Helsing, 2007). This study, however, grounded in sociocultural perspective, suggests that individuals’ lives and their identities are grounded in contexts, necessary to understanding their (un)certainty. More specifically, when people shift or prepare to move

across contexts (e.g., from graduate school to the classroom or from the elementary classroom to the role of literacy specialist) they can be unsure about the ways they do or do not belong.

Inservice Literacy Specialists

Three studies examined the identities of practicing literacy specialists. These studies explored the ways literacy specialists negotiated their identities across contexts and how their identities impacted their work with students and colleagues (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; McKinney and Giorgis, 2009; Rainville & Jones, 2008). This body of literature suggested that literacy specialists/coaches need training to deal with the complexities they will face during their work related to identity, positioning, and power.

McKinney and Giorgis (2009) explored the ways literacy specialists constructed their identities as writers and teachers of writing and how they negotiated identities across contexts. Their study included four literacy specialists from an urban school district who participated in a two-year professional development project on the teaching of writing. McKinney and Giorgis drew on theories of identities and performance using Wortham's (2001) process of dialogic narrative analysis. Their findings suggested participants constructed writer identities socially, culturally, and historically through life, school, and interactions with others. The literacy specialists who were more authoritative and confident about their own writing viewed themselves as writers and valued the teaching of writing, and teachers less confident and reluctant taught writing less or not at all.

Rainville and Jones (2008) examined the negotiations one literacy coach made as she engaged with colleagues in various contexts. The focal participant in this qualitative case study was Katie, a White, middle class, experienced teacher and literacy coach. Rainville and Jones approached their research from the perspective that, like other social practices (Gee, 1999),

coaching is situated. Researchers used constructs of positioning and power to examine personal and political issues related to teaching and learning by studying incidents of literacy events with the use of discourse analysis (Gee, 1999). Their findings suggested that Katie was constantly engaged in identity negotiations in positive and negative ways as a concerned colleague, friend, colearner, and as an outsider. She wielded power by positioning herself as an expert instructing a teacher and as a colearner gently guiding teachers' thinking about a particular practice. One teacher positioned her as an outsider imposing mandates and interfering with his classroom instruction. These findings also asserted that literacy coaches' training should prepare them to deal with issues of positioning and power. Rainville and Jones (2008) stated that future research, "Investigating power and positioning in the daily work and preparation of literacy coaches... is imperative" (p. 440).

Most recently, Hunt and Handsfield (2013) explored the emotional landscapes of literacy coaching related to issues of identity, power, and positioning. Their study included four focal participants who were all White, middle class women, with 10-15 years of teaching experience in a suburban school district. The district was amidst a K-8 school reform that had a reading and writing workshop model at its core with layered intervention that also required literacy coaches to participate in professional development. Researchers grounded their work in theories of positioning and de Certeau's (1984) ideas about how social agents negotiate institutional and social structures. They analyzed data using the constant comparative method and positioning analysis of small stories (Bamberg, 2004). Hunt and Handsfield defined small stories as short narratives that emerged from everyday contexts. Their findings suggested that all literacy coaches expressed emotions such as frustration and defeat. Researchers asserted "emotional performances cannot be separated from identity performances," despite emotional displays being

less acceptable in some contexts (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013, p. 63). Small stories illustrated how the literacy coaches used emotions to negotiate identity, power, and positioning within the dominant discourse of their local context. Coaches seemed to experience tension between demonstrating knowledge and expertise while being collaborative and trusting, and they felt pressured to prove themselves in local and institutional contexts. Researchers recommended moving beyond conceptualizing the role of literacy coaches to highlight the complexities of being in the role. They concluded that training for literacy coaches should attend to such complexities, including those related to identity, power, and positioning.

Summary

Teacher identity studies shed some insight into the identities of preservice literacy teachers and inservice literacy specialists. The preservice literacy teacher studies highlighted the negotiations teachers made between their personal ideologies, racial, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds, and work expectations (Alsup, 2006; Assaf, 2005; Haddix, 2010; Hall, 2010). These studies also showed how identities are shaped in discursive spaces where preservice teachers discuss and explore literacy teaching and learning (Assaf, 2005; Rogers et al., 2006). Inservice literacy specialist studies showed how literacy specialists' identities impacted the ways they approached their work (McKinney & Giorgis, 2009). These studies reported on how literacy coaching is a complicated process that includes negotiations of power, positioning, and emotional performances (Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008). Such negotiations can be related, at least in part, to teacher uncertainty (Britzman, 2007; Helsing, 2007; Farnsworth, 2010).

As noted above, the literature described negotiations that teachers make, but were not specific to the present study's population of aspiring literacy specialists. Much of the literature

specific to literacy specialists' identities focused on those with greater teaching experience compared to those in this study. The current study adds details about aspiring literacy specialists' identities as they completed their studies in literacy education and prepared to apply for positions as classroom teacher or literacy specialists. The participants' discourses revealed the ways they were (un)certain about their identities as teachers, literacy specialists, and people at an important life transition more generally. They drew on situational, institutional, and societal discourses in ways that could impact their later effectiveness. This study ties identity and (un)certainty more explicitly than previously noted in educational research. Such detail may help us to better prepare aspiring literacy specialists and coaches to be school leaders who support students and teachers.

Theoretical Perspectives

I designed this study to extend Assaf's (2005) earlier exploration of a young woman studying to be a literacy specialist in an undergraduate program. My study, however, focused on literacy education graduate students, and I had more participants. Like Assaf, I drew on Gee's (2000) notions of identity, Discourse, and group membership. Theories on identity, Discourse, belonging, and critical discourse analysis helped me to understand the ways aspiring literacy specialists' discourses are embedded in social institutions and society.

I drew on a sociocultural view of literacy, like other studies on identity in literacy that examined individuals' literate and social practices. Research of this nature aligned with a paradigm shift that has occurred over decades to define literacy from a sociocultural rather than a psychological or cognitive perspective (Gee, 2012; Hamilton, 2006; Moje & Luke, 2009). In this view literacy "involves people in participation, interaction, relationships, and contexts, all of

which have implications for how people make sense of themselves and others, identify, and are identified” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 416).

Identity

The ways identity has been theorized over time has shaped, in part, the growing body of insights related to teacher identity and literacy research. Identity studies appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, with identity theorized as internal, fixed, and stable (e.g., McDermott, 1977). In the 1990s and 2000s, researchers began to theorize identities as social, negotiated, and performed (e.g., Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Noll, 1998). Recent work on identity theorizes identity as discursive and hybrid (Lewis & Del Valle, 2009).

With the realization that individuals enact identities, researchers studied teachers’ identities. To provide an example, Olsen (2008) and Cook (2009) studied first-year English teachers’ identities. Olsen (2008) found that six female teachers, from the same teacher education program, relied on embedded understandings of and for themselves in their teacher identity development. Their personal and professional, past and present experiences shaped how they constructed themselves as teachers. Their reasons for entry were central to their identities and included gendered discourses. For example, they referenced playing school, influential women teachers in their family, and a desire for a schedule that was compatible with mothering. Cook’s (2009) phenomenology study, however, focused on the identity disequilibrium that ten teachers experienced. She categorized their disequilibrium in four ways: imitation as apprentice (aspiring to be like teachers of their own), negotiating issues of authority (developing authority in the classroom), creating boundaries (building relationships with students yet setting limits that were flexible, sustainable), and resiliency and resolve (a commitment to moving forward in their development as teachers). Cook recognized that their identity disequilibrium related to their

newness as teachers and as a result of negotiating relationships in the world, with others and themselves.

My study drew on theories of identity that suggested identities are discursive, multiple, and negotiated in various contexts. Gee (2011) stated, “We build an identity here and now as we speak. We each act out different identities in our lives in different contexts” (p. 106).

Historical, institutional, and sociocultural forces also influence identities (Gee, 2000). Fairbanks and colleagues (2010) suggested “The ability to negotiate fit between one’s identity and one’s context has been directly linked to the development of belonging” (p. 165).

Such theories may be traced back to language philosopher and social theorist, Bakhtin (1981) (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). According to Bakhtin (1986) dialogism shapes our identities, “The process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 341). In this sense dialogue and identities are always, “In a state of movement and oscillation” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 302).

Discourses as Group Membership

Discourses are socially situated identities that mark our belonging to social groups (Gee, 2012). Gee (2012) said about Discourses, “They are, thus, always and everywhere social products of our social histories” (p. 3). We use discourses, or language-in-use, to be recognized, or identified, as certain kinds of people. Gee (2012) theorized, “Discourses are ways of being ‘people like us.’ They are ‘ways of being in the world,’” (p. 3). He explained, “These forms of language are not merely structural, rather they encapsulate, carry through time and space, meanings, meanings shared and lived out in a variety of ways by the social group” (Gee, 2012, p. 141).

Gee (2012) suggested a “niche” has to exist for an individual to be a certain kind of person (p. 3). He suggested we enact identities through language by positioning others, comparing or contrasting their identities to the identities we wish to enact. We measure our fit in Discourses by positioning others. In fact, some identities cannot exist without positioning others as having related identities. Gee (2011) said, “For example the ‘Special Ed’ teacher needs ‘Special Ed’ (‘SPED’) students and talks about and acts in regard to students in such a way as to create and sustain this identity as well” (p. 109).

Most often, Discourses are unconscious, unreflective, and uncritical (Gee, 2012). Gee (2012) suggested, “Each Discourse incorporates taken-for-granted and tacit ‘theories’ about what counts as a ‘normal’ person and the ‘right’ way to think, feel, and behave” (p. 4). Discourses can be dangerous because they relate to the distribution of social power in society and have ways of valuing what is “normal” or “good” in ways that “stack the deck” for certain “kinds of people” (Gee, 2012, p. 165).

Our multiple Discourses represent our multiple identities, and there can be conflicts among them because they do not always represent consistent and compatible values. Gee (2012) referred to competing Discourses as “tension” or “conflict” (p. 175). For instance, Gee (2012) suggested the values of many school-based Discourses treat certain children as “other” (p. 4). These tensions or conflicts can tie to ethnicity, race, class, and gender. Gee suggested, “They are endemic in modern pluralistic societies” (2012, p. 4). Such tensions or conflicts among competing Discourses can be sites of struggle and resistance when individuals bring other Discourses to their day-to-day enactments.

Some researchers have studied teachers’ discourses. Hyland (2009) studied the discourses of an early career, fourth grade, White female teacher. She found that while she

attempted to enact culturally relevant pedagogy in a classroom with predominately African American students, the teacher struggled to build relationships with the historically marginalized community. The teacher often drew on deficit discourses about the students' families and home lives. Santoro & Allard (2003) designed a project encouraging eight preservice secondary teachers to explore their own ethnic and classed identities. While the researchers noticed some small shifts in the preservice teachers' ethnic and class understandings, they still drew on deficit discourses about the "other" constructed in opposition to the mainstream. James (2012) studied the narratives of six female elementary school teachers and found their conceptions of caring were fixed and did not always match students' lives. James noticed interplay between mothering and deficit discourses in the teachers' talk. Subedi (2006) studied preservice teachers' perspectives on religion and noticed how teachers negotiated or resisted religious discourses. These studies, taken together, give insight into identity, discourses, race, class, gender, and religion.

Gee (2012) suggested as individuals become knowledgeable about theories of Discourses, it becomes an issue of a "moral stance" or "obligation" to reflect on them (p. 216). Thus, as teachers and aspiring literacy specialists prepare to assume roles in schools, it is important to understand the ways their membership in various Discourses position them relative to others. Understanding these Discourses may allow them to dismantle Discourses that yield inequity to provide more equitable opportunities for all in schools (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Hall et al., 2010). Critical discourse analysis is a method and theory that explores these Discourses in some detail, a first step in the process.

Belonging

Belonging is complex. A sense of belonging is achieved by being and doing in the world (May, 2011). It weaves many aspects of being such as age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, education, occupation, hobbies, and more. In addition, belonging can change over time, in response to changes in people's identities, affinities, and Discourses. May (2011) suggested, "Belonging is, in other words, not a given or something that we accomplish once and for all" (p. 372). It is something individuals have to keep achieving.

Belonging is inherently social but is often unwritten and unconscious. Fitting in is about belonging to a Discourse and being like people perceived to be like us (Gee, 2012). Belonging is partly about being aware of unwritten rules of a Discourse and being recognized by others in socially significant ways according to that Discourse. When people belong it becomes an everyday mode of being. It is not something that people need to think about.

One's uncertainty about fit can bring about a sense of not belonging. May (2011) argued the construct of belonging extends Bourdieu's (1979) habitus because it helps explain how individuals can be embedded in a familiar everyday world yet they have a feeling that they do *not* belong there. Not belonging usually carries a negative connotation. However, May (2011) suggested that not belonging can be an impetus for social change.

Hierarchies of belonging operate to include and exclude people. "Because shared cultures and values, or understandings of who 'we' are and what 'we' stand for, are the result of struggles over representation and membership, they tend to reflect power structures and serve the interests of those in power" (May, 2011, p. 369). This moves belonging from a construct that is a sense or feeling to a more politically contested issue. The construct of belonging helped

illuminate individuals' perspectives on the ways they and others were included and excluded in situational, institutional, and societal contexts.

Other researchers drew on the construct of belonging. Fairbanks and colleagues (2010) wrote a theoretical piece exploring why some teachers are more thoughtfully adaptive than others. They suggested, beyond knowledge, teachers' beliefs, vision, belonging, and identity influenced their responsiveness to students and situations. They defined belonging as a sense of connectedness, congruence, or fit with a teaching context and suggested belonging leads to engagement and motivated behavior (see also Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). The researchers recognized scholars once thought belonging, like identity, was measurable, fixed, or concrete (e.g., Osterman, 2000), yet recent theoretical work on belonging, from sociocultural perspectives, recognizes individuals' lived experiences in context. Thus, negotiating the ways identities fit in various contexts connects to belonging (Faircloth, 2009).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis brings together social theory and discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 2005; C. Lewis, 2006; Rogers et al., 2005). It draws on social theories with a critical orientation and linguistic work for analyses of discourse—text—to recognize and answer questions about relationships between language and society (Rogers et al., 2005; Rogers & Wetzel, 2014). Researchers use many different approaches to critical discourse analysis in such disciplines as social policy, social work, linguistics, and education (Rogers et al., 2005).

Critical theorists who use this research method assume that thought is mediated by historically rooted power relations, context matters, and some people are more privileged than others (Rogers et al., 2005). What makes a discourse analysis “critical” is the attempt to move beyond a description and interpretation of language to an explanation of *how* language works in

the social world (Rogers et al., 2005). Critical discourse analysis inevitably includes the study of power and how power can be enacted in both liberating and oppressive ways (Rogers, 2004; Rogers et al., 2005).

Foucault's theories on discourse and power (1969/1972) influenced the development of CDA (Rogers et al., 2005). He rejected ideas of structuralism, which suggested constructs could be separated from the structure of language. Foucault theorized that social constructs cannot be separated from knowledge and power. Foucault's theories extended scholarship on social practices as he delineated relationships between institutions and society. While CDA's roots are in social theories, including those of Foucault, Fairclough distinguished CDA from Foucault's theory of language because of its use of close text analysis (Rogers et al., 2005).

There are many different approaches to using critical discourse analysis as a research method. For example, in this literature review, the scholars who drew on theories and methods of critical discourse analysis drew on approaches, or a blending of techniques, as outlined by Gee (1999), Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), and Rogers (2004). Some approaches are closely rooted in linguistic analysis and focus more on the study of word selection and use (e.g., Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Other approaches focus less on the details of syntax and more on larger ideas, issues, and themes in written or oral language (Gee, 2011). Researchers and scholars debate on whether CDA should have a more standardized approach and greater balance between social and linguistic theories (Rogers et al., 2005).

Critical discourse analysis can be a useful research method that allows us to look at everyday oral and written texts to understand how language is formed in social structures and power relations (C. Lewis, 2006, Rogers, 2004). It guides us to make visible the ways situational (the local), institutional (the organization) and societal (society) contexts are implicated in our

discourses. Critical discourse analysis is one way researchers study identity because it allows us to examine how individuals make sense of their world, using oral and written language to constitute a data set. I describe my use of CDA in more detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed scholarship on literacy specialists' work, literacy specialists' education, and teacher identity. The research on literacy specialists' work highlighted the ways the roles and responsibilities of literacy specialists shifted over time and vary by context. The literature on literacy specialists' education suggested that pathways to certification vary, but the literacy practicum experience seemed important to literacy specialists' education—regardless of roles these individuals might have assumed as a result of their degree. The research studies on literacy teacher identity revealed that preservice and inservice teachers engage in a number of negotiations, often experiencing tension or uncertainty, conditions which may well impact the opportunities they do or do not provide students.

The research does not provide details about how identity and uncertainty may lead people to study literacy education in the first place. Yet such graduate studies yield a new certificate for teachers and, perhaps, unanticipated job possibilities that compete with what they imagined themselves doing in the first place. It also does not detail new competing possibilities typical to young people in general. We do not know about individuals' identities as teachers as they complete their graduate studies and garner jobs as teachers and literacy specialists when they are no longer preservice teachers but not yet inservice literacy specialists.

This study draws on theories of identity, Discourse, belonging, and critical discourse analysis to address three important but not well understood questions: 1) What do beginning

literacy specialists' discourses reveal about their evolving identities? 2) On what discourses do they draw? 3) How are situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated?

CHAPTER THREE:

METHOD

This qualitative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) used critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) to explore the identities of students who were situated at a juncture that is not well understood: their completion of their Literacy Education MS. The use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) allowed me to look at everyday oral and written texts of these students as a way to understand social structures and power relations (C. Lewis, 2006; Rogers, 2004). I relied on qualitative research methods to gather data such as observations, interviews, and documents produced and used by study participants. CDA tools helped me to move beyond description and interpretation of language toward an explanation of how language works in the social world (Rogers et al., 2005). In this chapter, I detail the research design, including the participants and setting, data collection, data analysis, and my perspectives as a researcher.

Participants and Setting

The setting, or context, of this study included many concentric circles (Figure 1). The 10 participants who agreed to take part in this study were part of a cohort – a group of graduate students who spent three semesters together studying in a Literacy Education MS program. At the time of the study, participants with varying demographic backgrounds and teaching experiences (see Table 1) were completing their last class, a practicum that included tutoring, group instruction, and coaching. The accredited program that housed this practicum followed standards outlined by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). I provide more details about these contexts and participants below.

Concentric Contexts

This study took place during a six-week literacy education practicum at a mid-sized university in the northern U.S. The class was required for successful completion of the MS program and for institutional recommendations toward literacy specialist certification. Fifteen certified teachers, who were also graduate students, tutored children in grades 3-12 for one hour a day in a one-on-one setting. The students then took turns co-teaching 30 minutes of group instruction. For about one hour, in a workshop setting, they also planned lessons and analyzed assessments. Other activities included working collaboratively on course requirements such as a school literacy audit and professional development at an urban school. The students also participated in coaching conferences with instructional supervisors to support their planning. After the workshop time, the class ended each day with a one- to two-hour seminar during which students explored issues pertinent to their assigned tasks and possible futures as literacy specialists. Discussions focused on tutoring cases and the roles of literacy specialists in schools.

This class, like others in the program, was designed to address established criteria by the IRA. The International Reading Association's *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2004) suggested reading specialists meet the following qualifications: previous teaching experience; master's degree with concentration in reading education; a minimum of 24 graduate semester hours in reading and language arts and related courses; and an additional six semester hours of supervised practicum experience. IRA and NCATE accredited the Literacy Education MS program through a professional standards review process.

Participants

Ten of 15 teachers/graduate students in one cohort volunteered to participate in this study. At the onset of the practicum, with IRB approval (see Appendix B), I explained my

dissertation study to all students to elicit volunteers for my project. The volunteers in this study were suitable participants because they were at all at a similar juncture as certified teachers completing master's degrees in literacy education to earn certification as literacy specialists.

The 10 participants in this study were predominately White and female, reflecting the demographics of literacy specialists today with slightly more diversity (Bean et al., 2012) (see Table 1). Eight participants self-identified as White. Two participants self-identified as mixed-raced, one identified as Latino-Jamaican and another as White-African American. Eight were females, and two were males. All participants self-identified as middle class. These 10 participants' demographics reasonably represented the graduate student cohort of 15 students.

Participants' teaching experience ranged from 0-13 years across elementary and secondary levels in special education, teaching English as a second language, social studies, and English. Six participants had no teaching experience beyond student teaching and substitute teaching. One taught for less than one year during his full-time graduate studies. One early career teacher had a little over one year of experience. Two participants had nine and 13 years of experience. One was working towards a second master's degree. The other taught in another state but was required to earn a master's for certification after she moved to her current address as per her new state's requirements.

Many concentric circles made up the contexts of this study. Participants were members of a cohort in a literacy practicum, in a Literacy Education MS program, in a college of education, at a university, in a state with specific teacher certification and program accreditation requirements met through IRA and NCATE review. Participants brought race, class, gender, other demographics, and life experiences to the study. They also had a range of teaching experience across varied grades and subject areas.

Data Collection

Critical discourse analysis required the gathering of various sources of participants' oral and written language (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). I collected several kinds of data, typically used with this approach, to inform my understanding of the contexts of participants' language use and as potential sites for critical discourse analysis. These included interviews to gain a better sense of participants' perspectives and to record language examples for CDA, field notes of class seminars to inform my understanding of participants' interactions with others, and documents to provide details about participants' contexts. This resulted in 605 pages of interview transcripts, 92 pages of field notes, 686 pages of documents produced by participants, and 64 pages of additional documents from institutional contexts such as the program, state, and IRA (See Table 2).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the 10 participants to gather rich data filled with participants' words that revealed their perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). My use of semi-structured interviews meant I asked the same general questions of each participant and followed up with pertinent questions that arose from information he or she shared during interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This method focused my inquiry on gathering comparable data from participants. It gave me some flexibility to ask further questions to clarify my understandings of participants' insights. This interview structure was permeable and allowed participants to discuss insights about which I may not have considered asking.

I conducted three interviews with each participant in a seven-month timeframe. I interviewed each participant twice during the six-week class, once during the first half of the practicum and once during the latter half of the course, in the fifth and sixth weeks. I followed up with participants via a third interview within seven months after the course was complete. I

decided to conduct a total of three interviews with each participant to continue to forge relationships and to gather more data over time because identities are constantly in flux (Trent, 2010b). This gave me a range of participants' perspectives as their identities were (and are) always evolving. I audiotaped all interviews and transcribed them using Tannen's (1984/2005) transcription coding system (see Appendix A). I hired a professional transcription service to transcribe some interviews also following the transcription coding system. I listened to all interviews to check for transcription accuracy and to make corrections.

I learned more about participants' background and perspectives in each subsequent interview. The first was a life history interview (Appendix C, question 1) that aimed at learning participants' backgrounds, beliefs, values, and assumptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The focus of the second interview was on teaching and literacy, and it aimed at learning about participants' perspectives about their identities as teachers and potential literacy specialists (Appendix C, questions 2 and 3). Before the third interview, I had all data transcribed and reviewed. My review of the data guided my line of questioning in the last interview. I realized I needed to fill in details to better understand participants' biographies, participation in their studies, identities as literacy specialists, and social affiliations (Appendix C, questions 4-9). I also knew from my study of CDA, I needed to ask more questions that would get at participants' perspectives on social structures and power relations (C. Lewis, 2006; Rogers, 2004). Therefore, I asked questions about participants' relationships with students and colleagues including questions about their backgrounds and race, class, and gender.

I also gathered field notes to capture details about the contexts of participants' oral and written words during 20 days of the graduate seminars. My field notes were a written account of my observations. These data were essential to critical discourse analysis because it is a study of

language in context (Bloome et al., 2008). In my field notes I made every effort to capture what I heard, saw, experienced, or thought during the seminars (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I collected field notes representing a “thick description” of observable behaviors (e.g., nonverbal social cues, seating arrangements). I transcribed my handwritten field notes at the end of each day and augmented with observer’s comments to record my developing insights about participants’ identities and discourses. I decided against audiotaping seminars because I did not want the audio-recording to change the nature of the class. It would have also been very difficult to avoid capturing audio of those who did not consent to be part of the study.

My final data source included documents representing the concentric contexts of participants’ studies (Figure 1). To represent the situational context, artifacts included course assignments and participants’ submissions in response to these assignments. Assignments included lesson plans, reflections, on-demand, in-class quick write reflections, student progress reports, literacy audit materials, small group plans, and peer coaching recommendations and reflections (see Table 2). Participants posted most of these assignments to Blackboard, and I retrieved them from this site. Artifacts also represented the institutional context including printed information on the literacy practicum, graduate program, college, university, state, and accrediting professional organizations. This form of data collection allowed me to explore the situational and institutional contexts that influenced literacy specialists’ identities and discourses.

I established methods for managing my data. To do this, I created a spreadsheet in which I logged interviews, observations, and other artifacts. I recorded dates, sites, saved file locations, and respective paginations. I also created multiple copies of electronic data files for each participant. I printed and stored the same data in binders. I toggled back and forth between electronic and hard copies throughout my analysis.

While I relied primarily on the interview data as sources of my text analysis, as evidenced in the findings chapters to follow, other data sources built a context to shape my understanding of participants' identities and discourses. Participants' interviews provided a richness of their perspectives. Field notes of class seminars informed my understanding of participants' insights at the situational level and other documents provided details about the institutional contexts. Taken together, these data sources constituted the data set.

Data Analysis

In this study I blended analytical techniques of Fairclough (1989) and Gee (2005, 2011) because they mapped well onto one another and both are widely used in literacy research (Figure 3). I followed Fairclough's (1989) three dimensions, or stages, (e.g., description, interpretation, explanation) of critical discourse analysis. I used these stages as a guide for making visible situational, institutional, and societal contexts. At the same time, I utilized six of Gee's (2011) 27 discourse analysis tools that best aligned with my research questions including: deixis, subject, intonation, fill in, identity building, and big "D" Discourse. The six discourse analysis tools I used yielded findings that seamed together with some overlap, allowing for points of convergence in the data. Below, I detail the many steps included in my textual and content analyses and analytic writing tasks.

My data analysis included several detailed steps as required by CDA. First, I repeatedly reviewed the corpus of participants' data for explicit "clusters of themes, statements, ideas, and ideologies" (Luke, 2000, p. 456). I kept a running list of possible codes and noted references to situational, institutional, and societal contexts. I wrote memoranda about these ideas. I identified five to 20 salient or recurring codes per participant (e.g., race, class, reasons for entry, visions of teacher self, self-perception, cohort). The number of codes ranged because some

participants talked more than others. I organized these codes into semantic maps that illustrated codes that were most central to each participant's narratives (see Figure 2). This resulted in 10 semantic maps that I was able to compare for common themes. Then, I pulled snippets of interview data with each participant's salient codes into a new document for fine-grained analysis. This yielded 10 Word documents with a total of 405 pages.

I used Fairclough's (1989) three stages of critical discourse analysis as a guide for studying the situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated in participants' discourses. The first stage, description, focused on textual features or the properties of the text. In this stage, I paid attention to features of the interview text such as word choice, tone, turn-taking, and body language. The next stage, interpretation, dealt with the contextual factors that influenced production and interpretation of the text. In this stage, I looked for discourses mediated by participants' backgrounds, beliefs, values, and assumptions (Young, 2000). In the final stage, explanation, I aimed to bring together the description, interpretation, and societal contexts (Fairclough, 1989).

I found Gee's (2011) discourse analysis tools mapped well on to Fairclough's (1989) three stages or dimensions. I read Gee's (2011) *How to Do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit*, which offered tools to attend to both language structure and content. Each tool provided specific questions to ask of the data. Gee (2011) suggested his toolkit, "sees discourse analysis as tied closely to the details of language structure (grammar), but that deals with meaning in social, cultural, and political terms, a broader approach to meaning than is common in much mainstream linguistics" (ix). These tools prompted me to tie participants' language to what they meant, intended, or sought to accomplish in the world (Bloome et al., 2008; Gee, 2011).

As I explored Gee's (2011) 27 tools, I made tables and wrote memoranda in an effort to discern which tools would be most useful in my study of aspiring literacy specialists' identities. I kept in mind Gee's (2011) suggestion, "Furthermore, anyone engaged in their own discourse analysis must adapt the tools they have taken from a given theory to the needs and demands of their own study" (p. xi). First I made a table listing all of Gee's tools and the questions they asked (Memo, July 25, 2011). Then I made a table that referenced my research questions and the tools that would attend to those questions (see Table 3). This table helped me to organize my thoughts and visually represented my initial ideas about the tools that would best guide the analysis of my data. I then created a third table that included Gee's tools, what the tools attended to, and how the tools related to one another (Memo, September 2, 2011).

I recognized the importance of context to my interpretations as I continued to weigh discourse analysis tools. Gee (2011) defined context as "the physical setting in which the communication takes place and everything in it" (p. 7). This included bodies and movement, eye gazes, things previously said and done, any shared knowledge—including cultural knowledge, by those involved in the communication. Individuals communicate in a way that fits a specific context and how they want others to perceive them in that context. However, communication, itself, creates a context. Gee (2011) added, "It seems, then, that we fit our language to a context that our language, in turn, helps to create in the first place" (p. 84). I utilized those tools that would help me unpack the ways participants' discourses shape and were shaped by situational, institutional, and societal contexts.

Textual Analysis

I used three tools to study language and context (Gee, 2011). These tools guided my focus on the text (grammatical) structures of participants' knowledge, assumptions, and inferences. My textual analysis included the use of the deixis, subject, and intonation tools.

First, I used the deixis tool. The deixis tool helped me understand the context of participants' words and their assumptions. It helped get at tacit details about race, class, and gender in participants' words that might have otherwise been obscured. Linguists refer to "deictics" as pointing words, words whose reference must be determined from context (Gee, 2011). Deictics connect language and the larger context. Common deictic words fall into three categories: person, place, and time. This tool required, "For any communication, ask how deictics are being used to tie what is said to context and to make assumptions about what listeners already know or can figure out" (Gee, 2011, p. 10). I circled all pointing words (e.g., I/me, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them, here/there, this/that, now/then, yesterday/today) in participants' 405 pages of text snippets to ponder this question. I refer to the interview data that tied to each participant's salient codes, described above, as text snippets.

For example, the deixis tool highlighted the way that Jessica may not have fully owned her Ukrainian ancestry. She used "that" to point to her Ukrainian background. She used "we" and "us" to position herself and her siblings as still "now" not remembering how to say holiday salutations in her grandparent's native language.

So (.) **that** was always a little bit of our culture. Like at Christmas time my mom, would always, as **we** were walking in the door like tell **us** how to say Merry Christmas in the= in Ukrainian. **I** couldn't remember it for the life of **me, now** still.

See Appendix D to see the full text snippet and my line of questioning.

Second, I used the subject tool. The subject tool helped guide my exploration of the ways participants positioned themselves and others. All languages are organized grammatically to include subjects and predicates (Gee, 2011). The subject is the noun or pronoun in a sentence. The predicate includes the verb, which gives details about the subject. Gee (2011) said, “The subject is the center of attention, the point around which information is organized” (p. 18). Gee (2011) also suggested that speakers strategically choose subjects, so studying subjects and what participants say about them is a key grammatical tool in discourse analysis. It required:

For any communication, ask why speakers have chosen the subject/topics they have and what they are saying about the subject. Ask if and how they could have made another choice of subject and why they did not. Why are they organizing information the way they are in terms of subjects and predicates? (Gee, 2011, p. 19)

As part of this fine-grained text analysis, I circled all subjects and underlined all predicates in participants’ text snippets to guide my inquiry. I noted patterns I observed. I noticed deictics include pronouns (e.g., I, he, she, we, they), and these pronouns were also subjects of participants’ discourses.

As indicated in the text below, the subject tool showed that Jessica implied she was White and Caucasian. Her use of subjects positioned her grandparents as having cultural or ethnic backgrounds:

E: Um (.) ((Smacks lips)) um while you are talking about your family, how do you identify culturally and ethnically?

Implied subject

J: ((Smacks lips)) Um (.) White, Caucasian, is that what you mean like ((laughingly))? Yeah I mean my=my mom’s mom ((taps on table)) is from the Ukraine. And my

mom's dad (taps on table twice) is from (.) like he's his family came from England but they came over a while ago. So he's my grandpa's like third or fourth generation. But my mom and my mom's grandma was first generation here from the Ukraine.

Third, I used the intonation tool. The intonation tool guided me to consider how participants' speech emphasized more and less salient ideas. Gee (2011) described speech as produced in small spurts. Within these spurts, we can hear intonation contours when we listen carefully. Shifts in intonation contours include placing stress on word sounds to make them sound louder, longer, or with a pitch change. Speakers choose to contrast or emphasize words which give details about their meaning and importance. It questioned:

For any communication, ask how a speaker's intonation contour contributes to the meaning of an utterance. What idea units did the speaker use? What information did the speaker make salient, in terms of where the intonational focus is placed? What information did the speaker background as given or old by making it less salient? (Gee, 2011, p. 28)

For this tool I used a highlighter to mark shifts in intonation in participants' text snippets as indicated by the transcription coding system (Tannen, 1984/2005). Again, I documented patterns I observed.

For example, the intonation tool seemed to highlight the way that Jessica may have been unsure or uncomfortable answering questions about her cultural and ethnic identity. Her language included lip smacking, pausing, and laughing:

((Smacks lips)) Um (.) White, Caucasian, is that what you mean like ((laughingly))?

Content Analysis

I used three additional tools that Gee (2011) recommended to focus on larger ideas, issues, and themes in the content of participants' discourses. These tools guided my study of the ways participants built identities and enacted socially recognizable Discourses. My content analysis included the use of the fill in, identity building, and big "D" Discourse tools.

The fill in tool further guided my inquiry of language and context. This tool seemed important because it laid the groundwork for the two subsequent content analysis tools. Gee (2011) suggested, "WHAT THE SPEAKER SAYS + CONTEXT = WHAT THE SPEAKER MEANS" (his emphasis, p. 11). So with the fill in tool, I considered participants' discourses and the context of their words, and then I made assumptions and inferences to make the discourses more clear or complete (Gee, 2011). This tool questioned:

For any communication, ask: Based on what was said and the context in which it was said, what needs to be filled in here to achieve clarity? What is not being said overtly, but is still assumed to be known or inferable? What knowledge, assumptions, and inferences do listeners have to bring to bear in order for this communication to be clear and understandable and received in the way the speaker intended it? (Gee, 2011, p. 12)

This tool encouraged me to understand what each participant meant, what his or her purpose was, and what he or she was trying to accomplish. I reread the data line by line and made notations in margins with assumptions and inferences that I drew from the text and context. My insights from the three previous tools also guided my understandings with the fill in tool. I am, however, limited by the discourses available to me.

The fill in tool, labeled number two below, helped to show that Jessica might have assumed she was part of the “norm” as White and middle class. Her use of “the typical” below suggested this to me:

Um and my dad’s family is Irish and English=or Irish and Italian, (.) but I mean for the most part it was just White ((taps on table)) middle class, you know, values and home life, and the typical you know. #2 Middle class as norm

I used the identity building tool to focus on the language participants used to reflect their identities. This tool guided me to consider how participants enacted different identities and how they portrayed others’ identities in relation to their own (Gee, 2011). While individuals build their own identities across contexts, they also build, or position, identities for others. Gee (2011) said we use language to build and rebuild things in the world. He argued that we use language, always and simultaneously, to build in seven areas: significance (importance, relevance), activities (practices), identities, relationships, politics (the distribution of social goods), connections (relevant to each other or not), and signs and systems and knowledge (communication systems like languages, dialects, etc.). I used the identity building task tool because it seemed most pertinent to my research questions. This tool asked:

For any communication, ask what socially recognizable identity or identities the speaker is trying to enact or to get others to recognize. Ask also how the speaker’s language treats other people’s identities, what sorts of identities the speaker recognizes for others in relationship to his or her own. Ask, too, how the speaker is positioning others, what identities the speaker is ‘inviting’ them to take up. (Gee, 2011, p. 110)

This tool required me to reread the 405 pages of participants’ interview data text snippets. I made notations in the margins listing the identities participants enacted or recognized for others.

While the text tools highlighted the way participants were positioned or positioned others, the identity tool achieved this as well.

For example, Jessica identified herself as White with a distant Ukrainian background. From her text, I could surmise that she enacted an identity as White of European descent. I labeled the identity tool number 16 below:

E: Um (.) ((Smacks lips)) um while you are talking about your family, how do you

identify culturally and ethnically?

#16/27 White, European descent

Implied subject

#2 Unsure or uncomfortable about culture

J: ((Smacks lips)) Um (.) White, Caucasian, is (that) what you mean like ((laughingly))?

Last, I used the big “D” Discourse tool. This theoretical tool brought together theories about language, culture, and the world from cultural anthropology, cultural psychology, sociolinguistics, and philosophy. It explains how individuals make meaning through language and objects, tools, technologies with other people (Gee, 2011). It worked in tandem with the identity tool. As noted above, Gee (2011) defined big “D” Discourse as distinctive ways of speaking/listening and/or reading/writing coupled with ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, and believing. Discourses, historically and culturally, allow people to be socially recognized in a specific ways. Gee suggested our discourse is situated in memberships to cultural and social groups. He said, “Each of them has distinctive ways with words associated with distinctive identities and activities” (Gee, 2011, p. 176). This tool required:

For any communication, ask how the person is using language, as well as ways of acting, interacting, believing, valuing, dressing, and using various objects, tools, and technologies in certain sorts of environments to enact a specific socially recognizable

identity and engage in one or more socially recognizable activities. Even if all you have for data is language, ask what Discourse is this language part of, that is, what kind of person (what identity) is this speaker or writer seeking to enact or be recognized as.

What sorts of actions, interactions, values, beliefs, and objects, tools, technologies, and environments are associated with this sort of language within a particular Discourse?

(Gee, 2011, p. 181)

Again, I reread participants' data snippets line by line and made notations in the margin listing the big "D" Discourses participants enacted. For each of the content analysis tools I used different color codes to make notes and keep track of my analysis with each respective tool.

Finally, the big "D" Discourse tool, labeled number 27, affirmed that Jessica identified herself as middle class based on, what she referred to as "typical," values and home life:

(.) but I mean for the most part it was just White ((taps on table)) middle class, you know, values and home life, and the typical you know.

#27 Class= values and home life
#2 Middle class as norm

#16 Middle class

Analytic Writing

The analyses in this research also included phases of analytic writing. First, I wrote memoranda before and during my data collection and analyses. Next, I created several charts to organize my data in a way that I could look at findings across participants. I organized, summarized, and reorganized my analyses by categories. Then, I wrote case studies about each participant. In this phase, I organized, reorganized, and synthesized my analyses. In the final steps of my analyses, I returned to the charts and hand-coded data snippets, wrote, and reorganized findings according to conceptual themes.

I wrote memoranda throughout my study. I wrote memos before collecting data in an effort to attend to my own knowledge, assumptions, and inferences (Memo, June 25, 2010), and I

elaborate on this later in this chapter. During my analysis, I also wrote memos after I completed work with each tool and upon completion of all six tools per participant. This guided my attention to points of convergence across the analysis. Writing memoranda provided a place to question my assumptions and evolving understandings about the ways participants represented their identities as aspiring literacy specialists. Memos documented the progress of my research, providing “a time to reflect on issues raised in the setting and how they relate to larger theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 165).

I also visually represented my analyses by making charts. First, I organized my tool work into a chart. On a large sheet of chart paper I listed 10 participants, by number, horizontally, and vertically I listed the six tools. Within the quadrants of the chart where participants intersected tools, I made notes including all of my codes per participants, per tools. My notes on the chart also included a corresponding page number to the original text snippets where I made notes (see Table 4 for an example). I wrote all of my analysis work, up to this point, into one large chart. This made it easier for me to look at the analyses at once.

I realized the first chart (Table 4) contained too much detail, and I needed to be able to talk about each participant and each tool in more parsimonious fashion. As a result, I made a second chart on the same large chart paper to reflect the first, but I only wrote a few words in each quadrant. I wrote down words that seemed significant as I attempted to articulate my findings per participant, per tool (see Table 5 for an example).

After I organized my data analysis into a second chart form, I noticed four categories. It seemed that participants talked about their visions of self as teachers, what they thought it meant to be teachers, their visions (or lack) of self as literacy specialists, and what they thought the roles of the literacy specialists entailed. In order to talk about participants’ notions of themselves

as literacy specialists, I had to talk about their identities as teachers first. This became evident as participants had clearer visions of themselves as teachers, yet they expressed uncertainty about their identities as literacy specialists. It seemed participants perceived an order to become literacy specialists: they did not belong as specialists without being teachers first. I elaborate on this in the findings chapters to follow. Based on this observation, I organized my analysis according to these categories into a third chart (see Table 6 for an example). I added a fifth space to include other important insights. This served to document my evolving understandings.

Based on the above categories, I wrote a case study for each participant. This helped to further my understanding of participants' perspectives about their identities as teachers and literacy specialists. In the case studies I elaborated on how participants identified as teachers, what teaching meant to them, how they did or did not identify as literacy specialists, and what being potential literacy specialists meant to them. I wrote 10 case studies that resulted in 82 pages of analysis. In this phase of analytic writing I wove together findings from the textual and content analysis.

The case studies served as a starting point as I tried to establish an organizational scheme for my findings. First, I considered organizing my findings according to my research questions: 1) What do beginning literacy specialists' discourses reveal about their evolving identities? 2) On what discourses do they draw? 3) How are situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated? I revisited the case studies to see how clearly I addressed my research questions. On a hard copy of the case studies, I made notations of where in the text I addressed my first and second research questions (e.g., Q1, Q2). I noted places in the text where there were details about participants' background or profile (e.g., P). I cut and pasted the snippets of text from the case studies that were coded Q1, Q2, and P into a new document. I did not make notations in the

text for the third research question because I thought its answer, more conceptual in nature, would be clear by way of answering the first two questions.

I considered the ways I could organize my findings by themes across participants instead of presenting them in individual case studies. I engaged in open-coding of the case studies and grouped the findings by themes (e.g., reasons for entry, change of intentions). This process helped me to realize that when I organized the findings by research questions from the case studies, I lost a lot of the textual analysis, which seemed important to understanding each participant as endeavored.

I decided to organize my findings in yet another way, according to text and content analysis tools. I went back to the very first chart I made (see Table 4) and to the original hand-coded data snippets for each participant to refresh my memory. I also returned to my second chart, which captured a few words per participant, per tool that seemed significant (see Table 5). I looked across this chart for common words in participants' discourses. With the deixis tool, I noticed that most participants used deictics to position literacy specialists, teachers, and students and compare them to themselves. I toggled back and forth between my charts and my hand-coded data.

I immersed myself in the analyses and themes within and across participants. I created a new Word document to record these (Memo, October 16, 2012). In this document, I listed each of the six tools and all participants by number. I then made a list of the key words that were clear across participants, drawing on my notes in the aforementioned charts. As an example, using the deixis tool, I indicated where participants used pointing words to name literacy specialists, teachers, and students. I went back to the data snippets for each participant and cut and pasted them into a new document. I printed and cut out participants' respective snippets and

organized them into categories (e.g., positioning literacy specialists, teachers, students). Then I started to write about the ways participants' discourses positioned others, selecting purposeful quotations to make my case. I repeated this cycle for each of the six tools. This resulted in 61 pages of additional analyses.

At this point, I realized that my analyses tied together conceptually to explain how participants affiliated themselves with regards to situational, institutional, and societal contexts. I identified two salient themes: uncertainty and fit. Many of these aspiring literacy specialists were unemployed, in search of their first teaching jobs, and earning additional endorsement that put them in a position to be school leaders, and all of these things complicated the process of becoming a literacy specialist. Participants seemed both uncertain and certain about the identities that they tried on, calling my attention to the false dichotomy that these categories set up. This led me to the use of (un)certain. Data overwhelmingly referred to how people felt (un)certain about fitting in as teachers, potential literacy specialists, and people in the adult world with families and jobs. Their (un)certainty about their fit was grounded in situational, institutional, and societal contexts.

My line of questioning in the interviews, in part, likely prompted participants to share descriptions about their fit. As I completed field observations, I noticed that participants' body language and the ways they verbally responded to one another suggested there may have been tension among members of the group. As such, during the third interview I asked participants questions about their participation in their studies (see Appendix C). I asked them if the group dynamics impacted their studies. Some participants discussed the ways they did or did not fit in the cohort. I also asked participants about how they saw themselves fitting in as literacy specialists in schools given research suggests that literacy specialists are mostly White, working

or middle class, females. While I asked about their fit to learn about their social affiliations, participants talked about their (un)certainly about their fit in general.

I returned to the literature to read about uncertainty and belonging, or fit. I referred to a body of research on teacher uncertainty and identity. The literature helped me to situate my findings in current scholarship while adding new insights specific to literacy specialists. Research on the constructs of uncertainty and belonging suggested they are interrelated and can be tied to social hierarchies (Helsing, 2007; May, 2011). Teachers' uncertainty may attribute to feelings of ineffectiveness that in turn influences teachers' pedagogical decisions. Teachers who have a sense of belonging may enact more thoughtful teaching practices (Fairbanks et al., 2010). I used the constructs of uncertainty and belonging, or fit, to organize my results.

My final phase of analysis included a few more revisions. First, I revisited all original data to be sure the data were saturated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), and I added new data sources to the findings. I then revisited the findings chapters to explicate the ways participants' uncertainty and fit tied to their positionality in situational, institutional, and societal contexts and how they positioned others. To do this, I questioned the contexts of participants' discourses, and when I could, I made explicit where their discourses tied to social institutions and society (C. Lewis, 2006, Rogers, 2004). This, in part, makes this study critical by locating power in social practices (Rogers et al., 2005).

In Chapter Four, I describe participants' (un)certainly about their fit as teachers and people more generally. In Chapter Five, I attend to their (un)certainly as literacy specialists and the ways they measured their fit against other students and aspiring literacy specialists. These chapters detail the situational, institutional, and societal discourses such individuals drew on that could later impact their effectiveness.

Researcher's Perspective

I recognize that my own subjectivities affected the ways I understood and conducted my research. As Peshkin (1988) recommended, it is important for researchers to “Disclose to their readers where self and subject became joined” (p. 17). I share my subjectivities related to my identities and the Discourses I enact. I highlight my own struggles with fit. I also share details about my connection to participants in this study. I recognize that exploring my assumptions continues to be an important process.

I come to this research as a White, middle class female who grew up working class. I am “typical” of the population educating K-12 students today, particularly literacy specialists (Assaf, 2005; Bean et al., 2002; Bean et al., 2012; McVee, 2004). Like many White, middle class female teachers, I spent little time while teaching considering my own positionality (Marx & Pennington, 2003). My sense of belonging was unconscious. I did not question whether I belonged or not because I did not need to. I presume that 10 years ago, when I was their age, my discourses would have been quite similar to those of most participants in this study. This felt like a constraint during my analysis, as I was only able to access discourses already available to me. During my time as a doctoral student, I learned how my race, class, and gender are integral to my identity representations and how I, in turn, read others' race, class, and gender (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

I bring to this study experiences as a learner. I studied education for nearly half of my lifetime. As an undergraduate, I studied elementary education, and immediately pursued a master's degree in literacy education, like three participants in this study. I studied literacy education for a number of reasons. For one, I was encouraged to do so by undergraduate professors whom I considered my mentors. In addition, they hired me to work as a graduate

assistant for a grant on which they served as principal investigators, so it made financial sense to stay on and complete my graduate degree. I thought that learning more about literacy education would make me a better classroom teacher. I was eager to begin teaching after I completed my one year of study, yet I did not think I belonged as a literacy specialist without classroom teaching experience. I was, however, grateful that I fulfilled my state's certification requirements that required a MS.

I try to embody a good student identity, and I put great value on learning. Throughout my educational career, I worked hard to belong as a good student. My standardized test scores (from kindergarten through college) never reflected significant aptitude. I remember taking the SATs several times, even after review courses, and when my score did not improve my mom said, "You're not that smart. You just work hard." My way of being a good student, even while writing this dissertation, included being a hard worker and possessing a love for learning.

My assumptions about what it means to perform as a good student do not likely match others' assumptions. I assume a good student is a student for life—a lifelong learner. A good student genuinely desires to learn more. However, I recognize that I would be naïve to think this is the only way learners enact good student identities. Good students also aim to please the teacher. They seek the teacher or professor's approval. In doing so, they often work to earn good grades and participate frequently in classes (Memo, June 25, 2010).

In addition to being a certain kind of lifelong student, I was also a classroom teacher. I taught sixth grade for five years in an upper middle class, high achieving suburban public school district. I worked with dynamic educators who shaped my assumptions about what it means to be a good literacy specialist.

As I think about my perspective toward literacy specialists, I draw both my experiences in K-12 schools as well as my graduate studies. A literacy specialist works in collaboration with classroom teachers. In addition, a good literacy specialist: supports the teacher's planning, is sensitive to all students' needs, advocates for students, supports instruction, is informed about institutional initiatives, participates in curriculum development planning, provides professional development, works well with others, advocates for teachers, and is caring and sensitive to parents' concerns (Memo, June 25, 2010). As a researcher, I explicated my assumptions in an effort to acknowledge they exist and so as to hear participants' perspectives as aspiring literacy specialists.

I disclosed my connections to participants as these interactions influenced my assumptions. In the fall and spring of the academic year that I conducted this study, I served as a graduate teaching assistant in the Literacy Education MS program. I independently taught two required graduate level courses, so subsequently, prior to this study I taught eight of the participants. This was advantageous, as I established rapport with them. It was disadvantageous in that I had assumptions about these students as learners and as literacy educators. I explored my assumptions about all possible participants prior to data collection by writing a memo (Memo, June 25, 2010). I made a bulleted list of my knowledge, assumptions, and inferences about each individual.

Two participants studied part-time, and I did not have them as students in my courses. We built rapport around the sharing of our narratives of juggling family life and graduate work. As I figured out (and continue to figure out) my fit in the academic world, I subtly shared with them the negotiations I made as a mother and scholar. This discourse was likely visible in the

data collected because both participants talked quite explicitly with me about motherhood in and outside of interviews.

Throughout my analysis and writing of this dissertation, I was concerned about how to best represent participants. I used their words whenever possible. I considered: how would my own discourses be any different, and what would it look like if someone did a fine-grained analysis of my talk? With that said, I did not mean for this dissertation to indict participants or their intentions. They could only articulate with discourses their backgrounds made available to them.

As is true for the participants in this study, my background, beliefs, values, and assumptions are part of my identities. From the outset, I wrote memoranda and conversed with colleagues to attend to my biases. Even while I have made an effort to be more aware and reflective, the analysis and reporting of these data use my lenses.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) was to explore the identities and discourses of 10 graduate students/teachers who were completing their Literacy Education MS studies to gain certification as literacy specialists. This study used critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) to explain how their language worked in the social world (Rogers et al., 2005). Because of this, data collection included the gathering of various sources of oral and written language produced by participants, including interviews, field observations, and documents to represent the concentric contexts in which participants were situated.

To analyze the data, I blended analytic techniques of critical discourse analysis outlined by Fairclough (1989) and Gee (2011). A final phase of my analysis, with many steps, included

analytic writing. I also shared my own subjectivities as a researcher, my struggles with belonging, my connection to participants, and my concerns about how to best represent them.

The next two findings chapters represent my use of the research methods described here. Chapter Four highlights participants' (un)certainly related to their fit as teachers and people at an important life transition. Chapter Five brings attention to participants' (un)certainly about their fit as literacy specialists as well as the ways they gauged their fit against students and other literacy specialists.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PARTICIPANTS WEIGH THEIR FIT AS TEACHERS AND PEOPLE:

“YOU’D THINK THAT I WOULD FIT IN JUST FINE.”

“And um, so even though I’d be surrounded by a bunch of White, middle class, English speaking women, I don’t know if that would necessarily mean I would fit in” (Stacy, November 22, 2010). Stacy’s words draw on her social affiliations to assess whether she was suited to be a teacher. Stacy well represented layers of (un)certainly expressed by my entire group of participants. Especially significant for individuals who were augmenting their employment credentials by studying literacy education, these individuals were not yet certain how they fit as teachers or as members of other competing social groups.

This chapter explores the study participants’ tentative identities as teachers. Their identities as teachers specifically and as people more generally seemed to ground the ways they were also building identities as aspiring literacy specialists. These identity-related revelations seemed important enough to deserve a chapter of their own since they highlighted much about how the participants positioned themselves as members of various social groups.

I organized this chapter into three sections. First, I foreground my findings with participants’ reasons for becoming K-12 teachers. Next, I detail the ways participants’ discourses suggested they were (un)certain despite their initial intentions. Then, I describe the ways participants expressed (un)certainly of how race, class, gender, age, and religion were part of their lives.

Reasons for Becoming K-12 Teachers

Participants’ reasons for becoming teachers varied. Many of the participants relayed family histories that included educators or childhood aspirations of becoming teachers and

playing school. For some, teaching presented job responsibilities that fit other life goals. Other participants had goals of impacting the lives of their students. Many expressed such clear goals that it was surprising that they experienced any (un)certainty.

Many participants described histories of teachers in their family as influencing their choice to enter education. Avery, a certified social studies teacher, for example, passionately described her place in her family's history. She described herself as a fourth generation college graduate and a third generation teacher. Her parents were English teachers and her grandfather was a school principal: "You know my parents are teachers. This is like what I *know*. Um and because it's, because of what I, it's what I know it's a very comfortable setting for me to be in" (Avery, December 15, 2010). Her emphasis of "know" highlighted her confidence. She did not see herself as having to work to belong as a teacher in a school. More than half of the participants shared backgrounds that were similar to Avery's, with family members who were teachers and for whom teaching was a socially acceptable aspiration. Besides Avery, Stacy, Chelsea, and Angela had mothers who were teachers, and Jessica and Isaiah had aunts who were teachers.

Some participants described their aspirations to teach as part of early memories of playing school. Steph, a White female, explained, "At like my kindergarten graduation I said like I wanted to be a teacher and I like never went away from that. ((Laughs))" (November 22, 2010). Stacy, Chelsea, Lauren, and Jessica also shared memories that included "playing school" (Lauren, July 19, 2010). In his study of first-year English teachers' identity development, Olsen (2008) argued playing school was a gender-related enactment. His female participants' early role-play experiences represented teaching derived from school experiences, society, and family that may have instilled images of who is suitable to serve as a teacher (Olsen, 2008).

Angela, a certified English teacher, invoked discourses that Olsen (2008) described as gendered when she noted that becoming a teacher was well-suited to her life goals. She admitted, “I would never really have a family life if I went through the track of attorney like I thought I would. ((Laughs)) So I decided education might be a little friendlier for my=my life goals too” (Angela, January 4, 2011). She explained that teaching presented responsibilities that were compatible with other aspects of her life, such as being a wife and mother. Chelsea, Avery, and Jessica also described how becoming teachers was part of their plans to balance careers with family lives.

By contrast, Jamie’s reason for becoming a classroom teacher resulted from her desire to make a difference in the lives of her students. Jamie’s observations of disparities in students’ life chances grounded her goals to help students facing these inequalities and “change the, like, inequality of the world” (July 30, 2010). Jamie, a mixed-raced female, explained this motivation by drawing on a work study tutoring experience in an urban center where she was an undergraduate studying to be a journalist. Using pointing words (e.g., I/me, he/him, she/her, we/us, they/them, here/there, this/that, now/then, yesterday/today), Jamie described the literacy skills of the eighth grade boys who attended this program:

They couldn’t like even write paragraphs. They were spelling everything phonetically, like couldn’t, /ya/ know, read, write, speak. They couldn’t be *successful* like to enter high school. I didn’t even think they were prepared to enter high school. They were being pushed through the system and I was like, /ya/ know, I /wanna/ be a, like a teacher like to help them. (March 21, 2011)

Jamie put herself “I” in a position to “help” “they”/“them,” calling attention to her difference from them. Jamie blamed “the system” for failing these students. Her motivation seemed

consistent with Su's (1997) observation that preservice teachers with non-dominant backgrounds are often more aware of inequities in schools.

Brian, a White male, also wanted to influence his future students, but his path to becoming an English teacher diverged from Jamie's. He began his collegiate career in studies to be a music teacher. During a semester away from college he started a career in retail as an assistant store manager. Brian described himself as being unable to advance in retail because he didn't yet have a college degree:

But there's that that ceiling where if you are a store manager, the next thing is district manager, but there's a gap between what I was and an educated person, that I could do, and I didn't have the education to get to his thing [district manager] so that=that ladder would be /kinda/ broke. So that was the first time I realized that school was a little bit more important. (July 14, 2010)

When Brian went back to school, he reported that an English teacher inspired and changed him. He noted, "I want to be a teacher that would change students" (August 3, 2010), though addressing inequity, per se, was not the motivation it was for Jamie. Brian's belonging to the dominant culture as a White male may have contributed to his absence of talk about inequities in schools.

Stacy, Chelsea, Avery, Jessica, Isaiah, and Angela described teaching as part of their family histories. Stacy, Steph, Chelsea Lauren, and Jessica also shared recollections of early desires to be teachers or playing school. Chelsea, Avery, Jessica, and Angela thought teaching was compatible with their goals to be mothers. Brian and Jamie explained their desire to change the lives of students. These findings align with Olsen's (2008) research that suggested teachers' reasons for entry "braided together into tangles of cause and effect, truth and fiction, sexism and

opportunity that for many women (and men) influence a career in teaching” (p. 31). My participants’ reasons for becoming teachers similarly suggest that, despite their clear reasons for becoming teachers, they still experienced unavoidable (un)certainty.

Teacher (Un)certainty: “Am I /Gonna/ Be Able to Handle Being a Teacher?”

Despite participants’ aspirations, most expressed (un)certainty as they weighed their career choices, considered the kinds of teachers they wanted to be, and questioned their ability to handle the politics of teaching. They drew on discourses about the economy and job market, the social status associated with teaching, what it means to be a teacher, and the politics associated with teaching. The participants who seemed more certain about their fit as teachers enacted good teacher Discourses. They drew on previous schooling experiences, good teachers’ attributes, measures of success like teacher evaluations, and their initial teacher education. These details provided important insights about the assumptions these individuals brought to their studies as aspiring literacy specialists.

Career Choices

Some participants weighed their options about which careers they would pursue from among those they were now qualified via their experience, education, and teaching credentials. A few considered the stress or prestige associated with their career choices. Participants drew on discourses about the state of the economy and the job market, new job possibilities as a result of their literacy specialist education, and the social status of teaching.

Chelsea, a White female, applied for teaching jobs and collegiate athletic coaching positions, hoping for employment. She explained her decision to take an athletic coaching position, even after years of pursuing her teaching credentials, including those in literacy education. In doing so, she described coaching and teaching as similar:

Okay so a=if I went into college coaching I don't know if then say in three years after, I like want to move on from that, if I try to apply for teaching jobs they'll be like 'Well why didn't you go right into teaching right after (.) your master's, you know, or right after school.' And I mean with coaching there's a lot, /ya/ know teaching, so. So I mean you can /sorta/ make that connection too I guess. But that was like, that's one of my concerns that people will be like—and I mean the job market is tough now too so maybe they would understand. (Chelsea, July 14, 2010)

Chelsea described herself as weighing whether or not she would still be a marketable teacher candidate to “people,” “they,” or those involved in the hiring process for an elementary teacher position should she revisit her plans for pursuing employment.

When students were absent to attend job interviews, the instructor explained that it was typical during a recession to be scheduled for interviews in the summer rather than during the preceding spring (Field notes, July 22, 2010). Such absences led to discussions about the state of the economy and its influence on the job market. A guest speaker, a local school administrator involved in hiring teachers, concurred that schools experiencing budget problems often hired teachers during the last two weeks of August. Further, she recalled having over 150 applicants for one open position. She recommended that the students complete a national job search if they were passionate about obtaining a teaching position. This advice seemed to heighten participants' awareness of the ways the economy was impacting institutions.

Stacy, a certified elementary teacher, weighed her career options by gauging the stress levels associated with various positions:

And on some days I want to be a teacher and on someday I would want to be a literacy specialist. I think that ((sighs)) I=I always gauge stress levels. /Ya/ know, which would=in which situation would my stress level be higher? (August 10, 2010)

She desired the least stressful position, and as I explain later, she leaned more toward applying for positions as a literacy specialist, thinking it would be less stressful than managing a classroom.

Brian and Angela, both certified English teachers, were also skeptical about whether they would best fit one role or another and applied for positions for which they were qualified. I highlighted Angela's (un)certainly about this fit in Chapter One. Brian's shift in intonation in the following quotation suggested his view that choosing to become a teacher would be less prestigious than choosing to be a literacy specialist:

Yeah even if I go=even if I do go as *just* a teacher, the stuff that I've learned from here is=it's like being a teacher and being *in* this program now. You have more knowledge about how schools operate, what they use, the testing they do, the assessments they do. So you would have that knowledge. So being a *teacher*, after going through the literacy program, I understand what it means or what it takes to get the students where they need to^ be. (Brian, August 3, 2010)

Brian shifted his subjects between use of "I" and "you," positioning himself in and out of the role of teacher, indicating unclear allegiance to his espoused aspiration to teach. Brian suggested his education would benefit him as an English teacher, yet he thought his new title as a literacy specialist came with added power or prestige. Later Brian described his newly achieved title as "surreal" (November 19, 2010).

Jessica, a White female, described having the title of “teacher” as less than prestigious compared to other professions, but she still decided to apply for classroom teaching jobs. Jessica quoted her sister in the following, using the second person “you” and with rapid speech, “WELL, YOU’RE JUST A TEACHER. AND, YOU KNOW, I’M A LAWYER” (July 21, 2010). Later, Jessica described teaching as respected but not prestigious:

A lot of people do respect the position. But I don’t think there’s a lot of, I don’t think people realize *how* much, what is the word I’m looking for? Someone tells you they’re a doctor and you’re like, ‘Wow that’s great. That’s a lot of hard work,’ whereas with a teacher there’s not the same (.) equivalent to it I guess. (November 20, 2010)

Jessica compared the social status of teachers, lawyers, and doctors as she figured out her where she belonged. Jessica’s perception about the way society perceived teaching seemed to align with accounts of teaching being a marginalized position, one that has historically lacked prestige (e.g., Alsup, 2006; Larsen, 2010).

Isaiah, a certified teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), suggested that even his students positioned his career choice as lacking prestige. During his studies, he applied for and was appointed to two different ESOL teaching positions. Isaiah said:

I value what I’m doing so hopefully it can rub off on them, to value education and, /ya/ know, what they’re doing. I will say often times I’ve had questions, a number of students have asked me, ‘Oh why did you become a teacher?’ This year they’ve asked me. ‘You should have been something more.’ And I’m like, ‘Like you could have been a lawyer or something. You’re smart.’ I’m like, ‘Well I’m=I::’m destined to be a teacher, that’s my calling. I was, I’m called to be a teacher. I don’t think I could be fulfilled anythi=any other way.’ (December 29, 2010)

Isaiah used “you” as a subject situated in dialogue to illuminate the ways his students perceived him compared to other teachers, positioning Isaiah as smart and other teachers as perhaps not so smart. Isaiah used “I” to separate their opinions from his own in a way that brought vehemence to his declaration, as if he were justifying his fit as teacher. Isaiah added, “I try to say like being a teacher is not a last resort thing. It wasn’t like, oh I’m /gonna/ do this because everything else didn’t work out” (December 29, 2010).

Some participants did not weigh their career choices in the same ways noted above. Avery was actively applying for social studies teacher positions, and Lauren was committed to her current role as a special education teacher. Jamie and Steph applied for English teacher positions but both expressed a need for a job in general. Steph said,

Like it doesn’t really even matter what it is. I just really want to do something where I can be like (.) I (.) am able to like have an income, able to like learn how to=to spend money, how to save money, how to just like balance all of that. (July 20, 2010)

Jamie also reported needing a job to afford adult-like responsibilities such as paying school loans and apartment rent.

Participants were (un)certain about their career choices. Brian, Stacy, and Chelsea weighed their career options. Chelsea had athletic experience that would serve her well as a coach should she not find an elementary teaching position. Brian and Stacy weighed whether they should be teachers or literacy specialists but for different reasons. Brian’s (un)certainty overlapped with Jessica and Isaiah’s concerns about their career choices being less than prestigious. Others, including Jamie and Steph, who did not share (un)certainty in this regard, expressed needs for jobs in general. Participants’ concerns seemed relative to their life juncture—many were unemployed and fresh out of school with their graduate studies essentially

extending their undergraduate experience. These participants were all shifting context from the university to potential classroom teaching positions. As individuals shift contexts it is not unusual for them to question where they belong. This relates to Alsup's (2006) findings that suggested preservice teachers experienced tension between their student and teacher selves. While the present study participants were not preservice teachers, they were at a similar juncture with limited teaching experience.

Teacher Personas

Beyond weighing career choices, some participants seemed (un)certain about the kinds of teachers they wanted to be or the teacher personas they hoped to enact. These participants were figuring out how they would build relationships and authority with students. They drew on discourses tied to what it means to be a teacher (Alsup, 2006; Cook, 2009).

Jessica, a newly certified elementary and special education teacher, questioned the kind of teacher she wanted to be.

Elizabeth: So um, how do you see yourself as a teacher?

Jessica: How would I see myself as teacher? Well ((sighs)) oh my God v. I=I don't know. I=I'm kind of wondering that ((laughs)) myself like as I'm going into the school year, like what type of teacher am I going to be? And I really, I'm still trying to figure that out, like what type of teacher I want to be. I want to be that authoritative figure, but I also want to build those relationships with the students. And I'm trying to figure out the balance of making that work. (Jessica, August 4, 2010)

Jessica's sighs, quieter speech, repeated words, and laughs showed shifts in her intonation hinting that she was unsure about the type of teacher she would be. Jessica grappled with how her teacher identity would influence her classroom management style. Her worries matched

Alsup's (2006) findings that new teachers worried about a popular assumption that good teachers are able to engage and manage students' behaviors acceptably.

Isaiah, a mixed-raced male who identified as an Evangelical Christian, described himself as negotiating or testing out a certain kind of teacher "persona" (July 22, 2010). In the context of substitute teaching in an urban center, Isaiah said,

I tell /'em/ straight up, 'You've met your match.' They ((laughs)) and so that's part of it like, I have this like and I've developed, I figured it out, it's half-crazy like I want them to think I am absolutely nuts and firm but that works to my advantage. So (.) but I don't know, that's helped me to develop my, subbing, and it was only a little stint but to be firm, rule with an iron fist, you know? But *love them too*. (July 22, 2010)

Isaiah perceived himself as figuring out how to take an authoritative, yet loving, stance towards students. Isaiah invoked "love," too, in an enactment of his religious Discourse. He explained his goal to, "Live uprightly before Him the best way that I can and love people" (Isaiah, July 22, 2010). Isaiah raised competing priorities often faced by teachers in urban contexts between disciplining students and making them feel loved and supported (DiBara, 2007).

Angela, a confident, experienced teacher, reflected on her early perceptions about authority and relationship building. She confessed that she once thought of the two as dichotomous. Angela shifted subjects from "you" to "I," as if taking ownership for her part in that troubling school year:

Of my first year trouble was like a lot of new teachers, you're trying to establish yourself (.) that I am the authority. I *am* your teacher um and so my emphasis on that *relationship* building kind of got muddled (.) in it um because I=I was afraid of too much, I didn't want to cross that line^, I was trying to *be* the *adult*. And um and so I think since then,

I've had enough security in being the adult, being the teacher (.) that=that those relationships are *really important*. (August 12, 2010)

Angela seemed to value building relationships with students even if, once, it had come with (un)certainty. Her memories aligned with results of Cook's (2009) study of 10 first-year English teachers who reported how they negotiated an authoritative role in the classroom and struggled to set boundaries with students.

Jessica and Isaiah were the only beginning teachers who shared their (un)certainty about balancing their authoritative roles with building relationships with students. Their (un)certainty related to the way Angela recollected similar negotiations she made as an early career teacher. As these individuals prepared to shift from the university context to classroom teaching positions, they were (un)certain about how they would belong among students and how they would enact their identities. Such situational discourses can be traced to larger discourses about teachers, and that good teachers manage students (Alsup, 2006). Their concerns seemed typical for early career teachers, a finding that aligned with Cook's (2009) study which found early career teachers experience disequilibrium. The priorities of disciplining and loving students that Isaiah raised seemed more complex because of his identity as a mixed-raced male. It calls attention to the ways that some research (e.g., C.W. Lewis, 2006; Lynn, 2002, Lynn, 2006) and mainstream media position Black male teachers in urban contexts as ideal role models, almost father like, to students who are assumed not to have fathers (Brockenbrough, 2012). Such fatherly roles include a mix of "tough love, discipline, and caring" (Lynn, 2006, p. 2517). Institutional and societal discourses seemed related to the teacher identity Isaiah enacted that connected to his goals and identity as a religious person.

Politics of Schools

Two participants expressed (un)certainty about their ability to handle the politics of schools. They worried about their ability to attend to complex hierarchical relationships with fellow teachers, administrators, and school boards, along with increasing responsibilities for students' literacy achievement. These kinds of pressures, as they both called them, caused them anxiety. They drew on discourses tied to the political climate of teaching.

Stacy espoused many fears, including being in a position where she might lose her job. She worried about establishing relationships with colleagues, not having enough materials, lacking instructional autonomy, disciplining students, and being held accountable for students' scores on state assessments. Stacy projected her future as a teacher,

So you, so not only are you dealing with all the politics with other teachers and administrators and school board and losing your job, you also might not have enough materials to wh=do what you want to do. And then you've got discipline with the students that you have and it just gets to the point where I'm so overwhelmed by the end of the day. (November 22, 2010)

All of Stacy's worries about her ability to handle the politics of schools seemed to cause her identity conflict. Olsen (2008) found that top-down mandates in secondary schools caused first-year teachers identity conflicts. Such conflicts occur when long-held expectations do not match the realities of teaching and have to be rethought (Olsen, 2008).

Stacy and Steph seemed unsure about their ability to address what they both called the "pressures" of classroom teaching (Stacy, July 15, 2010; Steph, July 20, 2010). Stacy quite passionately noted this (un)certainty by her shifting intonation in the following:

So there's so many, you know, so many pressures that like (.) you just are expected to know these things. You're expected to do these things, and you've got to keep everybody happy *all the time*. And no one ever stops to think, '*I wonder how this is affecting our teachers? I wonder.*' (July 15, 2010)

Stacy's use of the subjects "everybody" and "no one" grouped individuals at the institutional level as having overwhelming expectations for teachers that resulted in pressures. Stacy questioned her fit as a teacher so much given this climate that she decided not to apply for teaching positions at the completion of her studies.

Both Stacy and Steph expressed (un)certainty about their ability to handle the politics of teaching. Their situational discourses drew from institutional discourses that were generated on the heels of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), a federal policy that required schools to be more accountable for student achievement. This required the implementation of annual standardized testing in elementary and middle schools and the possible sanctions for underperformance on the tests. Race to the Top (2009), which followed, continued this focus but added attention to teacher evaluation and Common Core State Standards. Such policy mandates also often resulted in prescriptive school curricula and use of local accountability measures (State Education Department, 2013). In the present study, it seemed most participants were only marginally aware of the current policies and how they might impact teachers' identities in schools, yet such policies were traceable in their discourses.

Good Teacher Models

Many participants recalled experiences from their K-12 schooling to position some of their own teachers as good models. A few credited successful teachers they observed during their adult lives in schools as influential to their teacher identities. They described good teacher

models that were inspirational or that enacted ways of being they valued and hoped to emulate. They drew on dominant Discourses that good teachers are charismatic, inspirational, and caring (Moore, 2004).

Jessica described “*awesome*” teachers as reaffirming her desire to be a teacher (July 21, 2010). Jessica spoke as if talking to one of her AP (Advanced Placement) honors teachers, “*Ah, you’re such a good teacher; you make me want to be a teacher*” (July 21, 2010). Isaiah told stories of “great teachers” who “loved” him and taught him life “lessons outside of the curriculum” (December 29, 2010). Moore (2004) explained that preservice teachers often bring ideas about what it means to be a successful teacher to their teacher education programs.

Some hoped to emulate some of their K-12 teachers’ ways of being. Brian said a music teacher who was open to students’ musical “interpretations” helped him decide the “*type of teacher*” he wanted to be (August 3, 2010). In the English classroom, Brian wanted to create a context where students’ interpretations of texts were valued. Lauren aspired to emulate her teachers’ charismatic attributes. She shared recollections of a third grade teacher who was “very warm and caring,” and she remembered going to her teacher’s house on Saturdays for book clubs (Lauren, August 12, 2010). Chelsea also recalled that her favorite teachers were “*nice and positive*,” and she suggested that their influence shaped her as a teacher (August 11, 2010). Stacy explained, “I had a lot of good models that sort of made me think about how I would be as a teacher and the things I would do,” echoing what Lortie (1975) once referred to as the observation of apprenticeship (August 10, 2010).

Stacy and Jamie drew on inspirations provided by host teachers during their undergraduate studies. Stacy said,

I should say my host um for my first student teaching placement was incredibly influential (.) on me. Um she was so=she was so energetic and she modeled so many *good* practices for me that I wanted=*I wanted* to be just like her. It's just that I want=*I want* to be just like her. You know she embodies *so* many things that I agree with. You know, motivation and understanding kids. She introduced me to um ((smacks lips)) this idea of dominance, where some kids hear better in=on one side, and some kids see better on one side, and you=you fix your classroom like that. I mean it's=it's just a s=it's a simple thing. But she=she *cares so much* about her kids. (August 10, 2010)

She seemed inspired by her host teacher's effort to understand and care for students in unique ways. Jamie said her host teacher was a "*phenomenal* teacher" because she put forth a lot of effort and knew the value of literacy (March 21, 2011). Angela credited "*excellent* teachers" in her first teaching position as shaping her identity (July 26, 2010).

As I describe in other sections, Avery and Steph drew on other teacher models. Avery referenced her family's history of teaching as influential to her identity. Steph hoped to emulate her university professor's pedagogy.

Participants who seemed more certain about their identities as teachers drew on models of good teachers they once had. Jessica and Isaiah suggested their K-12 teachers inspired them. Brian, Stacy, Chelsea, and Lauren hoped to enact positive attributes of their past teachers. Stacy, Jamie, and Angela drew on teacher models in their adult life, during their studies and early careers. Together they seemed to draw on discourses associated with good teachers as loving, student-centered, warm, caring, and energetic. Such dominant Discourses in teaching and teacher education that have their roots in institutions (e.g., government rhetoric and teacher education programs) and society (Moore, 2004). In the least, their visions of future teacher

selves gave them something to go on as new teachers at an (un)certain time. Cook (2009) similarly suggested beginning teachers draw on past recollections to define who they are becoming.

Good Teacher Attributes and Discourses

Some participants perceived good teachers as building rapport while serving as advocates for students. Many also suggested that good teachers' personality attributes included being outgoing, passionate, and determined. They implied that they shared these attributes, drawing on good teacher Discourses that circulate in dominant culture.

Angela stated, "I think I do pretty well establishing rapport and getting to know people of all ages" (January 4, 2011). Isaiah, an ESOL teacher, said,

I like to view myself as an advocate for many of my students. /Ya/ know, imparting that like curriculum knowledge but ((clears throat)) also being like a liaison between cultures, um, teaching them a bit more than English, um, which is much of what I do, so.

NOT=not there to be their friend by no means, but um, to set up a (.) good rapport. I

know how to put some extra oil on the machine and it works out quite well, so. (August 2, 2010)

Isaiah's use of the verb, "advocate," suggested he saw himself in a position to be a champion for students, drawing on the idea that good teachers are charismatic. His reference to imparting curriculum knowledge hinted at his competence or effectiveness, which is also a dominant good teacher Discourse that is used in government rhetoric (Moore, 2004). Isaiah's use of "liaison" was more understated than his use of "advocate." It seemed less dominant and more about mediation. His statement of "I know how to put some extra oil on the machine and it works out quite well," conveyed his certainty about his ability to establish rapport with students.

Lauren, a White female, also understood herself as an advocate in her role as a special education teacher. She noted,

Um I think I'm compassionate and warm and caring. Um I think I (.) try to see the strengths in kids and try and bring that out. And I try to=working in other classrooms, I think I try to let teachers know and advocate for kids. (Lauren, August 12, 2010)

Again, Lauren suggested she possessed attributes (e.g., compassionate, warm, and caring) that she valued and that are associated with charismatic teacher Discourse.

Many participants suggested that personality attributes of good teachers included being outgoing, passionate, and determined, and they implied they shared these attributes. Stacy and Jessica reported that they were "outgoing," which helped them forge relationships with students and colleagues (Stacy, July 13, 2010; Jessica, November 20, 2010). Jamie, a certified English teacher, said:

Um, I think that I'm really outgoing. Um, I'm stern when I need to be. So I think that's like pretty good and then I'm *passionate* about it. Like I'm really passionate about what i=*about* learning and about reading, writing, just like my own personal growth too. So I think I always encourage other people to learn more and like, /ya/ know, be successful. (March 21, 2011)

As noted above, Jamie also identified herself in this explanation as passionate. Isaiah seemed to concur that this was an important attribute for teachers. He suggested,

I think you /gotta/ have the right heart for it too. You /gotta/, it's not about necessarily about loving kids, it's about being passionate about teaching and education. I don't think=I think you could be a great teacher and not love kids. But I think if you're going

into teaching /cause/ you love kids, that's not the reason to go in education. (Isaiah, December 29, 2010)

Isaiah suggested “loving kids” was not the right reason to be a teacher. Rather teaching requires a passion for teaching and education. He argued, in other instances, that good teachers show students love.

Jamie and Steph also described themselves as determined. Jamie, a mixed-raced female, said, “Um, I think that I've encountered a lot of like obstacles but have never, like I grew up being told to like keep going and like never give up and so that's what I did” (March 21, 2011). Similarly, Steph identified herself as a “good worker” who was able to adapt to any situation—she was certain that she worked well with others and that this would serve her well as a teacher (July 20, 2010). Brian, Chelsea, and Avery did not suggest they were outgoing, passionate, or determined.

Jamie, Isaiah, and Angela identified themselves as having “good rapport” with students (Jamie, July 30, 2010). Stacy, Jamie, Steph, Jessica, and Isaiah also shared other attributes of good teachers. While I show the ways participants seemed certain, embedded in their situational discourses were societal discourses about what it means to be a good teacher. Their language suggested they were charismatic, which Moore (2004) traced to the popular media's representation of teachers. Isaiah's discourses also suggested that he was competent or effective which can be tied to institutional discourses about good teachers.

Good Teacher Measures

Some participants drew on evaluations they had received from administrators' classroom observations as evidence of their competence or effectiveness. This evidence seemed to add to their confidence in light of new government initiatives to evaluate their effectiveness based on

student outcomes. Most participants, however, did not talk about these policies, suggesting that they were either unaware of or resolved to their implications.

Jamie and Jessica cited evaluations of their work by school administrators as evidence that they were effective teachers. Jamie highlighted her principal's observations resulted in ratings of "100% engagement and like 100% classroom management," in the context of a snippet where she shared aspirations to work in what she called "a better district" (March 21, 2011). Jessica also told that her administrators said, "We can tell how much you care about your students by just the way you interact with them, by how much you're doing with them in the classroom and outside of the classroom" (November 20, 2010). These measures of success or competence seemed important to these two participants' sense of themselves, with Jamie highlighting her ability to engage and manage her students and Jessica emphasizing her caring nature.

The instructor explained during seminar that the federal Race to the Top initiative connected teachers' evaluations to students' progress. Race to the Top was a federally funded \$4.35 billion competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states for innovation and reform in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). People mentioned Race to the Top at least eight other times after that (Field notes, July 6, 2010). The federal government awarded Race to the Top grant money to the state while this study was taking place.

Some participants' enactment of good teacher Discourse seemed to bolster their confidence regarding teacher evaluation in the wake of government initiatives. Avery, a White female, responded to queries about such initiatives with student-focused good teacher Discourses, saying, "I really worry about like the kids. I don't really worry about my job, I guess I never really have /cause/ I feel like I come to work and do it" (December 15, 2010). At the

same time, she noted, “There should be *some* progress that you see in kids” (Avery, December 15, 2010). Similarly, Isaiah identified as “confident” (December 29, 2010). He asserted, “I’m not worried about tenure. I=I’m not worried about resting on my laurels” (Isaiah, December 29, 2010).

Isaiah was certain about his teaching, yet somewhat uncertain about performance-based evaluation, with teacher effectiveness ratings hinging on students’ performance. Isaiah was aware of and concerned about the “*attack* right now on teachers” (December 29, 2010). With heightened intonation, Isaiah articulated his thinking:

And *there are* bad teachers out there, there are teachers who should be fired, there should be accountability, but performance-based teaching scares me. Especially being someone like me. Like ESL, my kids, I don’t know how that would work. I mean my kids, half my kids, are failing all their classes, almost all their classes. Like not based, some of them lack motivation but they *don’t know English* and a language acquisition is a five to seven year process. I mean there’s studies. (December 29, 2010)

Race to the Top’s initiatives frightened Isaiah because his ESOL students’ content area test scores could be linked to his teacher effectiveness, and they were failing. He considered his students’ English acquisition the most important variable regarding their performance.

Some participants used measures of their teaching to show their certainty as teachers. Jamie and Jessica drew on administrators’ evaluations to highlight their effectiveness. Avery and Isaiah described themselves as confident about their teaching, yet they showed some (un)certainty about new government initiatives tying student achievement to their teaching performance. Participants did not otherwise discuss the ways good teaching measures impacted how they saw themselves as teachers.

Teacher Education Tools

Some participants drew on tools acquired during their teacher education programs as a source of their skill. These participants suggested their literacy education studies also helped shape their teacher identities. They drew on dominant Discourses about good teachers as trained, skilled, and competent craftspeople (Moore, 2004).

Some participants drew on their schooling or programs of study as influencing their teacher identities. More generally, Avery reported that she attended an “*amazing* education program” (July 15, 2010) as an undergraduate, and Stacy also said, “I think I was in good education programs” (August 10, 2010). Jessica suggested, “Um, but I don’t think I would be the teacher I am today without, um, without (.) the (.) schooling that I had for sure” (November 20, 2010). Isaiah also drew on his academic work:

Well yeah the classes I mean undoubtedly. Like that’s actually given me that pedagogy and that=that content knowledge. So that’s a big part of it too that’s helped me kind of like formulate, /ya/ know, my burgeoning identity. (August 2, 2010)

Others suggested their professors were influential. Brian reported that he was motivated by “the support” and “the push” his undergraduate professors provided to make him a better teacher (August 3, 2010). Jamie also shared that “awesome” staff and professors surrounded her (March 21, 2011). Steph suggested the university instructor’s “collaborative” pedagogy was something she would try to imitate in her teaching (August 5, 2010). Chelsea suggested the professors coupled with the coursework shaped her identity: “Sort of put it together that=that’s what’s me as a person” (August 11, 2010). The two experienced teachers in the group, Lauren and Angela, did not reference their programs or professors in the same ways.

The literacy education practicum seemed to be a supportive space for participants to try on teacher identities and put their teaching tools to use. The instructor of the practicum experience and graduate seminar encouraged students to use the time in the practicum to learn how to balance being effective and efficient in their teaching (Field notes, July 7, 2010). The literacy master's program also provided a space to talk about instructional strategies and look at curriculum materials to prepare teachers for practice (Field notes, July 7, 2010).

Many participants drew on their teacher education as evidence that they were good, trained teachers. Stacy, Avery, Jessica, and Isaiah spoke more generally about their teacher education programs. Brian, Chelsea, Jamie, and Steph suggested their professors were influential. For some participants, particularly those without teaching experience beyond student teaching, the literacy education practicum seemed to be an additional space for them to try on their identities as teachers and literacy specialists. Their discourses about their teacher education tools were situated in institutional discourses that suggest teachers are trained and skilled craftspeople (Moore, 2004).

Summary

Participants' discourses revealed they were (un)certain about how they would fit as teachers. As the title of this section suggests, at least one participant questioned, "Am I /gonna/ be able to handle being a teacher" (Stacy, November 22, 2010)? As participants gauged their fit as beginning teachers, they weighed their career options and the prestige of career choices. They contemplated the kinds of teachers they wanted to be and their ability to handle the politics of teaching. Other participants, more certain, enacted Discourses as good teachers (Moore, 2004). In this regard, participants drew on previous schooling experiences, attributes of good teachers, actual and anticipated evaluations of their teaching, and teacher education tools.

“I Don’t Know If That *Affects* My Teaching.”

While participants were figuring out whether and how they belonged as teachers, they were also (un)certain about their fit in the world. They were maintaining or developing social affiliations with groups who shared cultural models, social languages, and Discourses (Gee, 2005). As the title of this section suggests, “I don’t know if that *affects* my teaching,” most participants seemed unsure about the ways their race, class, gender, age, and religion would impact their future classrooms. Participants’ enactments could sometimes be traced to how they identified themselves with regard to such attributes. In some instances, too, participants were silent when it came to questions about their memberships in various affinity groups. According to some scholars (Apple, 1986; Delpit, 2012), this suggests their memberships in dominant groups were so a part of them that they lacked an awareness. This lack of awareness could lead them to unknowingly reify existing social hierarchies in schools that limit opportunities for some students (Rubin, 2008).

Race

When I asked participants to describe their personal backgrounds they had varying understandings and awareness of them. Sometimes I prompted participants with “How do you identify culturally?” They often replied by naming their race. Only a few participants expressed awareness of how their racial identities might position them as teachers, including both individuals of color in this study. Some White participants described themselves as if they were cultureless.

Isaiah positioned himself as a male teacher of color. He identified himself as the only male of color in his school building and described himself as “respected and valued” (Isaiah, December 29, 2010). The following is Isaiah’s recollection of an interaction with another

colleague. To begin, Isaiah used “you” as the subject of his discourse, situated in dialogue, and then shifted to “I”:

He’s like, /ya/ know, ‘Not for nothing.’ He’s like, ‘You know, you’ve got some things going on for you. You are a good teacher.’ But he’s like, ‘You’re male and you’re a male col=teacher of color.’ He’s like, /ya/ know, ‘We need that.’ And so, people *know*. They *know*, you know. I’m mean I’m not there on affirmative action. I=I had to battle for that spot but, um, *they know*. I think they don=put that aside, they don’t want to deal with *my kids*. I know they *don’t*. ((Laughs)) From jus=from what I hear. *They don’t want my kids* (December 29, 2010).

Isaiah seemed to take a defensive stance, as if he needed to justify his fit as a male of color who chose to be a teacher. He positioned his colleagues as “they” who did not want to deal with his students, “*my kids*.” Isaiah also described his “kids” as “all non-White, *all poor*” in the majority White, middle class school district where he taught (December 29, 2010). He explained his colleagues’ perspective that teachers of color are needed in the field, a view shared by others in the literature (C.W. Lewis, 2006; Lynn, 2002; Lynn, 2006). Brockenbrough (2012) problematized this view, calling it “at least partially, as another attempt to reproduce patriarchal constructs of Black men” (p. 368). I elaborate on this further in the last chapter.

Jamie showed an awareness of implications of race on her work. She thought others took advantage of her at the school where she was hired after graduating because of her race. Jamie identified as the only adult woman of color in her school, aside from the janitors or cafeteria people. She shared an anecdote about a time when she was pulled from her regular teaching assignment to substitute teach in a colleague’s class where she was asked to teach about African American culture. Jamie expressed feeling underprepared for this role: “What do you want me

to say? I grew up in [a] suburb. I know *nothing* about being in the ghetto. What do you want me to say? ((Laughs)),” (March 21, 2011). Jamie’s use of “ghetto,” defined as a part of a city in which members of a particular group or race live, usually in poor conditions, invoked deficit Discourses. Comber and Kamler (2004) explained that deficit Discourses are those that position individuals or certain groups in society as failing or deficient. The language that Jamie took up likely reflected how she was figuring out where she best fit as a person of color having grown up in what she called, a “predominantly White, very like upper class,” community (July 30, 2010).

As I explained earlier, Jamie thought of herself as a good fit for, what she called, making a difference, because she saw herself as a role model and she believed students did too,

And they see me as like a (.) role model because, um, you know I *didn’t* come from that and I *made* something of myself and I like reflect something similar in front of their face and v they always see that and give credit for it. (March 21, 2011)

As an example Jamie added,

So I think that like standing in front of a group of females who maybe doesn’t=doesn’t see a strong successful female in front of them every day at home, or whatever. I think it’s important. I think that, I’m kind of like doing a duty almost, /ya/ know? (March 21, 2011)

She saw herself as representative of females of color in the teaching field despite having a different upbringing compared to students with her reference to “I *didn’t* come from that.”

Jamie used her observations of schooling in urban centers and juxtaposed that to her own education in a mostly White, affluent suburban school district. The “injustices” were very troubling to Jamie (July 30, 2010). She said,

I don't know. I've been in so many classrooms in the city that like I compare to my own education and it's like *insane*. /Ya/ know? And like it's um it's already like hard enough for these kids because they're like facing that like our=that like=I don't know if it's like pr=that like stereotype I guess ((tapping on table)). That like um whole like th=they don't want to learn, they don't want to do this, they're /gonna/ be like this ((taps table for each statement)) and blah, blah, blah. /Ya/ know? And like no one like thought like, that didn't happen like at my sc=high school at all. (Jamie, July 30, 2010)

Jamie positioned herself as “I” opposite students, “these kids” and “they,” people who were different from her, growing up in an urban setting facing harsh stereotypes. Unlike the students Jamie observed, she had few recollections of childhood experiences with racism and prejudice.

Jamie described herself as figuring out her cultural identity, and she associated her culture with race. She explained that she leaned more toward identifying as Black in her adult years, wanting to “explore like that side /cause/ it was something that was never like there for me^” (Jamie, July 30, 2010). Jamie suggested that her exploration of Blackness began when she started going into an urban center to get her hair done. She said, “I just loved it. Like it was=it was a completely different world than like what I was used to, /ya/ know” (Jamie, July 30, 2010)? Jamie described her African American boyfriend's take on her entry to this “world:”

‘Like you love the hood. You're always running=driving around listening to ((laughs)) music, trying to hang out in the hood like, blah, blah.’ He's like, ‘You it j=intrigues you, it's funny.’ Like he always is making fun of me. His friends are always making fun of me for=it's *so* funny and like when I'm with his friends and like I'll say something ((laughs)) he'll be like ‘THAT'S SO WHITE. OH MY GOD THAT'S CRAZY.’ ((Laughs)) It's so funny, it's funny. But like I don't=like um like I'm not that girl that's

like t=wants to be like super ghetto. Like they'll be like, 'We don't know *any* other Black girl that wear flip flops like you do' ((Laughs)). (July 30, 2010)

Jamie's heightened, quickened intonation and word choice highlighted the way her discourse positioned Whiteness and Blackness—as talking and dressing a certain way versus being ghetto. She seemed to conflate geography, culture, and class with race, drawing deficit Discourses associated with race in the dominant culture.

In contrast, Avery was the only White participant who expressed an awareness of how race and class positioned her as a teacher. Avery noted that she felt “judged” as soon as she walked into an interview for a teaching position at an urban high school and suggested, “(.) I think they were reading me like, 'I don't think she's /gonna/ be relatable to the kids.' That's what I think they read me as” (August 11, 2010). Avery observed how the way she was dressed was different compared to the other candidates. She said, “And I was more in like, /ya/ know I had a skirt and a jacket and I had my *pearls* on and I had, /ya/ know, jewelry which I probably shouldn't have had on, /ya/ know, I got ready for my interview^” (Avery, August 11, 2010). She reported that on her next interview she didn't wear her engagement ring. She added, “Because I didn't want like people to *assume* anything about me” (Avery, August 11, 2010). Avery's assumptions about the way others perceived her seemed related to her identity as White and middle class. While other White participants did not describe themselves as being read by race, some expressed (un)certainty about their identities in general.

Lauren and Stacy were (un)certain about their cultural identity. Lauren, a certified elementary and special education teacher, said, “Um (..) I=I don't know (..) like how do I identify myself” (July 19, 2010)? She added, “I'm not very interesting at all. ((Laughs)) So. So I guess I identify myself as pretty boring. ((Laughs))” (Lauren, July, 19, 2010). Lauren's discourse

included pauses, repeated phrases, and laughs, indicating that she was uncomfortable talking about the ways her social affiliations may have influenced her identity. Stacy, too, identified as “uncultured” (July 13, 2010). This lack of awareness of how social forces are inscribed on one’s actions has been referred to as colorblindness (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993; Marx & Pennington, 2003). Colorblindness is a view that, in a racist society, only those in dominant positions can afford to see society as racially neutral, ignoring how their race positions them (Frankenberg, 1993).

In contrast, Angela self-identified as “White bread middle class” (July 26, 2010). Yet her language was unique because she confessed to an awareness of the implications of how who she was had developed as a result of her suburban and urban teaching experiences. Angela described herself as exploring social issues. In doing so, however, the contours of her discourse highlighted “the *other*.” As Hyland (2009) also observed with another White teacher, Angela resisted deficit Discourses but succumbed to them too:

(.) Uh again I guess it=it didn’t *really* impact me, it di=I=because I wasn’t cognizant of it until we moved and I was, um, teaching and working with the *other* basically. And um, and that’s what made me aware of the advantages to those different roles. But also made me, I think I said before, really want to fight for the, um, the disadvantages that a lot of the students had. And either not being native of English speakers or not having the socioeconomic means to do things, or um, or the race. Um, but it made me really want to empower them. And I quite often, um, would be pretty explicit about letting them know, not in a mean way, but letting them know that there were odds that they were /gonna/ have to overcome and that’s why they really needed to take hold of their education. And=and they were /gonna/ have to fight and compete against kids who were far more

advantaged. And so, /ya/ know, they really needed every advantage they could get to get that leg up. (January 4, 2011)

In this snippet, Angela positioned students as “other,” using the pointing words, “they” and “them,” and she positioned herself as in a “fight” for students to be able to compete in a larger context, outside of her classroom. Angela defined “advantaged” as “experiences that help them [former suburban, middle class students] to interpret their world as well as what they’re studying about their world” (January 4, 2011). Her examples included traveling beyond the city, to the ocean, other countries, or even attending theaters. While Angela drew on deficit and helping Discourses, she also drew on language tied to economic challenge and global competition with words like “compete” and “get a leg up.” These words may be traced to U.S. government rhetoric that tries to position citizens as needing to be competitive in the world economy.

A few participants did not expand on their racial backgrounds. When I prompted Brian about his race, he teased, “I identify with the human race” (November 19, 2010). He shared, “I never really thought about the=the race affecting it,” referring to his work as a teacher (Brian, November 20, 2010). Chelsea, Jessica, and Steph also did not detail implications of being White teachers.

Isaiah was more aware of his position as a teacher of color, and he justified his fit as one. This suggests Isaiah was aware of societal discourses that positioned predominately White women as fit to be teachers. Jamie also showed awareness about the implications of her race though she drew on deficit Discourses likely informed by her past, growing up in a White, middle class context. Avery expressed awareness of her race and class but was not self-critical about how they positioned her. Angela, however, described herself as exploring the implications of her racial identities while still ascribing to deficit perspectives. Most other participants’ lack

of discussion about race suggested colorblindness (Frankenberg, 1993), a finding that aligns with other research on White, middle class, female teachers (Haddix, 2008; LaDuke, 2009; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2008).

Class

All participants identified themselves as middle class. A few thought their middle class financial status would be beneficial in their role as teachers. One participant observed the way class positioned students. The majority did not acknowledge their class status as influential to their work with students despite much scholarship indicating that class, like race, can be important because middle class values and affordances are often perceived as the norm. Such perspectives marginalize individuals without the same resources (Santoro & Allard, 2003).

Brian and Jessica assumed that being middle class would allow them to purchase items needed for their classrooms. These were the only participants who overtly discussed the ways their class may have influenced their roles as teachers. Brian explained that he did not see himself purchasing a class set of iPads. However, “If there is [*sic*] books I need or if I=if I’m at Barnes and Noble and I see, /ya/ know, a couple things that would help the classroom or something for the library I’ll be able to get it” (Brian, November 19, 2010). Jessica shared that her middle class status allowed her to purchase snacks for her students each week. She also started an after school club for “students that are at-risk” to “hang out, play board games, order pizza.” Jessica added, “A lot of them go home to nothing. Um, so I guess because I am middle class, I’m able to do tha=those little things that others might not be able to” (November 20, 2010). “At-risk” is a label that brings about connotations of ethnic and linguistic deficiencies (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Jessica’s use of “nothing” suggested her awareness of social class but positioned her students as deficient.

Isaiah did not speak directly about the way his middle class status would serve his students, but he expressed awareness about class positions. He described race as “a socialized thing,” and I followed up.

Elizabeth: Do you think class is too?

Isaiah: Oh undoubtedly. Class is definitely and you know I can speak to this we=quite well now that I’m at [suburban high school] cause I’ve learned and I’ve spoken to some teachers. Actually a janitor was the first one to let me in on this. Janitors man, and secretaries. I’m telling /ya/. (..) Class=class wise, put race aside cause they’re all White. But I’m talking about *wow, it is evident, /ya/* know? Class is a big thing. At=at=at least where I teach. But that just speaks to the society we live in anyway. (December 29, 2010)

Isaiah’s experience teaching in a middle class suburban school district illuminated how class positioned individuals, in this case students. Isaiah described himself as learning and speaking to faculty members about differences among students. Since the majority of students were White, class differences became, perhaps, more evident. Isaiah description of “big thing” suggested class was important to the ways students position themselves and others and reflected society in general.

Lauren, however, seemed (un)certain about how her race and class influenced her current role as a special education teacher. Drawing on the ways she had identified herself in a previous interview I asked, “Um, so how does your identity as White, English speaking, middle class impact your role as a teacher, or special education teacher specifically?” Lauren answered, “I don’t know. ((Laughs)) That’s a hard question. I can’t say, I guess I can’t say that it doesn’t impact me.” Lauren described herself as compassionate in nature. She stated:

Um, (...) ((sighs)) I don't=I don't know. I mean I'm not going out buying them clothes or shoes or anything but I, /ya/ know, you certainly feel for students that don't have a lot and you want to do more for them. Um, I'm always the one that wants to like take them all home and take care of all of them but I don't know. I think I'm just compassionate overall and I, pretty sure I would be no matter what race or class I identified myself.

(Lauren, January 14, 2011)

The contours of Lauren's discourse, which included pauses, sighs, and repeated phrases, suggested that talking about her identity with regard to race made her uncomfortable. She began by positioning herself as a teacher "I" and students as "them," and then she shifted to using "you" to articulate her desire to help students. Gee (2011) suggested that the use of "you" can be a way to express empathy. Perhaps Lauren positioned herself as compassionate because it is a trait she and society associated with good teachers, or she used "you" to distance her circumstances from her students' experiences.

Chelsea, a certified elementary and special education teacher, seemed, overall, unsure about her cultural identity. She tied her culture to her social class. I prompted Chelsea, "How would you say you identify culturally?" Chelsea responded:

My culture? Um, well. ((Laughs)) I would um (.) ((Taps on table)) ((Laughs)) v This is tough. ((Laughs)) Um (.) my culture? I don't know, like I um, I would identify like saying I'm Irish. And I studied abroad in Ireland. (July 14, 2010)

The contours of Chelsea's language included laughs, pauses, and quieter speech. This may suggest Chelsea was also (un)certain or uncomfortable talking about her culture. Chelsea, however, had an array of experiences that contributed to, what she described as, her cultural background. She described her family as "doers," with rich experiences (Chelsea, July 14,

2010). Chelsea shared that, with family or friends, she had visited racetracks, lake houses, beaches, and large metropolitan areas for sporting events, shopping, or the arts, reflecting a social class with many affordances.

Both Brian and Jessica suggested that they could buy things for their classroom, with Jessica noting that she could purchase items for students that they might not be able to afford at home. While well intentioned, their discourses positioned students as deficient, without accounting for the positives they would contribute to a classroom (Pennington, 2007). Isaiah, on the other hand, described awareness of how class differences among students influenced the way individuals were read in schools. Lauren confessed an (un)certainly about how her class and race positioned her as a teacher. Chelsea, too, seemed (un)certain, but described class related experiences that contributed to her background.

Gender

Participants were aware of the gendered nature of many of the roles associated with teaching (Alsup, 2006; James, 2012; Larsen, 2010; Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004). One male participant thought that his gender would allow him to manage student behaviors better. The majority of participants' language positioned teaching as caring or nurturing work that is socially, historically, and culturally acceptable for women and mothers. Two of the participants were mothers and made connections between motherhood and teaching.

Brian's words revealed that he understood his gender as advantageous. He asserted, But I think being a *male* teacher, from what I've learned, um, male teachers are a little more rare. Um, but I think, I don't know I think there comes a little more, I don't know. I want to say there comes a little more respect, but I don't know if that's true. /Ya/ know what I mean? Um growing up from what I've learned in high school there was always,

like the female teachers had less control over the classroom than the male teachers.

(November 19, 2010)

Brian emphasized the word “male,” yet there seemed to be hints of (un)certainty in his words with the repetition of “I don’t know...”

Both Brian and Avery said “women are more nurturing,” and suitable teachers because they take on a caring and nurturing role (Brian, November 19, 2010; Avery, December 15, 2010). Jessica’s language, including the use of the second person pronoun “you,” positioned teachers as women and mothers. Jessica said,

You have to take care of the kids, you’re not just there to teach them but a lot of times you take care of the social, the emotional, you take care of all the aspects that you would as=as a ^mother. (November 20, 2010)

Jessica suggested teachers fulfill the role of mothers in schools as if, in some cases, mothers do not satisfy their roles at home. She seemed to conflate caring, teaching, and mothering while taking up a deficit perspective (James, 2012). The perspectives enacted by teachers, like Jessica, and other aspiring literacy specialists, sometimes fell under deficit constructions beyond their literacy program.

Stacy used “we” as the subjects of her language to position women part of society at large with historically rooted values. As a female, Stacy asserted that teaching was a socially “*accepted* profession” for her to go into (November 22, 2010). She said,

As much as we want to say that, you know, women are breaking out and doing all these things like there’s still a little bit of, /ya/ know, an acceptance thing going on where it’s just, girls kind of feel intimidated sometimes by like, /ya/ know, starting a business or, /ya/ know, being a doctor. (Stacy, November 22, 2010)

During her graduate studies, too, Stacy started her own business. She was proud that she had the courage to ultimately do this. Instead of going into teaching upon the completion of her studies, Stacy continued to expand her business.

Angela's discourse also highlighted the way our culture positioned teachers, historically and culturally, as nurturing mothers. Angela asserted:

There's that nurturing sense to education that, uh, we have, you know, females are more nurturing right? ((Laughs)) We're the mothers, we take care. So I think there are a lot of really, um, old ingrained things from our culture that although we—we *say* we've moved past and we *think* we're more progressive, I think there's a lot of that really old stuff that is still holding on. (January 4, 2011)

Angela used the subject "we" to point to groups of teachers, women, and society at large. This aligns with the history of why women are assumed to make better teachers (e.g., Alsup, 2006; Larsen, 2010; Schick, 2000).

Angela's enactment as a wife and mother were among her first priorities. She reported, "I think my personal goals supersede everything else, my goal as mother (.) and as wife" (July 26, 2010). She described herself as "old school" in the ways she supported her husband (Angela, July 26, 2010). Angela explained, "I want him to be happy," and, as an example, noted that they moved seven times in 13 years to support her husband's academic and career aspirations (July 26, 2010).

I um, especially the last few years while Kevin's been working on his Ph.D. and I've been (.) the um the one to try to hold it all together ((laughs)) as best as I can. So um I'm the one who checks Sophia's backpack to see what's her homework, what's coming up for the week, what's=what field trips are going on. I'm the um go-to person with daycare

for Ella, as far as communicating anything that's happening there. (Angela, July 26, 2010)

As noted earlier in this chapter, Angela decided not to be an attorney so she could have the job parameters associated with teaching to make her family a priority. In Angela's view, a career in teaching allowed her to balance her personal and work lives in a way that matched her life goals.

Angela shared the ways that being a mother influenced her teaching, making her more sympathetic to the demands of having school-aged children. After Angela's oldest daughter entered school, she felt the demands of helping even a "very capable" child with schoolwork (January 4, 2011). This helped Angela see "what it might be like a little bit for other parents whose students were not quite as capable. And they themselves, as parents, might not have felt capable" (January 4, 2011). Angela noted that parenting made her have more "realistic" expectations about the workload she assigned while improving her interactions with families, even though she drew on deficit Discourses to position these insights (January 4, 2011).

Being a mother also seemed to affect Angela's relationships with students. Early in Angela's career, she struggled to assert herself, but this improved with parenting:

I know what I'm doing is right by them and um and, you know, they may come around, someday. ((Laughs)) And they may not, but this is still what's best. And I think being a mother has helped with that too. And /ya/ know, there are days that your kids don't like you moments, your kids really don't like what you're doing for them, you know it's right. And=and I think, and again back to that relationship, your kids know you love /em/. And I think that's true with the kids in my classroom, that they know I love /em/. And=and I try to tell them that frequently, that I care about them and I wouldn't push /em/ so hard if I didn't care. (August 12, 2010)

Angela described motherhood as contributing to her confidence about building relationships with students and knowing what's best for them.

While teaching invoked a narrative of convenience for Angela, for Lauren teaching and motherhood invoked a narrative of busyness. Lauren described her husband, also a public school educator, and herself as juggling extra commitments at school, taking graduate courses, and doing things with their own children. Lauren suggested she experienced guilt because of her busyness:

Um (.) sometimes I feel guilty because I work so much and I'm not always home to do things with them that I like to do and um= or sometimes I feel like things are rushed because I have so much to do:::. I never want to be that parent that, /ya/ know, the teachers are sitting around the teachers room talking about how='Well they're both educators and how come they don't have any time for their ^ KIDS?' ((Laughs)) (July 19, 2010)

Lauren described her juggling of motherhood and her teaching life as a constant negotiation.

Even though Lauren expressed guilt over not being home with her children, she didn't think she could identify herself as a stay-at-home mom. She said, "Um, I think=I don't necessarily think I'd be a good stay-at-home mom because I like that interaction with adults and feeling like I'm making a difference" (Lauren, July 19, 2010). Angela also did not find her identity in being a "stay-at-home mom" (July 26, 2010). Conversely, other participants shared aspirations of being mothers, positioning teaching as a suitable career to step in and out of when raising children. Stacy and Avery shared desires of being stay-at-home moms that I elaborate on further in the next chapter.

Like Angela, Lauren shared the ways teaching influenced her parenting. Lauren brought activities from her teaching of special education fifth grade students to do at home with her own children. This included establishing organizational routines for her preschool son to avoid the difficulties she observed her middle school students faced. During her studies, she found herself “more interested” in learning about early literacy because it related to her own children’s experiences (Lauren, January 14, 2011).

The findings in this section reflect what other scholars have described as society’s assumptions about the gendered roles of teaching. Brian, the White male participant in this study, suggested he would have more control over students’ behaviors in the classroom, ascribing to societal discourses that suggest male teachers enact masculinities that make them good disciplinarians (Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004). Brian, Stacy, Avery, Jessica, and Angela positioned women and mothers as particularly suited to the demands of teaching, drawing on a frequently invoked cultural construction (Alsup, 2006; Biklen, 1995; Larsen, 2010). Lauren and Angela were mothers, and teaching and mothering were priorities in their narratives about balancing teaching and family life. Biklen (1995) suggested how society positioned women’s work and family lives in opposition when she noted “Measures of commitment do not take realities of women’s lives into account” (Biklen, 1995, p. 35).

Age

Some participants considered age as a possible variable in the ways that others read them as teachers. One suggested that her young age contributed to the ways people perceived her as not competent. Another participant reported that her age made it difficult to establish relationships with other colleagues.

Jamie was one participant who felt positioned by her age as teacher in a charter school. She felt as though others respected her degree and the institution in which she earned it. Yet, she explained,

But some people just see that I'm twenty-five and not like my résumé so they think I'm like dumb. Or like that I'm not competent enough to, /ya/ know, think creatively or do authentic things rather than like read a story and ((laughs)) answer questions. /Ya/ know?
(Jamie, March 21, 2011)

Jamie's age contributed to the ways she understood herself as read as not competent.

Steph thought her age would influence her teaching and relationships with colleagues more than her other attributes. She said:

I think it's hard, I think age wise it's hard being a teacher now, um, in regard to other teachers. Um, cause I don't, sometimes I think (.) cause they know that you're so young, like the kids don't realize how=yet=they know you look kind of young but they don't really know how old you are. But I feel like the teachers and they just know you're so young, sometimes that, I think that's where I see more of like the difficulty for me.
(Steph, November 22, 2010).

Steph's age contributed to her concerns about her ability to deal with hierarchical relationships in schools. Avery and Isaiah also suggested their "young" age would be a "variable" in the ways others perceived them (Avery, August 11, 2010; Isaiah, December 29, 2010).

Jamie described herself as positioned by her young age and not competent. Steph also shared concerns about the ways other teachers would perceive her because she was young. Avery and Isaiah considered their age may influence their roles as teachers and colleagues. The literature did not suggest individuals experienced identity conflicts because of their age. Perhaps

these findings present a new idea. Participants may have taken up discourses about their age because they were also learning to be literacy specialists where there is a shared idea that it is important to gather teaching experience before assuming such positions (Bean et al., 2012). I elaborate on this further in the next chapter.

Religion

Some participants understood their religion as important to their teacher identities. Two participants enacted helping and loving Discourses that related to their respective faiths. Other participants suggested religion also played a role in shaping their identities.

Angela's religion was central to her identity with what Subedi (2006) would refer to as a missionary Discourse of changing lives. Subedi (2006) suggested missionary's work is often interpreted as helping, generous, and a benevolent practice. Angela defined church or religion as "the most important part of who I am" (July 26, 2010). She described herself as growing up with a really strong faith, as a member of the Church of the Nazarene. This Protestant denomination, Angela shared, "was always looking to others and how we could help others, what we could do for others" (January 4, 2011). This was similar to her ideas about teaching.

Angela saw a connection between her religious values and teaching:

That I think that not only it (.) is part of my faith that I think it's=faith is something that ought to be impacting others and lived out but as a teacher it appeals to me because I am interested in helping people and changing lives and all that kinds of stuff so. (July 26, 2010)

Angela thought that she could live out her religious values as a teacher, helping people and changing lives.

Isaiah positioned his faith as “a big deal,” yet he struggled with some perceptions associated with Christianity (July 22, 2010). He identified as an Evangelical Christian and wanted to be read as a follower of Jesus. But he shared concerns about assumptions others would make because of “horrible connotations” associated with Christianity. “Most people who think they’re Christian often times are Republican. And I am certainly not Republican” (Isaiah, July 22, 2010).

Isaiah described himself as a “big believer” in God’s purpose, and he understood God’s purpose was within him (Isaiah, July 22, 2010). He said,

(.) I feel like I have a certain purpose and I’m not fully there finding out what it is yet. But God has brought me to wants me to do something, not necessarily like preach but /cause/ I don’t want to be pastor, but I just *love on people*. (Isaiah, July 22, 2010)

Isaiah understood himself as able to “love on people” through a career in teaching. Like Isaiah, Stacy described herself as looking “for God in things that happen” (July 13, 2010).

Chelsea, Avery, and Jessica discussed religion more subtly. These participants identified as Catholic. Chelsea reported going to church every week with her family. Chelsea said “communion or whatever and just the importance of religion and um /ya/ know that belief” influenced her identity (July 14, 2010). Likewise, Avery described religion being part of her family’s values—they did “church things” together (July 15, 2010). She suggested that growing up this way surrounded her and her siblings by “good people with good morals” (Avery, July 15, 2010). Avery, however, did not identify as “super religious because that’s creepy” (July 15, 2010). Jessica reported that her family attended church on “Easter and Christmas,” and, like others, family values seemed important to her identity (July 21, 2010).

Both Isaiah and Angela took up missionary Discourses. This was not surprising because both of them identified as religious people, with religion being the most important part of who they were. Subedi's (2006) study of preservice teachers' perceptions about religion found, "Those who participated in such experiences [as missionaries] interpreted 'helping' as a generous work and, for certain, a benevolent practice. And, not surprisingly, students often used terms, such as 'good will' and 'love for others,' to describe their experiences" (p. 232). Angela and Isaiah, too, made connections between their religious Discourses and their teacher identities to suggest that they could help and love students. Other participants spoke about religion more generally impacting their identities.

Summary

Most participants seemed somewhat (un)certain about their fit in the world and the ways their enactments of race, class, gender, age, and religion might influence their role as teachers, as indicated by the title this section. Some expressed an awareness of the implications of these affiliations and described themselves as exploring their implications. When participants drew on these affiliations, they sometimes used deficit Discourses to describe those who would be their students.

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter suggested participants were figuring out who they were and where they belonged in schools and in the world. Participants' (un)certainty sheds light on the perspectives they brought to their studies and to their roles as teachers or literacy specialists. It also highlighted the deficit Discourses they sometimes used and brought to their work.

Participants' reasons for becoming K-12 teachers seemed important to how they talked about themselves. Some participants told of histories tied to teaching, or they shared memories of long-held aspirations of being teachers. Two participants perceived teaching as a way to

fulfill goals to change students' lives. Despite their goals, they all experienced (un)certainty that Britzman (2007) has noted is typical for teachers.

Most participants seemed (un)certain about how they would fit as teachers. Some weighed or came to terms with their career choices, sometimes positioning teaching as less than prestigious. A few were figuring out the kinds of teachers they wanted to be, the personas they aspired to enact in the classroom. Some were unsure that they would be able to attend to the politics of teaching, especially teaching literacy. They balanced their (un)certainty by drawing on good teacher dominant Discourses to express the ways in which they were more certain of their fit. Observations of other teachers in schools influenced how they thought about themselves. Administrators' evaluations of their work and their studies also gave some confidence in their teaching skills.

Participants expressed (un)certainty about their fit in the world. Participants' race, class, gender, age, and religion were central to the ways they identified as teachers and people. Most participants, however, were (un)certain about the ways their social affiliations impacted their teaching and interactions with others. Sometimes participants drew on deficit Discourses to position themselves relative to others' race, class, and gender. This occurred when participants conflated race with culture, class with ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, or caring, teaching and mothering.

In this chapter, I highlighted the ways these graduate students gauged how they would fit as teachers and people in the world. I detailed their awareness and confusions about how race, class, gender, age, and religion impacted their identities. I reported the ways they drew on deficit Discourses to position themselves and others with whom they might work—positioning that

other scholars have found to perpetuate uneven expectations and achievement among students (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Pennington, 2007; Rubin, 2008).

CHAPTER FIVE:

PARTICIPANTS WEIGH THEIR FIT AS LITERACY SPECIALISTS:

“I’M NOT TOO CONFIDENT AS A LITERACY SPECIALIST.”

Isaiah’s words in the above title reflect the main idea of this chapter, that, with some exceptions, most participants’ discourses revealed that they were (un)certain about their identities as literacy specialists. Their (un)certainty was related to how they saw themselves within their existing and anticipated networks of social affiliations. In addition to talking about why they became teachers in the first place, as described in the last chapter, most drew on discourses about needing experience, first, as classroom teachers. They also shared concerns about the ways others would read them as beginning literacy specialists and about the lack of available positions. They drew on discourses about their home lives and other experiences as learners and teachers, sometimes using deficit Discourses to position students and their peers in their graduate school cohort.

I begin Chapter Five with participants’ reasons for entry into literacy education, aside from state requirements described in the methods chapter. I report participants’ original intentions to foreground the changes in how they identified as literacy specialists. I detail the ways they drew on discourses to gauge their fit, describing the ways they measured themselves against their students and each other, other literacy specialists, again sometimes drawing on deficit Discourses to position themselves relative to others.

Reasons for Entry into Literacy Education

As Freppon’s (1999) research suggested, participants’ reasons for studying literacy education varied. The participants in my study chose literacy education to be better prepared to teach literacy, to be more marketable, and for other various reasons. None of them intended to

pursue positions as literacy specialists at the start of their studies. Despite these original intentions, however, they all described changes in how they identified as teachers and literacy specialists. They all saw themselves as literacy specialists in their future, some more immediately than others.

Chelsea and Jessica felt unprepared to teach reading at the elementary level at the end of their undergraduate program. Chelsea said, regarding strategies to teach reading, “I didn’t get *enough* in my undergrad” (August 11, 2010). Jessica, similarly said,

When I graduated from undergrad I’m like, ‘I do not feel ready to be=to teach reading to anyone.’ Like in the classroom I was like, ‘I don’t know what I would do if I had a struggling reader.’ I was completely uncomfortable with it, with the idea of it. (August 4, 2010)

Jessica took onus for the teaching of reading in an elementary classroom through her use of “I.”

The three experienced teachers in the cohort referenced previous teaching experiences to describe how they felt ill-prepared to help students read in K-12 contexts. Angela described herself as able to help students understand metaphors and themes, but struggled to “help them understand at the most basic level” (July 26, 2010). Angela said, “I guess I really just wanted, when I started out, wanted to know, um, how I could best help my students in my classroom um, wanted to be able to instruct them better” (January 4, 2011). Avery noted that her seventh grade social studies students were not reading on grade level, “But I didn’t know *how to help them*” (July 15, 2010). Lauren also reported, “I wanted a better background in teaching students with reading difficulties how to read” (January 14, 2011). Their use of “help” took up a privileged Discourse of teaching. This Discourse suggested they needed the knowledge and power to help those less than, in this case struggling readers (Pennington, 2007).

Three less experienced teachers took advice from others to study literacy to be more marketable as teacher candidates. A relative who was a school administrator advised Isaiah. Undergraduate professors encouraged Brian and Stacy to study literacy or special education. Both agreed literacy education seemed to be a better option for them than studying special education to earn the master's degree that was required in their state. Brian said,

I don't think I'm—I'm the type, I'm sure I *could* do it, but the whole special education thing, I don't think I have, it might sound bad, but the patience for it. Like you need a certain amount of patience and to be a certain type of person to deal with the special and I don't=like I mean kudos to them but I don't think I'd be able to do *that*. (November 19, 2010)

Brian suggested he did not have “patience” needed to work with students with learning difficulties, drawing on discourses positioning special education students as people different from other, non-special education students. Stacy asserted a similar perspective, “It takes a *really*, really amazing special person to work with special needs kids,” and she was unsure her “heart was in it” (August 10, 2010). Their perspectives also seemed to conflict with what has been identified as a primary role of literacy specialists, to teach and organize programs for students who experience difficulty with reading (Bean et al., 2012).

Jamie and Steph had other reasons for studying literacy education. Jamie did so because an English teacher who she worked with during her undergraduate student teaching inspired her. This English teacher had completed the same literacy education program. Jamie said, “And she like raved about the program and honestly when I met her, like I /wanna/ be her someday” (March 21, 2011). Steph, on the other hand, described pursuing a literacy education graduate

degree as “a personal thing” and for her growth (November 22, 2010). She wanted to learn more about the “rules of the English language” (Steph, November 22, 2010).

Some participants’ reasons for studying literacy education were traceable to big “D” Discourses or ways of valuing, feeling, thinking, and believing. Chelsea, Avery, Lauren, Jessica, and Angela studied literacy education to better be able to “help” the other, in this case students who struggled with literacy development. Sometimes teachers are not critically reflective of their own limitations, that everyone has, when they use such Discourse. Brian and Stacy’s language described what they did not have to work with the other, in this case with special education students, as a reason they studied literacy instead. These Discourses suggested a belief that, with knowledge from graduate studies, they would gain an ability to work with some, though not *other* students and lack of insights regarding how these students might benefit from literacy instruction (Hinchman, 2010).

Literacy Specialist (Un)certainty

Participants showed (un)certainty about how they would fit as practicing literacy specialists. Most participants’ discourses suggested they were not ready to assume such positions. These participants suggested they were (un)certain about assuming the role and responsibilities as literacy specialists because they were still finding their fit as classroom teachers. They were concerned about the ways they would be read as beginning literacy specialists, and they were (un)certain about the attainability and sustainability of literacy specialist positions. Participants drew on discourses about the varying roles of literacy specialists and about the need for leadership skills and additional teaching experience. They also drew on institutional discourses about the economy and social constructs related to age and race.

In spite of participants' (un)certainly, they all saw themselves as possible literacy specialists in years to come. Those who seemed less certain about taking jobs as literacy specialists were more certain about their ability to apply their literacy expertise in the classroom. Others explained that they intended to immediately pursue positions as literacy specialists at the completion of their studies. The literacy specialist position appealed to these participants because they felt ready to assume roles in which they could lead and help others. Their use of helping Discourse described the literacy specialists' instructional role as one focused on helping students and teachers. Their use of a leadership Discourse referred to the coaching role and the job of facilitating school-wide literacy programs.

Fit as Classroom Teachers

Some participants' language suggested that they were not ready to assume leadership responsibilities associated with the role of literacy specialists because they were still learning to fit as classroom teachers. I outlined this in the previous chapter. These individuals suggested that they may try taking on leadership roles as classroom teachers or by sharing literacy expertise with colleagues.

Isaiah understood the roles of literacy specialists to be in a different capacity than other teachers because of their coaching responsibilities (modeling, observing, etc.). Isaiah elaborated on the complexities of establishing relationships with teachers and administrators:

You're a literacy coach, like, /cause/ I guess, you know, I guess it's real easy to get /schmoozey/ with the administrators because you're in a different capacity than the trenches teachers. You're critiquing teachers, but at the end of the day you're in the teachers union and you still need, ((laughs)) you might have to go back there, uh, and so

that's a political thing too, /ya/ know? You /wanna/ be, you /wanna/ be well received.

Everything is politics man. *Wow*. So yeah. (December 29, 2010)

He seemed (un)certain about his fit as a literacy specialist because of the way literacy specialists are positioned to aid teachers while still being teachers (e.g., Bean et al., 2003; Bean et al., 2012; Dole, 2004; Shaw et al., 2005). Isaiah explained, "I feel like I'm just learning how to be a confident ESL content area, uh, you know, in the trenches teacher," implying that a literacy specialist was something else (December 29, 2010).

Chelsea saw herself as a classroom teacher who might assume some leadership responsibilities like literacy coaches do:

Yeah, I definitely see myself more as a classroom teacher um and um=but I think that maybe starting some wi=like leadership roles^ that maybe a literacy coach may have um like such as, I may suggest like starting a book club. (August 11, 2010)

I asked Chelsea, "So how do *you* see yourself as a literacy specialist?" She replied, "Um I mean I=I definitely think I'm *growing*. I definitely have a lot more to learn" (Chelsea, August 11, 2010).

Jessica, a fourth grade special education teacher, thought she could share her literacy education expertise with her colleagues. She identified herself as "a tool" to other teachers in her school building, sharing useful literacy resources and knowledge offering (Jessica, November 20, 2010). Jessica did not consider this literacy coaching, though, and added, "I guess I just feel more like that, like I'm just sharing ^knowledge" (November 20, 2010). Jessica described her desire to be a more effective classroom teacher, explaining her use of her studies with, "But I think in some ways I'll always be thinking with the literacy professional's cap on" (August 4, 2010).

Chelsea, Jessica, and Isaiah described themselves as figuring out their fit as classroom teachers before they could assume roles as literacy specialists. They suggested they would draw on their literacy education to take on school leadership responsibilities, such as leading a book club and sharing expertise. These participants shared concerns that matched the discourses about identity construction in other studies of literacy specialists about power and positioning (e.g., Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Rainville & Jones, 2008). Their concerns seemed reasonable given that they were beginning teachers who lacked classroom experience.

Ways of Being Read as Beginning Literacy Specialists

Several participants positioned themselves as lacking classroom experience. Because of this, they were concerned about the ways others would read them if they were to assume positions as literacy specialists. They suggested they needed time in the classroom to build their expertise as teachers. A few participants thought their age and/or race might also impact the ways other teachers perceived their credibility as literacy specialists.

Avery thought that, as a result of moving from school to school, others perceived her as “the new person,” and that she needed experience to be valued (December 15, 2010). She said, “Um but I don’t know I guess I’m still—I’m nervous, I feel like I need more—I think I definitely need more teaching experience to be more credible in a literacy specialist role, personally” (Avery, August 11, 2010). Steph used similar adjectives, “nervous,” “overwhelmed,” and “stressed,” to articulate her (un)certainty about taking on the role as a literacy specialist (August 5; November 22, 2010).

At the start of the semester, the instructor of the graduate seminar asked participants to respond to the following in writing: “Describe yourself as someone who is about to be certified

as a literacy specialist. Include strengths and areas for development” (Field notes, July 6, 2010).

Part of Jessica’s response included:

I feel another area of development is practical classroom application and ideas. The last 5 [*sic*] years have been spent here at the university so aside from student teaching, I don’t have the hours in the classroom that full-time teachers do and therefore the knowledge that comes from experience isn’t there for me. (Written response, July, 6, 2010)

Jessica measured her fit as an almost-certified literacy specialist against “full-time teachers” in the cohort and in K-6 schools who had richer teaching experiences. Jessica’s perspective on the importance of teaching experience remained after graduation. She explained:

But I would=RIGHT NOW at this point, I would not feel comfortable being a literacy specialist. I think I have the knowledge and I have the resources to go find the answers, but I don’t think I have the experience. I want the teaching experience first ((taps on table)) because I don’t think I can be giving other people advice when I’ve never even taught myself. So um I definitely think I’m ready to be using the knowledge I’ve gained in the general education classroom, but I would not feel comfortable ((laughs)) coaching others at this point. (Jessica, August 4, 2010)

Chelsea and Steph expressed concern about their inexperience and “stepping on other people’s toes” (Steph, August 5, 2010) or getting teachers “mad, that like telling them what to do in a way” (Chelsea, December 14, 2010).

Avery explained her worry that others would perceive her as young and that this, too, would ultimately impact her credibility among colleagues:

((Sighs)) Well I think that when you wa=((sighs))=I think that because it is a coaching role and it is, /ya/ know like, ‘Oh read this, do this.’ I think that=I know I look young um

and I think sometimes that because of the way that I look people don't necessarily take me um (.) seriously right away. They're like, 'Oh another young person coming in trying to tell me what to do.' So I feel like if you can kind of um if=if I had more experience and I was able to speak to that experience more that people would take the coaching side of that a little bit more serious. (August 11, 2010)

One gains teaching experience and years at the same time.

Isaiah was also worried about how others would perceive him, in his case because of age and race. He said, "It's a vulnerable process to begin with, and we learn that from the literature. So any little thing that is different from what is considered the conventional norm, I consider a factor" (Isaiah, December 29, 2010). Isaiah added,

I'm young and (.) /ya/ know, all those things are variables I don't think necessarily are going in my favor. Um, another thing I=I don't really like to drop, I think if you're competent, you're competent. I don't really like to drop race too much. But it's always at some point a factor, just you don't know where these people are coming from, you don't know what their background is or what their perceptions are on certain groups of people. I'm not White so it's always, it's always /gonna/ be some kind of variable. Whether a minute one or one that, /ya/ know, 'Who is this guy?' in my, /ya/ know. So those are all things that I would say that are not working in my favor. (December 29, 2010)

Isaiah did not fit the "conventional norm" of literacy specialists, who are 89% White, 97% female, and experienced teachers (Bean et al., 2012). He recognized himself as "young" and "not White," and his question of "Who is this guy?" suggested others, or "these people," would also question his race, age, and gender. Isaiah described his affiliations as working against his

credibility as a literacy specialist. While other participants shared his concern about age and experience, they were not concerned about race or gender.

Chelsea, Avery, Steph, Jessica and Isaiah suggested they needed classroom teaching experience be read as credible by older, experienced colleagues. Avery and Isaiah suggested their age and race may contribute to the ways others perceived them. These findings best align with Hall's (2009a, 2009b) study, which found preservice elementary teachers were most concerned with the ways their colleagues may perceive them. Other research on literacy specialists did not note such concerns, but this was likely because these studies' participants included older, experienced teachers who fit the dominant demographics of literacy specialists, White middle class women (e.g., Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Rainville & Jones, 2008).

Attainability of Literacy Specialist Positions

Some participants seemed (un)certain about taking jobs as literacy specialists because of the tumultuous state of the economy and job market. They thought that literacy specialist positions were hard to get or lacked job security. This was a topic of discussion raised during the graduate seminar by the instructor and guest speakers.

Avery, who was employed as a social studies teacher after her graduate studies, described literacy specialist positions as difficult to attain. She said, "Um, those positions, I don't know, you have to sell your firstborn I think to get them sometimes" (Avery, December 15, 2010). Avery also described herself as building alliances with colleagues in her school district, particularly the head of the humanities department. She thought this groundwork could perhaps open the door for the conversation of, "I kind of do want a reading position later on but let's try

this” (Avery, December 15, 2010). At the time of this study, Avery felt grateful to have a job as a classroom teacher.

Lauren and Isaiah were both (un)certain about pursuing positions as literacy specialists because they were hard to sustain, especially in what they saw as a tight job market. The position intrigued Lauren, but she did not see herself leaving her special education position anytime soon. Lauren expressed a fear that, if her school district cut jobs “supplemental resource” faculty seemed to be the first to be laid off, including literacy specialists (January 14, 2011). She saw her position as a special education teacher as more secure. Isaiah, who was committed to his role as an ESOL teacher, also shared concerns about Title I funds, “I know that some specialists’ jobs aren’t /gonna/ be there maybe the next, after that funding runs out” (December 29, 2010).

Literacy specialist job tenuousness was also a seminar topic. The instructor suggested that the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as No Child Left Behind (2002), suggested a need for more literacy specialists to serve as coaches in the primary grades (Field Notes, July 8, 2010). ESEA is an act that has historically funded Title I literacy specialists. The number of literacy specialists wasn’t adequate to provide services the law required. A guest speaker who came into seminar to present “Life as a Reading-Literacy Specialist in Schools” described her district as having three reading specialists and two assistants in each building, with the caveat that administrators cut specialists’ and assistants’ jobs when money grew tight (Field Notes, July 8, 2010).

Avery, Lauren, and Isaiah experienced another kind of (un)certainty about becoming literacy specialists tied to the unpredictable job market and availability of literacy specialist positions. Their discourses seemed related to larger discourses about the economy and the job

market. Brian, Stacy, Jamie, and Angela's language, however, suggested they were still willing to apply for literacy specialist positions. Little is known from the research about how teachers transition into the role of literacy specialists or about how the job market impacts their decisions.

Improved Classroom Teachers

Most participants saw themselves as better prepared to teach literacy in the K-12 classroom than they had at the start of their program. They were more confident about addressing reading development in the context of the classroom. Some participants described using coaching skills in their teaching positions. The ways participants perceived themselves addressed some of their initial reasons for studying literacy education.

Most participants' language suggested they thought their studies would improve their classroom teaching. For example, on studying literacy education, Chelsea, a certified elementary and special education teacher, said, "I am so happy I did because I learned so much through it and, um, feel as though I would be a better teacher" (December 14, 2010). In this regard, Chelsea described herself as changed for the better.

Isaiah described himself as enacting "a literacy specialist thing" through his role as an ESOL teacher (December 29, 2010). He drew on a program for preventing and remediating reading difficulties that students used during the literacy education practicum:

And I've been seeing some strides there. Um, and that's a literacy specialist thing, tracking the progress over time, doing the systematic, uh, you know, sound-symbol phonemic awareness type thing, and I mean we're not, it doesn't teach comprehension, but I'm able to at least get these kids to decode, which is a start. But now I know all the syllable types, final /e/, all that junk, where I realize s=depending on the background of

the kids they have certain struggles with certain type of syllables. I know how to identify them and systematically work on that. (December 29, 2010)

Isaiah saw himself as “*grooming*” himself as a literacy specialist through his role as an ESL teacher (August 2, 2010). In his text, Isaiah used what Gee (2011) referred to as a blend of a vernacular style of English and academic social language. When Isaiah referred to syllable types as “all that junk,” he used informal, social language (December 29, 2010), at the same time that he represented himself as academic with his use of literacy-specific vocabulary. Lauren, too, described herself as using the same program to teach reading in her special education classroom.

Lauren saw herself using literacy coaching skills in various ways. She explained that, in the co-teaching model, “We’re constantly meeting and talking about students, so. Um, /ya/ know, sometimes I have to use those coaching type, um, sentence starters to help get us on the right track to solving some of the issues within the classroom” (Lauren, January 14, 2011). Lauren was the only participant who described herself as enacting coaching skills in her day-to-day work.

Jessica described herself as lending references, books and articles, to her colleagues. As a fourth grade special education co-teacher, she offered to give the Qualitative Reading Inventory (Leslie & Caldwell, 2010), an informal assessment of oral reading fluency and comprehension, to a fellow teacher’s students. Jessica said, “I’ve told them about how I can give them=how I can give them a=a=a somewhat accurate look at where they are in terms of reading level.” She added, “Um, but I guess you could say I’m coaching them a little bit but for the most part I just, I don’t know, I ((laughs)) don’t really see myself as a literacy specialist right now” (Jessica, November 20, 2010).

As a social studies teacher, Avery described herself as having literacy expertise in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension strategies. She said, “I have a lot more knowledge now about, um, how to get kids to understand the information, you know” (Avery, December 15, 2010)? Avery identified herself as being “*well* equipped with ways to deal with kids who aren’t reading on grade level” (December 15, 2010). She reported, “Um I guess I=I see myself as being somebody that’s *in touch* with what’s going on in classrooms” (Avery, August 11, 2010). Steph also seemed to feel more prepared to teach in the English classroom. She said, “Um I feel like if I was /gonna/ be in front of an English classroom I could kind of be ready to go^” (Steph, November 22, 2010). Steph credited the literacy practicum for making it “most clear to me about ho=how every student is different, every student is an individual, they have different strengths, different needs” (November 22, 2010).

The ways participants perceived themselves, as better prepared to teach literacy in the classroom, aligned with their goals from the onset of their studies, described previously in this chapter. As Jessica said,

My whole goal for this program was to be able to teach reading better as a general ed. teacher, or as an inclusive teacher, whatnot. Um and after the first like couple of weeks of class I was like, ‘^I could kind of see myself being a literacy specialist.’ Or like being a literacy coach or whatever. Um and so I’ve *definitely* changed my view on=on the role of a literacy specialist. (August 4, 2010)

Brian, Stacy, Chelsea, Avery, Lauren, Steph, Jessica, and Isaiah’s discourses suggested they thought their studies would improve their classroom literacy teaching. Avery, Lauren, Jessica, and Isaiah shared the ways they were applying their literacy education in the classroom. Their certainty seemed to match some of their original intensions for studying literacy education.

Despite their initial motivations for study, Jamie and Angela did not discuss how their literacy education improved their classroom literacy teaching.

Possible Literacy Specialists

All participants saw themselves as possible literacy specialists in the future, some more immediately than others. As they imagined themselves as literacy specialists, they drew on their literacy education graduate studies as shaping their identities. A few drew on their observations of literacy specialists in K-8 schools.

Most participants thought they may apply for positions as literacy specialists one day. Isaiah said he might pursue a position as a literacy specialist in five or ten years, after gaining experience as an ESOL teacher. Chelsea agreed, explaining, “Um maybe like in the future but not any—not within like ten years” (August 11, 2010). Avery, Lauren, Steph, and Jessica also envisioned themselves as possible literacy specialists in the “future” (Lauren, August 12, 2010).

Many made references to assigned readings, other related assignments, and professors for shaping their “burgeoning” identities as literacy specialists (Isaiah, August 2, 2010). Jessica, for example, highlighted the way she now understood literacy instruction based on her graduate studies,

It needs to include so much more; text sets, inquiry, digital books, magazines, etc. It needs to include vocabulary, phonics, comprehension strategies and the like all taught in different ways- student exploration, modeling, GRR [Gradual Release of Responsibility], etc. These are the things that I want to bring to a school someday as a literacy specialist. I want others to know how literacy can be fun and engaging and how easily they can incorporate it into their classroom throughout the day and school year. (November 21, 2010)

Jessica's words contained hints of the pedagogical core language in program requirements dictated by the state at the time of their studies. The state required that graduate studies prepare literacy teacher candidates with: 1) Knowledge of the theories of literacy development; 2) Proficiency in providing instruction and assessment in cooperation with other school staff; 3) Proficiency in organizing and enhancing literacy programs. Jessica's assertions addressed the second proficiency:

Including but not limited to: creating instructional environments; teaching all aspects of literacy acquisition, including but not limited to phonemic awareness, phonics skills, word identification, vocabulary skills, study strategies and strategies for building comprehension, constructing meaning, and building literacy in the content areas; assessing students' literacy performance, including but not limited to identifying dyslexia; providing appropriate instruction for students experiencing difficulty in acquiring literacy skills; and providing literacy services to students in compensatory or special education programs. (State Education Department, 1998)

The state's many proficiencies required for literacy specialists focused on developing their understanding of how to teach the reading process, especially to students who struggled.

Avery and Jessica drew on their early teaching experiences, as a seventh grade social studies teacher and as a fourth grade special education teacher respectively, to position literacy specialists they engaged with and observed. Jessica explained her interactions with coaches in her school building by using pointing words (e.g., I, we, us, they, them, now, then) to position coaches as helpful. Jessica said,

So we sat down together and just their ideas they were coming up with were great and just the things, we've had meetings with them since then as like the fourth grade team

meets with them once a week, um, to discuss different things and they're both great. And it just, I think it'd be awe=like they come up with, they help us come up with center ideas, they help us plan how to tie up the other subjects into the curriculum. They come in, um, and they observe and they would even offer to f=/ya/ know we need you to help run a center every now and then or whatever. So they're just great and I think it would be a fun job to do. (November 20, 2010)

Jessica's text also suggested that she and her co-teacher had a collegial relationship with the coaches. The coaches made their position appealing, one Jessica thought she may pursue in the future.

Avery, on the other hand, observed a literacy specialist in her school in a less favorable way. Avery positioned the reading specialist as aged and not in a capacity to coach, as if he did not belong. She used the deixis pronoun, "he," to talk about the reading specialist and asserted, In our building we do have one position, a reading position. Um, and the guy's old enough to retire but he's not ((laughs)) going to. And he, um, he does like READ 180. That's the big program. And that's really al=you know he does like supplementary things, but he does=he's not a reading *coach* by any means. (Avery, December 15, 2010)

Avery's emphasis on "coach" positioned the literacy specialist in her school in a lesser role because of the nature of his work. Her language suggested that a "reading position" did not equate to a "coach."

All thought they would be literacy specialists one day, some more immediately than others. Those that saw themselves as possible literacy specialists in the future included Chelsea, Avery, Lauren, Jessica, Steph, and Isaiah. These participants drew on discourses around their literacy education program including references to readings, assignments, professors, and the

state's pedagogical core. After they completed their program, Jessica and Avery shared observations of literacy specialists that furthered their understanding of the role. These participants drew on the discourses available to them to decide how they would and would not fit the role.

Probable Literacy Specialists

Some participants reported they would probably pursue careers as literacy specialists right away. The content of their discourses suggested they were considering applying for positions as literacy specialists more immediately than their colleagues described above. Their assertions reflected varying degrees of (un)certainly connected to quite varied reasons.

Angela, an experienced English teacher, expressed a genuine interest in working as a literacy specialist:

I would like to um I would like to somehow^ at some point^ work in the role of a literacy specialist, to work with teachers. Um and I think it's um because of my passion for students that I want to do that because I know that um students will benefit if I can work with teachers and ^teachers benefit too but ultimately it's about the kids. (July 26, 2010)

Angela's words emphasized that a literacy specialist works collaboratively, "with" teachers, and how the work with teachers filters to students. With 13 years of classroom teaching experience to support her, Angela seemed confident about her potential in this position.

After pursuing an undergraduate degree in English Education and a MS in Literacy, Jamie was the only participant who was offered a part-time Title I reading teacher position upon graduation at a charter school. About herself as a literacy specialist, Jamie said, "I think I'm good at it all. ((Laughs)) I think I c=whatever I like put my mind into I think I'll be good at it" (March 21, 2011). Jamie's work included altering lessons from the English classroom for her

students, co-teaching literacy lessons during English class, and tutoring students after school in reading. Jamie said, “I see myself as a literacy specialist today” (March 21, 2011). Her confidence about her work with students was admirable, although she was somewhat more (un)certain about her fit among colleagues because of her age and race, which I elaborated on in the last chapter.

In contrast, Brian suggested he was ready to be a literacy specialist but with a little less certainty as indicated by his repeated phrase of, “I don’t know,” in the following explanation. I asked Brian, “What’s your plan for the fall? English or reading?” He answered,

((Sighs)) I don’t ^ know. I don’t know. I don’t think I’ve made that decision yet. I don’t know if I want to be in—I don’t know which position I want to be in to start. Do the literacy coach thing for a while and then just go into teaching^, or do the teaching and like it too much where I don’t want to go into literacy thing. I don’t know, I don’t know. I *don’t* know where I want to go, yet. It’ll happen. Like I don’t=one day it will just be like, ‘Oh this is what you want to do, okay.’ (Brian, August 3, 2010)

As noted above, Brian wavered between becoming an English teacher or literacy specialist. He applied for both types of positions. Brian seemed to assume that if and when he applied for a literacy specialist position he would be a viable candidate. Brian was older than his peers in his literacy education program, also bringing business management experience to his work. His certainty might also be related to his identity as a White male of privilege or his age (McIntosh, 1990).

The content of Stacy’s language suggested that she considered pursuing a position as a literacy specialist quite confidently. Stacy originally asserted, “But I mean, I think that in the right school with the right supports and the right structure I think I would. I think I would take a

literacy specialist job” (August 10, 2010). However, she decided not to pursue any teacher positions. Stacy described herself as “ashamed to think about not being a teacher or literacy specialist right away, /cause/ this is a very pivotal moment.” Stacy added “everything’s changing” in education and “there needs to be people in the field who know what they’re talking about” (August 10, 2010). She saw herself as one of these people. Stacy decided that she was “good at school” but she was unsure that this would translate into a successful teaching career (November 22, 2010). Stacy’s ultimate lack of certainty seemed related to her shift from being a student to teacher, which Alsup (2006) noticed caused tension for preservice teachers.

Each of these participants brought unique experiences to a probable literacy specialist role. Angela had 13 years of classroom teaching experience to support her, which many would suggest might make her well suited to be a literacy specialist. Jamie’s confidence suggested that she was certain about her work as a literacy specialist, despite her (un)certainly about her fit among colleagues. Brian was confident that he would be a viable candidate as a literacy specialist, perhaps due to his studies, and perhaps due to his age, gender, and race. Stacy lacked confidence in her ability to serve as a literacy specialist and to work in schools more generally, perhaps because she was struggling with the transition from student to teacher.

Helping and Leadership Discourses

The participants who seemed most ready to assume positions as literacy specialists drew on helping and leadership Discourses. Participants’ helping Discourses positioned themselves as literacy specialists able to assist others, particularly the underprivileged (Pennington, 2007). Those who most thought they were prepared to take on an authoritative role used leadership Discourses (Sinclair, 2004). Some leaned on leadership experiences to assert their readiness to be literacy specialists. Others drew on their desire to help more generally.

Brian, a former business manager, saw a connection between his management experiences and teaching. He said:

I enjoy the=the concept of helping other people. It's u=even be=when I was in retail I enjoyed helping other people. I guess it's a different realm but (.) oh I guess it's kind of the same thing. I think even as a manager I was helping my employees or I was helping the customers in a helpful type of way and now I think the teaching, you can help, you can still help, it's a different way but you can still help. I like the helping part of it.

(Brian, November 19, 2010)

As a literacy specialist, Brian suggested he would be in a position to help and “control” (November 19, 2010). He said,

Well helping teachers help kids. Like taking that one step further, making sure that teachers=cau=I can, as a teacher, you can control what's in your classroom. But as a teacher teaching teachers, you can control other classrooms. So the whole helping others thing makes, makes that look a little better too. (Brian, November 19, 2010)

Control seemed important to Brian and his work. As noted in the previous chapter, Brian assumed that he would have better classroom behavior management as compared to his female counterparts because of his gender. Sinclair (2004) argued that leadership Discourses in education borrow from management and business thinking.

Angela, with years in the classroom beyond many in the cohort, leaned on her experiences as an English Department Chair to describe herself as able to assume leadership.

Angela asserted:

Um, ((laughs)) I said before it's, um, but I have learned to be a diplomat and I guess that's really key with coaching. Um, because everyone wants to think that what=that they

do things well, including me. And uh, and coaching people you want to encourage what they're doing well and, um, and then find a way to help with what they can do better without making them feel like they're messing up and they're no good at what they're doing and they need to change. And um, /ya/ know people's feelings get hurt an=as well as their, um, professional morale. (January 4, 2011)

As Angela described herself as a diplomat, she referred to herself as "I," in first person. When she described "coaching people," Angela shifted her use of subjects to the second person, "you." Angela's use of subjects may suggest that she did not fully see herself as a literacy coach, yet Angela was among participants who seemed most confident, drawing on a range of teaching experiences. Angela also understood leadership skills to include maintaining morale by serving as a diplomat while encouraging and helping teachers to improve literacy instruction. In some ways her discourses tied to managerial Discourses or dominant ideologies about leadership that focus on "forward progression" or "growth" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 12).

Angela understood helping, in the capacity of the literacy specialist, to be quite powerful. Angela's desire to help prepared her for, what she seemed to understand as, a leadership role. She said,

I still want to be with students, that's still my heart but, um, but I guess I've seen there=that there's great power outside of the single classroom, where I have my students, to empower other people to be doing the same kinds of things in their classrooms and administrators to value that and, um, spread things system wide. (Angela, January 4, 2011)

Angela's use of "power" and "empower" hinted at how she understood the role of the literacy specialist as one in a position of leadership or power (January 4, 2011).

Stacy and Jamie's discourses suggested they were ready to assume roles as literacy specialists, but they did not explicitly explain their leadership skills in the same ways as Brian and Angela. Instead, they expressed a strong desire to help. Stacy positioned this desire as necessary for literacy specialists. She said,

I think I *enjoy* going and talking to people and hearing about their problems and trying to find a solution or finding someone who can find a solution. So I—and I think that's something that a literacy coach has to h=needs to be. They *need* to want to help teachers and find, or at least try to find solutions ((taps table)). (Stacy, August 1, 2010)

Jamie described herself as enacting helping Discourses as a part-time literacy specialist. She articulated the way she “helped them,” meaning her students, with fluency, phonics, and their homework (March 21, 2011).

Brian, Stacy, Jamie, and Angela drew on multiple Discourses to describe how they were ready to assume roles as literacy specialists. All of them suggested they were in a position to help others, despite other (un)certainity. Brian and Angela also had leadership experience that they drew on to position themselves as probable literacy specialists, describing skills and managerial experiences thought to be necessary for such a role. The literature suggests literacy specialists are leaders because they assume responsibility for students' reading achievement in schools. Literacy specialists are suggested to serve, support, and collaborate with students, teachers, administrators, and communities (Bean et al., 2003).

Summary

Most participants seemed (un)certain about whether and how easily they would fit school culture as literacy specialists. They seemed (un)certain about assuming the roles and responsibilities of literacy specialists for a number of reasons. They were finding their fit as

classroom teachers and were concerned about the ways others would read them as beginning literacy specialists (Hall, 2009a, Hall, 2009b). Participants perceived that they needed teaching experience to be valued and respected by other teachers and colleagues as literacy specialists. Some participants also considered their relatively young age factor in the way colleagues would read them. One also considered race and gender as factors that could work against his credibility in such a role. A few participants suggested they were unsure about the attainability of literacy specialist positions. They drew on the literature about the complex roles of literacy specialists, the instability of the positions, their literacy education studies, and the state's pedagogical core.

Despite such (un)certainty, they all saw themselves as possible literacy specialists in the future. Participants who seemed (un)certain about their fit as literacy specialists were more certain about their ability to apply their literacy expertise in the K-12 classroom. Other participants suggested that they intended to immediately pursue positions as literacy specialists. The participants who were more certain about their fit as literacy specialists referenced Discourses as helpers and/or leaders, leaning on experiences that shaped their understanding of what it meant to assume such roles.

Measuring Fit Against Students

As participants figured out their fit as literacy specialists, they seemed to measure themselves against students with whom they worked during the literacy practica. They compared the ways they were alike and different, sometimes drawing on deficit Discourses. Some participants' discourses tied to social constructs surrounding race, class, and gender. Others drew on discourses related to their background, including their schooling and home life, and their experiences as learners and teachers.

Jamie was the only participant who described her race as influencing her relationship with her tutee during the practicum experience. Jamie suggested her identity as mixed-raced positioned her in positive ways with the students she tutored. Jamie said,

I think that just with Ali like I related with her. Just like, you know, I saw a lot of myself in her at a young age and like I was able to just relate with her and like get to her though things that she liked. Like we got, /ya/ know, we did *fashion*, we did Puerto Rico, we did all that kind of stuff and I was able to connect to her in that level. So, you know, I think they [Ali and another student of color] felt comfortable with me knowing that like I was half Black too. Ali was mixed so it was like /kinda/ comfortable, I guess. (March 21, 2011)

Jamie used the subject “we” to describe a mutuality with Ali. Her use of verbs like “related” and “connect” suggested they had an important level of rapport. Other participants may not have reference their race in relation to tutoring relationships because other aspects of the relationships dominated their ways of thinking in their work or because of colorblindness (Frankenberg, 1993), as I discussed in the last chapter.

In contrast to Jamie, Chelsea positioned herself as having a different background and school experiences from the students she worked with in the literacy practica.

Elizabeth: Okay how does being White, English speaking and middle class, um, how did it impact your experiences and your participation in the literacy program?

Chelsea: ((Clears throat)) Um, (..) I guess, um, (.) just like my background, um, throughout=through my schooling may have been different than, um, the schooling of=of the students I was working with in=in the clinics.

Elizabeth: So give me an example, give me an example of that.

Chelsea: Um, (..) uh (chi, chi, chi) maybe, um, (.) I'm trying to think. (..) Maybe the, um, like in my house being out of, um, like I, you know, was surrounded by a lot of books and, um, my parents, you know, would read to me and, um, you know bring me to the library and everything. Maybe their background, maybe they didn't have that. So I can take that into account and not assume that they would be, um, reading at home and having books to read at home and what not. (December 14, 2010)

She used "I" to describe herself as growing up in a literate environment in contrast to "they" who may not have grown up the same way. Chelsea's access to texts reflected her social class. Her intonation included hesitation in the form of pauses and stutters, which suggested she may have been uncomfortable talking about such difference in backgrounds. Her use of the adverb "maybe" also hinted at a hesitation to commit to her assertion, though Chelsea said she valued "recognizing the differences and, um, and wor=you know working through them" (December 14, 2010).

Steph's use of subjects and deictics also positioned her background, home life, and schooling as different compared to the students she tutored in the practicum experiences. Steph's binary of "I"/"me" and "they"/"them" positioned her tutees' backgrounds as not the same as her own. Steph use of deictics "that" and "there" further pointed to contextual differences:

Um, I think it was challenging during tutoring because my background and the two tutees' backgrounds were so different. So sometimes it was hard to (.) like make a connection, um, or *really, really* like understand what their school experience had been like. Even like outside of a classroom, just like at home where it seemed just, like not like it was chaotic or anything like that, but just like there was more kind of to go on.

Like for them being in middle school kind of where I feel like our experiences were kind of (.) different. I feel like, /cause/ I, you kn= like I came from, my mom was always home when I got home from school kind of thing. And so there was always like a very, very, co=I guess it was like kind of comfortable and there was always kind of someone there and it as just very, it was always kind of quieter and /cause/ they had, /ya/ know, at least in the s=in the summer like she had like a whole bunch of brothers and sisters and like half brothers and sisters and stuff. So there's, it seemed like it was always kind of loud. So even just things like that. So sometimes I feel like it was hard for me to relate because I didn't understand kind of what their home life was like. (November 22, 2010)

Steph's language suggested a lack of understanding of her tutee's background, and she acknowledged the "challenge" she faced developing relationships. Steph mixed affective and cognitive statements (e.g., I think..., I feel..., I guess) (Gee & Crawford, 1998) suggested, to me, she was trying to figure out the implications of her social affiliations. She tried to resist deficit Discourse by referring to the tutee's home life as "like not like it was chaotic," yet she framed her home life as "comfortable," "quiet," and, overall, more supportive, differences she referred to were due to social class. This related to Hyland's (2009) findings of a White female teacher who tried to resist but took up deficit Discourses about her students' community.

As an aspiring literacy specialist, Isaiah understood his gender as influencing relationships with students. Isaiah said,

She comes from a single parent home, /ya/ know? Um, I don't know how much of an influence she's had with a male figure or a male model. I, actually, the grandmother told me and a couple other people told me one of the reasons she may be quiet around me, a lot more so, is because I'm a male and I don't, I think she's r=was very, that changed the

dynamic a lot. She's apparently had no positive influences from males. So that allowed me to understand that, you know, just by being who I am I /gotta/ like, uh, that affects the way things are /gonna/ operate on a clinical level or on classroom level. You know, uh, y=you know, kids have eyes to see and basically their life is made up of their experiences so whether, depending on how that's /gonna/ work you know those factors or variables are /gonna/ come into play about who I am, so. (December 29, 2010)

Isaiah described his gender as changing "the dynamic." He suggested his tutee came from a single parent home and lacked positive male role models. This situation or context served as a "challenge" for Isaiah (December 29, 2010). Brockenbrough (2012) problematized such challenges by considering the detriments to Black male teachers positioned to negotiate pressures between being pedagogues and patriarchs. Isaiah remembered that his visual identity markers affected his interactions with students or tutees as he worked to establish rapport with them.

Other participants did not explicitly draw on their social affiliations in describing their relationships with their tutees during the literacy practicum. Jessica drew on her literacy education studies to describe how she was using students' interests to engage them in inquiry topics and reading comprehension strategy work. She said,

Um, and I guess maybe in terms of studies, just knowing that if you could make a connection with them it=it will make it easier. So with Claire especially, finding out what she liked and trying to bring that into what we were doing. (Jessica, November 20, 2010)

Brian and Chelsea used interests they shared with their tutees to build and plan inquiry projects and to establish relationships. Brian drew on "video games," and Chelsea incorporated reading about the "Yankees" in her instruction (Brian, November 19, 2010; Chelsea, July 14, 2010).

Chelsea said she learned during her studies about “bringing in their interests” from students’ “outside lives” (December 14, 2010).

Some participants drew on teaching experiences as they measured their fit against students who participated in the literacy practicum. Lauren credited her special education teaching experience as helpful in establishing a relationship with her tutee, and she drew on her knowledge of focusing and sensory strategies. Both Avery and Angela credited their urban teaching experience as preparation for establishing relationships with tutees. Avery said,

So I guess my=my previous teaching experience was very helpful in kind of dealing, you know ca=there are so many personalities that kids bring to the table and issues and problems. And you know you have to kind of be ready to deal with each thing as it comes along and be flexible. And I think teaching in the city really helped me with that ((laughs)) because it was=I got thrown everything=everything. (December 15, 2010)

Avery used nouns such as “issues” and “problems” to essentialize children in these learning contexts. She described herself as more prepared to deal with issues and problems as a result of her urban teaching experience. Likewise, Angela described her teaching experiences as preparation for negotiating relationships with students who are at a “disadvantage” whether it be economic, academic, or social (January 4, 2011). While feeling more prepared as a result of their teaching experiences, both Avery and Angela drew on deficit Discourses around working with urban youth in ways that positioned them as deficit or lacking (Pennington, 2007).

Summary

Participants seemed to be figuring out who they were as aspiring literacy specialists and, in the process, measured themselves against the students they worked with. One participant suggested her identity as mixed-raced helped her relationships with her students of color. This

seemed to give her confidence as an aspiring literacy specialist. In contrast, other participants positioned themselves as having different backgrounds, home lives, and school experiences than their students. Most participants positioned themselves as literacy specialists like they had as classroom teachers, drawing on differences that seemed primarily related to social class. As in their discussion about teaching more generally, the participants' middle class values and affordances seemed to be perceived as the norm, which marginalizes students without such experiences (Santoro & Allard, 2003). One participant also suggested that his gender changed the dynamics with a female tutee and this could have been related to the way he was positioned as a role model and father figure to her (Brockenbrough, 2012). Other participants drew on language about students' interests and their teaching experiences. Sometimes these discourses reflected deficit perspectives about students' backgrounds that were not "like" their own, much like Hyland (2009) found. These discourses can maintain positions of power and lack empowerment of students and their families (Pennington, 2007).

Measuring Fit Against Peers

Participants also seemed to measure themselves against other aspiring literacy specialists, that is, their colleagues in the cohort. Social class was the most obvious influence on the ways relationships were established, as well as on competition that arose over material possessions (Santoro & Allard, 2003). Participants' comparisons also tied to social constructs related to race and gender. These dynamics seemed to influence their perceptions about what it might be like in the teaching field.

Individuals' middle class status seemed problematic among members in the cohort of graduate students. Stacy, for example, explained how she struggled with the way Avery, in particular, established relationships in the cohort:

Like it's, it got to be where she h=just had so much money and she had so much influence over everybody that it didn't matter what anybody else said because no one was /gonna/ go against her or they would be out of the club. And a=and it's just, that just drove me crazy. And it made me so mad that the people who were in it couldn't see it.

(November 22, 2010)

Stacy seemed to frame Avery as of upper middle class. She asserted that to resist Avery would mean no more invitations to her "parties," "country clubs," or "double dates" after evening graduate classes (Stacy, November 22, 2010). Stacy did not think she could compete because she did not buy gifts for her peers for their upcoming weddings, and she never hosted parties. She said, "Like what do I have to offer her? Nothing. But that to me isn't how friendship really works" (Stacy, November 22, 2010).

Some of Avery's actions excluded some members of the cohort. These behaviors were especially conspicuous when the cohort was given class time in the graduate seminar to work on their program portfolios with the assumption that this work would likely occur during various times through the day and evenings. Participants were figuring out who to work with and where they were going to go. I share notes from my field observations below.

July 26, 2010: As people began to move around and gather materials, Avery said to her selected group, "Let's just stay here." Jessica repeated, "Let's just stay here."

July 27, 2010: Avery said they were going to the campus pub so they could drink and they didn't have a lot of time because it closed at two. Jessica said to Steph, Chelsea, and another individual, "Come on you guys, be followers for once."

July 28, 2010: Avery, Jessica, and another individual prepared to leave the room. They were talking about going swimming. Avery told Jessica she didn't need her suit. Jessica decided she wouldn't go home for it. (Field Notes)

These observations provided details about the social context of these graduate students' studies. Jessica positioned her group as leaders, making a small effort to include others. Avery planned extra-curricular events, like attending happy hour and swimming, but did not invite everyone. Stacy measured her fit by whether or not she was included in these invitations. Other participants did not participate in extracurricular gatherings for various reasons that included work and family obligations. In and out of classes participants were building and negotiating identities in relation to one another (Gee, 2011).

Some participants wanted to share details with me about the competitive group dynamics. My first interview with Jessica ended this way:

Elizabeth: Is there anything else you want to add or tell me?

Jessica: ((Laughs)) Is there anything you want to hear about^? The whole situation with ((laughs)).

Elizabeth: Oh, if you want to talk about your cohort you can. (July 21, 2010)

It seemed that Jessica knew I was aware of the conflict, and she wished to tell me more about it.

Jessica hypothesized that finances contributed to the social strife in the cohort. Jessica described a struggle between Stacy and Avery over "material beliefs and spending habits" (July 21, 2010). She suggested Avery asserted a financial identity as: "I like nice things^, and I work hard to get what I want^" (Jessica, July 21, 2010). Jessica described a time, during the fall semester, that she and some other members of the cohort traveled to a nearby high-end home decorating store when they had a day off from class. She said that Avery purchased costly home

décor. Stacy was flabbergasted, noting, “That money could be spent to like feed *twenty* kids in Africa^” (Jessica, July 21, 2010). This language was racially charged and related to financial status.

Jamie and others also noticed such class-related cohort struggles. Jamie shared an anecdote from the fall semester regarding a conflict that arose over engagement ring size between the only two married, full-time graduate students in the cohort, Stacy and Avery. The details arose from my line of questioning: “What is your relationship like in that cohort?” Jamie unpacked the relationships of the group, specifically around Avery’s issue with Stacy’s social class. Jamie reported that Avery referred to Stacy as “White trash” (July 30, 2010).

There was a big fight over the ring status because Avery’s ring is bigger than Stacy’s ring, and somebody said something about the ring and Stacy was like, ‘Oh, well I couldn’t get a big ring because I got a car.’ (Jamie, July 30, 2010)

Isaiah also reported, “Like I heard people say, like, like, Stacy was White trash. Which is just I, that’s horrible but that’s what I heard” (December 29, 2010). The deficit connotations associated with “White trash” positioned Stacy as White and poor. This seemed to be an example of the way class, like other social affiliations, can operate to exclude those who are not part of the dominant group that share normative perspectives (Santoro & Allard, 2003). On top of that, members of the cohort measured one another’s ring size to gauge their fit.

Jamie was one of the only participants who explicitly referenced her racial background as influencing her relationships within the cohort of graduate students. This finding is similar to Haddix’s (2012) study that found non-dominant students had to be purposeful about their enactments in the teacher education classroom. I asked Jamie, “So what about your background or your studies seemed to affect your relationships in the cohort?” She described her background

as “subconsciously” influencing her relationships. However, Jamie described herself as having overt conversations with Isaiah about race and the ways their peers read them. Jamie explained,

I know Isaiah and I both talked about how we felt incompetent at times, so that we had to prove ourselves harder because we were the only minorities in the group. Like *that* kind of thing, /cause/ people kind of questioned us. (March 21, 2011)

Jamie described herself as growing up having never experienced “injustice or like felt a certain type of way because of like the color of my skin or anything like that” (July 30, 2010). Incidents of racism and prejudice seemed new to Jamie, something she reported first experiencing as an undergraduate in college. Perhaps this attributed to her confidence as an aspiring literacy specialist.

Members of the cohort also measured themselves against one another according to their social constructions related to gender. Stacy and Avery were the only participants who shared aspirations of parenthood and child rearing at home, taking time off from teaching. Stacy explained, “I mean my=my number one goal is to be a stay-at-home mom while my kids are=are young” (July 15, 2010). She was in the process of devising a plan to be able to financially make her goals attainable. Stacy added, “So it’s like I need to get a job so that I can, you know, start a family. And it’s all just like *very heavy*” (July 15, 2010). Avery also had a personal and work life plan that included having babies and staying home with them:

Um (.) my ^plan is=is eventually I=we’re to have children in the next two or three years, three years probably. And um I’d like to take time off to be home (.) with my kids (.) at least, that’s in my mind right now. My husband would like that as well. Um (.) so that’s what I’d *like to do*. And then kind of pick up, I’d like to move to the reading teacher position *after* that. (Avery, July 15, 2010)

Biklen (1995) described such commitments to teaching and motherhood from a sociological perspective, suggesting these teachers aspired to balance teaching responsibilities on the fulcrum of family life.

Stacy and Avery also invoked various heteronormative Discourses that were observable during the graduate seminar. On the first day of class the students introduced themselves and mentioned one thing s/he had done since the last time the cohort was together. Stacy and Avery were the only two to talk about their married lives. Stacy first described herself as having taken a class, bought a house, started demolition on the house, and adopted kittens. Avery described herself as having done some kitchen remodeling, landscaping, and celebrating her one year wedding anniversary (Field Notes, July 6, 2010).

Lauren and Angela were also married but seemed less “affected” by the competitive group dynamics because they were part-time students with other responsibilities (Angela, January 4, 2011). They were in and out of several cohorts during the years of their studies. Lauren described herself as feeling “disconnected” and “guilty” (August 12, 2010). She said,

But you just feel like=like well, you feel bad that you have experience and you have a job when they're sitting here and they're worried about, 'What am I going to do after this? Um I have no experience,' and things like that. And um (.) finding someone that is in the same situation with kids and the full-time job and trying to leave school and get here on time and then go home and be a mom and things like that. So I=they just=it's hard to relate to where they are. (Lauren, August 12, 2010)

Lauren's use of pointing words (e.g., I, they, here, this, that, then) highlighted her disconnection from the cohort. She recognized she did not fit as a result of her life experiences and time to degree completion.

Lauren and Angela drew on their teaching, marriage, and parenting experiences to offer “advice” (Lauren, January 14, 2011) and “counsel” (Angela, January 4, 2011) to their peers. They described the role as “mama” of the group as helping them really think their learning through (Angela, January 4, 2011). Lauren said, “Um, I think because=because I had experience, um, I think I probably felt a little bit more confident sharing, um, sharing that experience. And I think maybe they felt comfortable coming to me with questions” (January 14, 2011). Lauren did not see herself in a “leadership role but almost like a motherly role” (January 14, 2011).

Both male participants struggled with belonging to this predominately female cohort. Brian called himself an “outcast,” (July 14, 2010) and Isaiah referred to himself as “an outlier” (December 29, 2010). Brian described the way he thought the females misread his intentions to “get you drunk” or “take you home,” a sexual reference of a man taking advantage of a woman (July 14, 2010). From the onset of Brian’s studies, about his membership among his female peers he said,

So there=there’s this class of girls=of future educators. And now there’s this guy that comes in, trying to make friends, trying to say, ‘Hey, what’s up? What’s going on? How’s it going?’ ‘Well who are you? You’re the new kid. You’re older than us? What do you want to do with us?’ So I was like this outcast right from the beginning when I transferred here, which was funny (.) to me. *Oh yeah.* (Brian, July 14, 2010)

Brian’s discourse included repeated phrases, pauses, and emphasis that he was an “outcast.”

Brian’s situation seemed even more complex because he was older, as noted in the explanation above, than most members of his cohort as he pursued a second career.

Brian and Isaiah did not see themselves as fitting in what they described as “factions or cliques” (Isaiah, July 22, 2010) or “Team Edward or Team Jacob” (Brian, November 19, 2010), an intertextual reference to the popular text *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). They leaned toward identifying the social conflict as “a female thing” (Isaiah, July 22, 2010). Brian said, “I felt—I felt kind of out of it though, being a male, because everyone, I mean besides Isaiah, everyone was female so you have the little cliquy thing” (November 19, 2010).

Isaiah, however, felt the brunt of an attack, and he related this to his gender and race:

(.) I don’t know if it’s also I’m a male and that I’m a male of color. I don’t really like to put the color card on the table SOMETIMES, but it’s been really challenging for me dealing with a lot of these people. A lot of those girls have been very unkind to me like in a snide way. (July 22, 2010)

Isaiah’s use of subjects positioned him as “I” and the females in the cohort as “those girls”/ “these girls.” Isaiah described the way the females were unkind with gossip and backbiting comments. He added, “I’ve heard a lot of *garbage* talked” (Isaiah, July 22, 2010). While Isaiah did not elaborate on what it was that the females said that was offensive, he hypothesized why he did not fit, “But I think the thing that it was=was like, I never made merry with them” (July 22, 2010). He added,

But I—I was a male primarily. I think that that was a big thing. Like I just didn’t have a big common ground with them on that level. They invited me t=in the beginning a lot to like go to these happy hour things, um, and I never really did. I had a, I would always be doing something on Thursday nights. Like I would go to this on campus ministry thing. It’s not like I just decided *not* to. Um, but you know, I have different values and there’s nothing wrong with having a drink or whatever but I think that they really, because

tha=there was like a jelling point at that point and I wasn't in on that. (Isaiah, December 29, 2010)

Isaiah's identity centered upon religion. One may assert that members of the cohort could have been critical of his strong religious values. As noted in the previous chapter, Avery identified being "super religious" as "creepy," and Isaiah had made his religious identity available to the cohort (July 15, 2010).

Ultimately, the cohort's dynamics impacted the male participants' positions and their ideas about the landscape of teaching. Brian, Isaiah, and Stacy, too, seemed concerned that what they described as "unprofessional" (Brian, November 19, 2010) or "*ridiculous*" (Isaiah, December 29, 2010) behavior would reflect who fit, not only in the graduate school classroom, but also in teaching positions. Isaiah said,

And so I was really hoping, and thank God my hope came true, that the professional setting wasn't like this. I was like damn. I can't have colleagues like this, *this is crazy*. Thanks be to God they aren't and if they are, I don't know them in that level. (December 29, 2010)

Isaiah's emphasis on "this is crazy" highlighted just how unnerving the social conflict was.

Both male participants expected their colleagues, other members of the cohort, would behave differently. Brian said,

Like someone is up there talking, presenting, they put time into what they're doing, you're /gonna/ turn your back and roll your eyes every time a certain person talks. And as much as one person would say they don't do it, everyone saw them do it. Like it's not, it wasn't a surprise. (November 19, 2010)

Brian was concerned about the ways such behavior would work in the context of K-12 schools with experienced teachers. He did not think it would settle well.

Sometimes I observed the behaviors Brian described during the graduate seminar. I noticed eye rolling (Field Notes, July 7; July 13, 2010), and I saw members of the cohort writing notes or whispering to one another (Field Notes, July 28; August 3, 2010). Perhaps most overtly, I recorded an instance in my field notes when:

Stacy offered a peer coaching suggestion about knowing students' reading levels because that is really important. Avery made a face as if she was about to burst out laughing.

Jessica covered her own mouth. To the whole class, Avery offered, 'Cause what Stacy said to me is, duh.' (Field Notes, July 28, 2010).

Several months later, in an interview, Stacy brought up this incident.

You know it's—it's hard to focus on something when something else is so in your face all the time and you have to face that person every day for however many weeks it was. To have to, /ya/ know, sit there and—and you know have them, you know, insult you. Like that one day in clinic when I like made a suggestion to that one group and then she like completely tried to make me look like an idiot in front of everybody. /Ya/ know, but it's just something that you h—that you think about every single time that you think about your job or you think about your schoolwork. You know, that's in the back of your mind. (November 22, 2010)

The group dynamics had left a lasting impression on Stacy and were, yet, another reason she decided to hold off on applying for teaching positions. Stacy suggested she “needed a break” (November 22, 2010).

Jamie suggested that another layer that complicated the group dynamics was that members of the group were competing for the same jobs because they were looking for jobs in the same communities during conservative economic times. Jamie said,

Um, I think we had a lot of strong, strong personalities in that cohort and I think a lot of competitive times at a *competitive* time in the job market. /Ya/ know? It's all during the r—we're in recession for that year pretty bad and people were struggling for jobs, struggling for, /ya/ know, each instructor's approval. (March 21, 2011)

Her shifting contours highlighted the “competitive” nature of the group. Steph reported that people were competitive and “that’s *why* it didn’t work,” meaning the group did not “mesh” well (August 5, 2010). Almost all participants shared concern related to the group dynamics in this regard, including Brian, Stacy, Avery, Jamie, Steph, Jessica, and Isaiah. As noted above, Lauren and Angela, the mothers and full-time teachers, were less concerned with the group dynamics. Chelsea, however, did not talk about the group at all.

Summary

As participants figured out their fit as literacy specialists, they measured themselves against one another. Social class seemed to cause the most social struggle, driving the way relationships were established (Santoro & Allard, 2003). One participant described her race as influencing her relationships with colleagues, similar to Haddix’s (2012) findings. Gendered discourses also seemed important. Both male participants described themselves as not fitting the predominately female cohort because of their gender. Mothers who were part-time students also found themselves on the periphery of the social conflict among the cohort of graduate students.

These findings are important to consider when thinking about the future work of aspiring literacy specialists. The literature suggests that literacy specialists, regardless of the ways their

roles are positioned (e.g., coaches, interventionists, specialists, supervisors), “support teachers” (Bean et al., 2012, p. 3). One might expect this would require establishing collegial relationships. In the context of this study, instead, they measured themselves against one another, drawing on their (un)certainly about who they were as raced, classed, and gendered beings.

Conclusion

The findings in Chapter Five suggest participants were assessing how they would fit as literacy specialists. Their discourses revealed varying degrees of (un)certainly. They measured their fit against students and other aspiring literacy specialists while drawing on a variety of aspects of their backgrounds and lives.

Participants described their initial reasons for studying literacy education. Their reasons included desire to know more about effective literacy instruction or to be a more marketable candidate for teaching positions. Other reasons included following in a mentor teacher’s footsteps or learning the rules of the English language.

Given their reasons for studying literacy education, it is no surprise that these participants expressed (un)certainly about becoming literacy specialists. A few participants’ discourses suggested they were still figuring out their fit as teachers. Some thought they might be read as inexperienced because of their age and race. Some participants also seemed (un)certain about assuming positions as literacy specialists because of the state of the economy and its effects on the job market.

In spite of participants’ (un)certainly, they all thought they may pursue positions as literacy specialists in the future. Most saw themselves as better prepared to teach literacy in the classroom. They drew on what they had learned during their graduate studies as shaping their identities, and a few participants drew on additional observations of literacy specialists in K-12

schools. In their view, four were ready to assume positions as literacy specialists immediately. These participants drew on helping and/or leadership Discourses to describe their fit as literacy specialists, suggesting how they could enact power or control while helping students and teachers.

Participants seemed to measure their fit against the students that they worked with in the practicum. One participant described how her identity as mixed-raced made her relationship with her tutees comfortable. Two participants positioned themselves as having different backgrounds, or class related experiences, compared to tutees, and one described this as making it hard to connect to students. One male suggested his gender influenced the social dynamics with his female tutee. Others drew on discourses about students' interests or their own experiences as teachers or learners to describe the ways they forged relationships. Participants' discourses sometimes drew on deficit perspectives by positioning others' backgrounds as different from their own.

Participants also measured their fit against others in the cohort of graduate students. Several participants described competitive group dynamics that they attributed to conflict over social class. One participant described her mixed race as influencing her relationships in the cohort. Participants' gendered discourses also seemed to operate to include and exclude some, with both males and mothers less involved in the social dynamics. Overall, most members of this cohort of graduate students worried such dynamics were reflective of the teaching field.

This chapter highlighted the (un)certainly participants' discourses revealed about becoming literacy specialists. They measured this fit against their understandings of the politics of school, the economy, students, and each other. Their sense of fit or belonging was embedded in a variety of discourses, including deficit Discourses, which in turn, included and excluded

some, particularly their students and colleagues. I highlighted the ways their sense of belonging was connected to the ways they interacted, learned, and taught. In the next chapter, I discuss these findings, and those of Chapter Four, and offer implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

This study explored the identities of 10 students who were completing their Literacy Education MS studies to gain certification as literacy specialists. My research questions asked: 1) What do beginning literacy specialists' discourses reveal about their evolving identities? 2) On what discourses do they draw? 3) How are situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated? In this chapter, I summarize the findings of this study and discuss the significance of these findings in the context of current and relevant research. I also address the limitations of this study and discuss implications for future research and literacy specialist education.

Summary

Participants anchored much of their talk about the desire to study literacy education and to become literacy specialists in dialogue about their fit as teachers and, sometimes, people more generally. Chapter Four: Participants Weigh Their Fit as Teachers and People: "You'd Think That I Would Fit in Just Fine," explored this idea in more detail. Participants seemed to be sorting out who they were and where they belonged in schools and in the world.

Participants' reasons for becoming K-12 teachers seemed important to the ways they weighed whether they were suited to be teachers. Their reasons varied, with six participants sharing family histories that included teachers, and four sharing that there were teachers in their families. Others recalled memories of playing school and always wanting to be a teacher. Two others described a desire to become a teacher to change students' lives.

Their discourses revealed that, despite desires to be teachers, more than half of the participants seemed (un)certain about how they would fit this role. These participants were all beginning or early career teachers, and they showed (un)certainty as they weighed their career

choices, figured out the kinds of teachers they aspired to be, and questioned their ability to handle the politics of teaching. They drew on discourses tied to the economy, the social status of teaching, ideas about what it meant to be a teacher, and the politics associated with teaching, such as weathering hierarchical relationships and standards for success imposed by various institutions.

More than half of the participants also drew on dominant cultural Discourses about what it means to be a good teacher (Moore, 2004). They referred to institutional contexts, such as schools, to describe teachers who were influential to their identities. They described these teachers as good models because they were warm, caring, loving, and taught life lessons. Participants similarly saw themselves as sharing attributes of these good teachers, referring to their ability to build rapport with students and serve as advocates for them. A few also identified themselves as good teachers because they were outgoing, passionate, and determined. Several drew on their administrators' teacher evaluations as evidence that they were competent or effective. Some suggested their teacher education was a source of their skill.

Participants' discourses revealed their (un)certainly about their fit as people more generally. Participants' race, class, gender, age, and religion shaped how they saw themselves, although most lacked awareness about the ways these affiliations affected their teaching. Several used deficit Discourses to position themselves relative to others, including potential students.

Only three participants drew on discourses about their racial identities as influencing their interactions with colleagues including school administrators. Others seemed (un)certain about the role race might play in their teaching, with several conflating it with their cultural backgrounds, a colorblindness common to many White people (Frankenberg, 1993). Two

participants described themselves as exploring the implications of their racial identities, yet they also used deficit Discourses to position others as deficient or lacking.

All participants identified themselves as middle class, and yet some were viewed as significantly better off or more privileged than others. Nearly all of them did not consider the ways their status could impact their teaching. Two participants suggested their middle class status could be helpful to K-12 students who were lesser off financially and, perhaps, ethnically and linguistically. One noticed how class positioned students in schools. Some participants described rich affordances that were traceable to social class. None wondered how their middle class values might marginalize those, including students, who did not have the same experiences or affordances.

Participants' discourses revealed they were most aware of gendered discourses associated with teaching. One male suggested his gender would be advantageous in the K-12 classroom where he would be able to manage student behaviors better than his female counterparts, even though he saw female teachers as more nurturing. Females described their fit as teachers as historically and socially acceptable for women. Two participants described the ways being both mothers and teachers influenced their home and work lives, adding to their confidence about building relationships with their own children and students.

Almost half of participants described their relatively young age as a variable that would impact the ways they would be positioned as teachers in K-12 schools. One participant suggested that her current colleagues read her as not competent because she was young. Another thought her young age made it hard to establish relationships with older, experienced colleagues.

Two participants identified themselves as religious people, and this seemed central to their identities. Their religious Discourse took on a missionary tone that included loving

students and changing their lives. These individuals saw connections between their religious values and teaching. Some other participants suggested that church played a role in shaping their identities, but to somewhat of a lesser degree.

In Chapter Five, *Participants Weigh Their Fit as Literacy Specialists: “I’m Not Too Confident as a Literacy Specialist,”* I reported on the ways participants were gauging their fit as literacy specialists, showing relative (un)certainty. Participants drew on their reasons for studying literacy education in the first place, which included improving their abilities to provide classroom literacy instruction, to be more marketable teacher candidates, and for other various reasons. At the conclusion of their studies, they all described changes in the ways they saw themselves as teachers and as literacy specialists.

Even though participants perceived themselves as changed as a result of their studies, their discourses revealed (un)certainty about their fit as literacy specialists. As I described, they were still figuring out who they were as classroom teachers. They were concerned about the ways others would read them as literacy specialists, due to their age or race. Some participants also expressed (un)certainty about attaining one of, what they perceived as, the few available literacy specialist positions given the fragile economy and job market.

While participants expressed (un)certainty, they all perceived themselves as possible literacy specialists in the future. Most understood themselves to be better prepared to teach literacy in their classrooms. A few saw themselves as ready to be literacy specialists, drawing on Discourses as helpers and/or leaders to describe why they would fit as literacy specialists. They were ready to help students and teachers, as well as to assume roles as program leaders.

Participants seemed to measure their fit as literacy specialists by their abilities to work with students in the literacy practica. One participant described her identity as mixed-raced as

helpful in establishing relationships with some students. Two others suggested that they had different social class backgrounds from their students, using deficit Discourses when they suggested that such difference made it hard to relate to students. One male suggested his gender negatively impacted his relationship with a female student. Other participants did not address race, class, or gender overtly when discussing relationships with students, drawing on students' interests and their own teaching and learning experiences instead.

Participants also seemed to measure their fit as potential literacy specialists against one another in the cohort. Seven participants expressed concern over unsettled dynamics within the group. Many attributed the dynamics to issues related to social class competition. One participant suggested her race subconsciously influenced how her expertise was seen and, thus, her relationships with colleagues. Both male participants suggested they did not fit in the predominately female cohort. The mothers also found themselves on the periphery of the social conflicts that erupted in this cohort of aspiring literacy specialists. Participants expressed concern that the competitive group's dynamics could be reflective of the teaching field, perhaps a context that might be more challenging for literacy specialists whose work includes supporting teachers (Bean et al., 2012).

(Un)certainty

This study, like others, recognizes (un)certainty as part of the process of being a teacher, literacy specialist, and human being (Britzman, 2007; Helsing, 2007; Farnsworth, 2010). Other researchers referred to the uncertainty or dilemma that teachers face as a result of conflicts of personal values and work expectations as "sites of disequilibrium" (Cook, 2009, p. 277), "identity conflicts" (Olsen, 2008, p. 37), and "narratives of tension" (Alsup, 2006, p. 51). Taken together, these findings suggest experiencing conflict, tension, and (un)certainty are part of the

process of building identities as teachers and as literacy specialists. For participants in the present study, however, (un)certainty was complicated by their specific context. They were earning additional endorsement as literacy specialists. All showed (un)certainty about some things and certainty about others, suggesting (un)certainty is unavoidable.

(Un)certain literacy specialists' discourses might espouse equity, while, at the same time essentializing other people. As I discussed in the literature review, researchers understand teacher uncertainty in two ways. Uncertainty may cause practitioners to be more reflective (Helsing, 2007). Uncertainty can be understood as a dilemma that results in negative teacher emotions such as anxiety, frustration, burnout, and poor teaching. Poor teaching quality can be associated with pedagogical practices that perpetuate the status quo, which is widely thought to contribute to the achievement gap (Lee & Anderson, 2009). These participants' habit of positioning themselves by drawing on deficit and essentializing Discourses to weigh their (un)certainty suggests that they may participate in perpetuating the status quo.

Some participants did not discuss race, class, or gender. Their absence of talk does not suggest that they will not participate in perpetuating systems of inequity. The ways that colorblind and other more socially aware participants took up deficit Discourses were, likely, unconscious and unintentional.

Many participants described entering the literacy education graduate program to be more marketable teacher candidates, with little or no intentions of ever being literacy specialists in schools. The title of literacy specialist seemed to hold some clout because it indicated expertise in literacy instruction. At the same time, this endorsement seemed to complicate matters because it also prepared participants to be school leaders and literacy coaches. Some, with (un)certainty, toyed with this identity—especially at a time when jobs, in general, were hard to find. They had

to figure out what identities they would assume: teacher, literacy specialist, or a hybrid of the two, and how they would balance this with other aspects of living their lives.

The social status associated with teaching was pervasive in participants' language. Participants described the decision to be teachers as a choice, and they justified their fit to the field despite its status as a less-than-prestigious role. Participants' perceptions about the ways others would read them were rooted in many conventional discourses about teaching. Larsen (2010) described the discourses in this way, "Teaching was viewed as a refuge for the old and destitute who have failed at their previous occupations(s) or had experienced misfortunate, misconduct or indolence took up teaching as the last resort" (p. 221). Some participants clarified teaching was not a last resort option for them.

Participants expressed (un)certainty about the kinds of teachers they wanted to be or the personas they hoped to enact. These findings match Cook's (2009) work that suggested beginning English teachers experienced uncertainty, or disequilibrium, when figuring out the kinds of teachers they wanted to be. She suggested the first-year teachers negotiated their teacher identities, personal identities, and students' identities (Cook, 2009). Cook (2009) noted teachers made theatrical references (e.g., wearing a mask) to describe negotiating their teacher persona. Another site of disequilibrium included negotiating relationships with students while maintaining authoritative boundaries. These kinds of disequilibrium or (un)certainty seem typical for beginning teachers as they shift from being students to teachers, a tension Alsup (2006) also noticed. The shift in identity from student to teacher, and context from the university to classroom, forces one to consider where they belong.

Participants questioned their ability to handle the politics of teaching, ranging from weathering complex school staff relationships to being accountable for students' scores on

standardized assessments. Olsen's (2008) findings also suggested that beginning English teachers experienced identity conflicts as a result of politics including top-down mandates, prescriptive curricula, and teacher accountability measures. It makes sense, on the heels of federal policies associated with No Child Left Behind (2002) and Race to the Top (2009) that participants in the present study experienced (un)certainty in this regard.

Participants were preparing to enter the context of schools inherently designed to prevent uncertainty with bureaucratic rules, regulations, and policies (Ponticell, 2003). They knew it would not yield positive outcomes to hint at any (un)certainty in the context of K-12 schools or even in a job interview that would announce, "I'm not sure I will be highly effective." Negotiating their identities in this context was more complicated for those applying for positions as literacy specialists, where they were trying on identities that demanded leadership skills in addition to teaching skills. Participants were trying to be marketable, yet they were not sure they really were.

Some participants' discourses suggested they felt they were still learning as classroom teachers and were, therefore, not ready or experienced enough to take on literacy specialist positions because of the leadership responsibilities. This makes sense given that six participants had no teaching experience beyond student teaching as undergraduates. Institutional documents, such as the International Reading Association's (IRA) *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2004, 2010), expect that reading specialists will have previous teaching experience. This is likely because of the leadership responsibilities literacy specialists may assume under titles as reading intervention teachers, literacy coaches, or reading supervisors or coordinators (IRA, 2004). The state in which this study took place, however, required all teachers to have master's degrees within the first five years after initial certification. This creates a context where many

teachers pursuing advanced studies, such as literacy education, do not have substantial teaching experience.

Participants' discourses could be traced to the state's pedagogical core that focuses on understanding of the reading process. The pedagogical core outlines that a certified literacy specialist will have: 1) Knowledge of theories of literacy development and individual differences; 2) Proficiency providing instruction and assessment in cooperation with other school staff; 3) Proficiency in organizing and enhancing literacy programs (State Education Department, 1998). Not included are requirements to reflect on and, perhaps, deconstruct one's preconceived notions about working with children or adults that are not "like" oneself. Such time-consuming identity work is not easily defended in contexts driven by efficiencies of a "time costs money" (in terms of credit hours) mentality.

Participants were also (un)certain about how they may be received as aspiring literacy specialists by colleagues. Although not specific to literacy specialists, this finding best aligns with Hall's (2009a, 2009b) studies. Hall (2009a, 2009b) found preservice elementary teachers, despite reading about culturally responsive pedagogy in book clubs, would base their actions in practice on what they believed was acceptable by their colleagues. They were willing to marginalize students and compromise instruction to fit in and be identified as good teachers (Hall, 2009a). This suggests it is important to teachers and literacy specialists to fit in the dominant discourses circulating schools about what it means to be good teachers. Peers' impressions matter and influence individuals' understanding of the ways they do and do not fit. The participants in the present study who expressed concerns about the ways that may be read as inexperienced, young, or by race could be susceptible to conforming to fit in with other teachers.

Participants experienced (un)certainty about their career choices, teacher personas, politics they may encounter in schools, how they might fit as teachers, and the ways they may be read as such. Their (un)certainty could be situated in the preservice teacher identity literature because they were, like most new teachers, at a similar life juncture with minimal teaching experiences. These findings suggest that (un)certainty is unavoidable. These individuals, though, were dealing with this (un)certainty as teachers while figuring out who they were (or might be) as literacy specialists. This context added complexity to their teacher identities compared to preservice elementary and beginning English teachers (e.g., Alsup, 2006; Cook, 2009; Hall, 2009a, 2009b; Olsen, 2008).

Discourses

Participants drew on good teacher Discourse to report themselves as having attributes and personality traits associated with charismatic teachers. Many drew on past experiences of observations in K-12 schools of teachers being loving, student-centered, warm, and caring, and they had aspirations to share these traits. Half of the participants drew on personality traits rather than their knowledge of teaching or literacy instruction to describe themselves as good teachers. Similarly, Ng and colleagues (2009) found that preservice teachers perceived effective teachers as having a charismatic persona including attributes such as being caring, patient, friendly, enthusiastic, approachable, and compassionate, rather than as knowledgeable.

Good teacher Discourses reflect the popular images of teachers in the mass media (e.g., television, movies, books, songs, or other media). Larsen (2010) explained how these images of charismatic teachers as idealistic, inspirational, and committed to saving disadvantaged students, are rooted in the supposed deficiencies of the students, their upbringing, and skills. Educators who draw on these Discourses during instructional planning often unknowingly feel sorry for

students and lower standards and expectations, perpetuating uneven opportunities (Comber & Kamler, 2004; Lee & Anderson, 2009).

Overreliance on charismatic and caring good teacher Discourses can also discount the complexities of teaching. This is not to suggest it is wrong to be a charismatic teacher. Yet there is a fine line between being idealistic, inspirational, and committed and positioning students as deficient. These Discourses overemphasize moral qualities of teaching while underemphasizing teaching knowledge and techniques (Larsen, 2010; Moore, 2004). Larsen (2010) explained that this dichotomy ignores the complex, contextualized nature of teaching. One may assume this might be more complex for literacy specialists who take on roles not only as teachers but also school leaders (Bean et al., 2003).

Participants also drew on other dominant Discourses about what it means to be a good teacher. When participants drew on their teacher education as a source of learning they suggested that they were trained, skilled craftspeople (Moore, 2004). Some participants used language about competence and effectiveness or drew on teacher evaluation measures to suggest they were good teachers. This language can be tied to government policies such as No Child Left Behind (2002) or Race to the Top (2009).

The context of teacher education seems to be a suitable space for teachers to interrogate their assumptions about what it means to be a good teacher. This may include interrogating the ways the essentializing rhetoric of society is embedded in identities and Discourses. Perhaps such a space would help teachers figure out who they are as teachers and where they best fit without the need to position others as deficient. This kind of identity work may be especially important for literacy specialists who may assume roles as leaders that could lead other teachers out of their oppressive discourses.

Most participants drew on helping Discourses. Helping Discourses can be well intentioned, but there is a fine line between helping and positioning others as deficient and needing help. Helping Discourses can be problematic when they invoke traditional social hierarchies tied to race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality. Tied to religious Discourses, these Discourses privilege colonized practices of dominant European Americans that viewed others as having deficiencies (Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, & Suda, 2012; Cockrell et al., 1999; Marx & Pennington, 2003; Subedi, 2006). Such Discourses can lead to uneven expectations and opportunities for students and colleagues who do not come from similar backgrounds (Rubin, 2008).

As evident in this study, teachers often use helping Discourses. Helping can be a privileged Discourse of teaching, a Discourse that suggests teachers have the knowledge and power to help those less than themselves (Pennington, 2007). Sometimes helping Discourses are admirable and foster important work. Yet sometimes when teachers take up such Discourses they are not critical or reflective of their own limitations, and they may then fail to see the strengths students can bring to the classroom. This can be the cost of helping Discourses.

Participants also drew on Discourse about leadership. The participants who saw themselves best suited to be literacy specialists drew on their leadership experiences to describe their preparedness for the roles. Some of their discourses were traceable to management or business thinking (Sinclair, 2004). The literature on literacy specialists' work highlighted the need for leadership skills (e.g., Bean, et al., 2003). The IRA's *Standards for Reading Professionals* (2010) reflect this literature and contain language that suggests literacy specialists must have leadership knowledge and skills. Literacy specialists may assume duties under a number of titles such as reading intervention teachers, reading coaches or literacy coaches, or

reading supervisors or reading coordinators. These duties might include leading a school's literacy program, leading professional development programs, and leading in student advocacy efforts. It makes sense that students saw leadership as a necessary skill for literacy specialists since it is outlined in institutional documents and the research literature.

Race, Class, Gender, Age, and Religion

A significant finding in this study was that, as beginning literacy specialists figured out where they best fit, they measured themselves against students and their peers or other aspiring literacy specialists. As participants measured themselves against students in the literacy practicum and their peers, they drew on social constructs related to race, class, and gender. They seemed to be maintaining or developing social affiliations with groups with shared Discourses (Gee, 2005).

Participants who did not fit the "norm" as White women worked especially hard to find their fit. Both mixed-raced participants described their race as influencing their role as teachers. The mixed-raced male participant described himself as respected and valued in schools, yet his language suggested that he needed to justify his fit as a male and mixed-raced teacher. He was aware that Black males represented about 1% of the teaching population and that such disparities call for more teachers of color in the field. Scholars have problematized this view in the literature by critically examining discourses that position Black male teachers as role models and father figures (Brockenbrough, 2012).

The mixed-raced female participant described many ways her race impacted her work as a teacher. She thought others viewed her as a token when her administrators called on her to teach students about African American culture, a culture that she referred to using deficit terminology. At the same time, she identified herself as a role model for female students of

color. This tension in her discourse suggested that she was figuring out her identity as a mixed-race female who grew up in an upper middle class suburban context. She seemed to be figuring out her own Blackness, especially since she just started encountering incidents of racism as an adult. She found comfort in working with students who were like her, from a mixed-raced background. Teaching students like her gave her confidence about her work as an aspiring literacy specialist.

In the context of her studies, she felt that her race “subconsciously” impacted her interactions with her peers. In the graduate classroom, she suggested she and the only other participant of color had to work harder to be read as intelligent because of their race. These findings were supported by Haddix’s (2012) study which found that Black females were positioned “in the margins” in the context of teacher education (p. 171). Haddix (2012) asserted that the context of teacher education often privileges enactments of White students. She found racially and linguistically non-dominant students have to be purposeful about their enactments in the classroom. Taken together, these findings are problematic because they suggest that individuals of color began their careers by feeling marginalized in the context of higher education.

Most participants did not consider the implications of their culture, which they conflated with race. Two participants identified themselves as lacking culture, as “boring.” This fits with research suggesting that White, female, middle class teachers often lack a sense of selves as cultural beings (Haddix, 2008; LaDuke, 2009; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2008). Some did not discuss their race or its implications for teaching. This silence about race is important to acknowledge, since Whiteness positions one as a member of the dominant racial group in a way that marginalizes others’ identities (Frankenberg, 1993).

Two participants expressed how they were exploring the implications of their backgrounds, yet they used deficit and/or helping Discourses when describing its meaning to them. Their use of helping Discourses suggested they were in an advantaged enough position to help those less fortunate, or “disadvantaged.” They both seemed to conflate geography, culture, and race by “othering” students. These participants were willing to explore discourses of race where others might shy away from exploring their identities, particularly when it comes to issues of White privilege and racism (Mosley, 2010). Some researchers refer to exploring identity or the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of others as social perspective taking (SPT) (Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Wang, 2012). These two participants were willing to explore this even though they lacked the language to explain this without othering students. These findings should prompt a discussion about how teacher educators encourage teachers to explore their own identities and engage in SPT, as well as how they help them to do this without positioning themselves in opposition to others.

All participants identified as middle class, which seemed to mean different things to different people. One recognized the ways students in the school where he taught positioned themselves and one another by class. Two participants acknowledged that their class was helpful because they could afford to buy things for their classroom, like snacks for “at-risk” students who might not have the same affordances at home. These discourses combined deficit and mothering Discourses, which positioned the teacher as a moral authority and the student as in need of help (James, 2012); deficit labels such as “at-risk” are often used to indicate ethnic and linguistic deficiencies (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Neither of these participants were aware of how their class positions might yield unequal instructional opportunities for students. Middle-

classness also is a normative construct and remains largely unexamined by those who share similar middle class lived experiences (Santoro & Allard, 2003).

Sometimes participants' enactments were traceable to social class though they did not refer to them as such. Three participants described establishing relationships as challenging because their backgrounds were different compared to the students and related to their unacknowledged social class enactments. Research indicates that this happens with teachers, but the present findings suggest literacy teacher educators also need to prepare literacy specialists to work with students that they perceive as "different" compared to themselves (Pennington, 2007). Interrogating discourses around difference could be beneficial.

This study also highlighted social conflict that occurred among the cohort of graduate students that seemed most traceable to issues around social class. Participants' class enactments drove their interactions as they measured their fit against one another. One participant seemed to assume the identity of organizer of social things that took place outside of the graduate classroom, which dictated the ways relationships were established. Conflicts over social class can arise and affect the learning experience of graduate students and the ways they see themselves as fitting in in the contexts of schools (e.g., the faculty lounge, etc.). As theorized, identities are built and negotiated in relation to one another (Gee, 2011). Santoro and Allard (2003) also suggested notions of class encompass personal values and moral judgments and can "operate to exclude or misinterpret other people's perspective" (p. 8). This seemed particularly true given the group dynamics in this study. Participants' class enactments seemed to affect some of how participants defined who belonged to extracurricular groups and who didn't.

Most research referenced positive group experiences in teacher preparation programs (e.g., Assaf, 2005; Maloch et al., 2005; Rogers et al., 2006). The findings in this study add a

different view to the existing literature. This graduate student cohort did not include all positive interactions with examples noted of physical gestures and other overt behaviors that were offensive and exclusive. Many were competitive with one another in ways that would not serve them well in the teaching field. One may infer that studying as a cohort did not suit these particular students.

Participants seemed aware of gendered discourses woven throughout teaching. One male participant thought that he would have more control in the classroom compared to female teachers. Montecinos and Nielsen (2004), too, found that men are positioned “to handle difficult children more forcefully” (p. 4). They concluded,

The gender of the teacher influences the job of teaching; the job, in turn, has gender characteristics which influence the people who perform it; and, the people with whom teachers work hold them accountable for behaving in gender appropriate ways.

(Montecinos & Nielsen, 2004, p. 4)

Their research also suggested that male participants argued that they could be caring and nurturing, but their long-term career aspirations included leadership positions such as administration.

The other male participant described his gender as affecting his interactions with a female student in the literacy practicum. This could be related to his positioning as a Black male fatherly figure for his tutee who, her family acknowledged, did not have positive Black male role models in her life. This participant could have struggled with the patriarchal power that he was expected to reproduce in this context (Brockenbrough, 2012). Other aspiring literacy specialists did not discuss gender in this regard in relationship to their work with students. Their silence may suggest that their gendered enactments were unexamined.

Participants also positioned female teachers as mothers and nurturers. This fits one version of the nineteenth century teacher who uses innate mothering capacities to provide a moral education (Larsen, 2010). Popular images also present female teachers as selfless, caring, and dedicated to students. Larsen (2010) explained, “This is the teacher who is willing to go the extra mile for her students. She is sensitive to the varying needs of her students. Above all, love of children and of teaching guide her work” (p. 213). Such gendered discourses become problematic when they suggest that teachers fulfill the roles of mothers when some students’ mothers or home lives are deficit (James, 2012). Participants in the present study seemed to conflate caring, motherhood, and teaching.

Participants enacted gendered discourses when they described their reasons for becoming teachers as Olsen found in his (2008) study. Participants became teachers because female teachers in their families inspired them and they shared memories of playing school. Some participants strove to have a career that allowed them to balance the demands of work and a family life. This seemed a reasonable aspiration as Biklen (1995) problematized the critique of women’s career commitments, suggesting women’s work is measured against men’s working patterns without accounting for the realities of women’s lives. Schick (2000) also suggested that women historically became teachers for social mobility. A teaching career provided an opportunity to achieve middle class status and respectability. Status as teachers helped some women escape the marginalization caused by patriarchy. Perhaps this was, in part, why some female participants decided to pursue careers as teachers.

It seemed that enactments of gender also influenced the cohort’s group dynamics (Larsen, 2010). The participants who seemed most involved in the conflict shared aspirations of being stay-at-home moms. Their discourses were heteronormative, as marriage and building a family

life were important to them. One may assert that this led to even more competition among the cohort and to silencing of those who were uncomfortable with such heteronormativity. The mothers in the cohort felt they actually assumed roles as mothers of their peers. The males felt less involved in the social conflict because of their gender. Further research may study the ways to create a culture in teacher preparation and in the field where teachers support students' belonging, especially non-dominant aspiring literacy specialists.

A few participants thought that their age would influence the ways colleagues perceived them, perhaps as not competent. This view prevented some participants from trying on identities as literacy specialists. The varying roles that literacy specialists may assume, as outlined in the literature review, likely contributed to this (un)certainty. The studies on literacy specialists' identities (e.g., Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; McKinney & Giorgis, 2009; Rainville & Jones, 2008) also reflected perspectives of experienced literacy specialists. Teaching experience seemed important for such roles. The teachers in this study were not sure if they pursued positions as literacy specialists if they would be able to take on leadership roles, providing guidance to older and more experienced colleagues.

Some participants' discourses revealed religion was important to their identities. These participants drew on religious Discourse with a missionary tone of loving students and changing lives. The religious Discourse also seemed related to the good teacher Discourse of the charismatic teacher who serves as a savior (Moore, 2004). Subedi's (2006) study found preservice teachers "who shared missionary experiences did not see their practices as being hierarchical in nature" (p. 232). Such Discourse has been traced to colonial missionaries, who brought the authority of White, western European religion to "civilize" unruly indigenous others

(Subedi, 2006). Subedi (2006) suggested that teachers' should examine their religion for essentialist assumptions about their relationships with others.

Limitations

Important limitations of this study relate to my subjectivities, which I outlined in the method chapter. My identities and assumptions about literacy, teaching, learning, and ideas about the way the world works shaped my interactions with participants and my analysis. Others may well see these data in different ways. Like the participants in this study, I shape and am shaped by the discourses that have been available to me (Marsh, 2002).

My relationships with participants could be viewed as both a limitation and strength. As noted in a previous chapter, I spent several semesters with participants, and in two of those, I served as their instructor. The participants in this study knew me as a White, female, teacher educator, and mother. We shared assumptions about each other. For example, the mothers and I often commiserated about our struggles of balancing our home and work lives. Perhaps they shared this Discourse because of my own lived experience. Maybe the participants who shared dreams or aspirations of having families did so because they knew I had a family, and I would read that as socially acceptable. I tried to unpack these assumptions while engaging in this research by writing memoranda and having conversations with colleagues.

Our relationships influenced our interactions during interviews. Often times, I explicitly reminded participants that I was no longer their instructor and I would not participate in the grading of the literacy practicum class which was the context of this study. I also tried to keep my responses neutral in the interviews with nods, neutral conversational replies, and simple probes. Because of my relationships and experiences with my participants, they may have been

able to read my social cues. As much as I attempted to mask my own assumptions and perspectives, it is possible that they had an effect on participants' responses.

I think the relationships I had with participants made many of them feel more confident sharing details of their lives with me, including their perceptions about literacy, teaching, and learning. Some participants may have been more reserved because they were concerned I may pass judgment. I recognize that who I am may have influenced the stories they chose to share or not share with me.

Critical discourse analysis requires participants' oral and written language for analysis. Given this, I primarily used interview data for participants' words. Other data sources provided a context for understanding participants' language use but I did not rely heavily on other documents (e.g., lesson plans, reflections, reports, etc.) because these projects revealed little about students' identities.

Critical discourse analysis served as a useful research method for studying identities and discourses in situational, institutional, and societal contexts, but there could be other ways to study the same data. While there is no one way to do discourse analysis (Gee, 2011), I appreciated having tools that could be used similarly across participants' data. Other research methods applied to this data would offer other insights. For instance, others might use different CDA tools, narrative analysis, or life history methods to study participants' perspectives and identities.

I could have achieved part of this analysis by doing a more simplified content analysis. CDA served me well as an emergent researcher. It taught me the closeness required to get into a text. The fine-grained text analysis required a level of linguistic analysis that I am not sure I could have accomplished through a simpler content analysis.

This study was small in scale so that I could complete a fine-grained analysis on participants' oral and written texts. The limited number of participants from which I drew provided important insights into perspectives of certain "kinds of people" completing literacy education studies (Gee, 2012, p. 165). It was limited to the experiences and perspectives of these individuals at this specific juncture. These findings may not very well represent all aspiring literacy specialists or all cohorts studying together to be literacy specialists.

The analysis and findings presented here were viewed through my lenses. I brought to this research a limited background with beliefs and values about what it means to be a student, teacher, and literacy specialist. I came to this research as a White, middle class, female. Many of the Discourses I enacted were, and perhaps in some ways still are, unconscious, unreflective, and uncritical (Gee, 2012). I drew on critical theoretical perspectives in this study in an effort to disrupt my own positionality regarding such power relations, likely with only partial success.

Implications

In this section, I review implications for research and literacy specialist education. In the implications for research, I suggest directions for future research about literacy specialists' (un)certainty and identities. In the implications for literacy specialist education, I describe the ways teacher educators can support teachers and literacy specialists through the use of data collection and analysis techniques, classroom activities, commitment to exploring their own identities, and programmatic changes.

Implications for Research

Other research exploring beginning literacy specialists' perspectives using CDA needs to be conducted, perhaps using different CDA tools or focusing more on individuals' cases. Future research could include a follow up study reconnecting with these participants. Researchers may

also study the perspectives of non-dominant background literacy specialists. Future studies could examine literacy education program elements that contribute to or diminish teachers' (un)certainty. Additional studies might examine other cohorts' experiences and outcomes of (un)certainty. Educational researchers should continue to study literacy specialists' identities at various points in their career trajectories because identities and contexts are constantly changing in ways that can impact interactions with colleagues and students.

Since identities are discursive (Gee, 2012; Lewis & Del Valle, 2009), and this study provided a limited snapshot of participants' identities, a follow up study may include reconnecting with these participants. It could examine how their identities as educators, teachers or literacy specialists, evolved over time. Participants' perspectives may have already changed since I collected these data.

Future research may also study the experiences and perspectives of literacy specialists with non-dominant backgrounds, including males and individuals of color. The perspectives of individuals with non-dominant backgrounds are not well represented in the literature. Their perspectives may offer insights into how to better support their belonging in university and school contexts.

Other research may study the context of teacher education programs to better examine the linkage between coursework and other program elements and teachers' perspectives. Few studies have examined literacy education program features (e.g., Grisham, 2000; Hoffman et al., 2005, Maloch et al., 2003; Sailors et al., 2005). Researchers could examine aspects of teacher education programs that contribute to or help to diminish teacher (un)certainty. Such insights may provide even further conceptual clarity about (un)certainty (Helsing, 2007).

Future work may also attend to outcomes, especially about the role of (un)certainty and how it affects teachers' and literacy specialists' practices. Such studies might provide further insights into what happens when teachers are (un)certain. It could be an evaluation of teachers' teaching quality relative to their (un)certainty.

Researchers and scholars should continue to study teachers' identity as an ongoing process. More research is needed on literacy specialists' identities as they prepare to assume leadership roles in power-laden situations in the contexts of schools and educational reform. Research may study how best to foster literacy specialists' identities to work in these contexts that are always changing.

Implications for Literacy Specialist Education

Hoffman-Kipp (2008) added, "Our teacher education classes offer a significant social context in which to further the identity construction process" (p. 161). Literacy teacher educators should attend to preservice and inservice teachers' identities in teacher education in ways that help them address their inevitable (un)certainty (Cohen, 2010; Hall, 2009b; Olsen, 2008; Trent, 2010a). The aspiring literacy specialists in this study proved to be at a tumultuous juncture as they completed their literacy studies, invoking deficit Discourses that had the potential for undercutting their work in ways that may perpetuate inequalities in schools. Teacher educators can support teachers' and literacy specialists' identities in teacher education through use of data collection and analysis techniques, classroom activities, commitment to exploring their own identities and discourses, and programmatic changes.

Engaging teachers and literacy specialists in data analysis as part of their coursework may guide them to explore identities and (un)certainty. Teachers could continue to use such tools once they begin teaching or if they are practicing teachers. Trent (2010a) suggested

training teachers in ethnographic methods of inquiry. Teachers could make observations and interview other classroom teachers to get a sense of local and institutional influences on education and identities. Trent (2010b) found action research can be an effective means for preservice teachers to study identities and learn how identities are in constant flux, as well as to note inequitable actions that result from this flux.

Vetter and colleagues (2012) suggested teacher educators teach teachers to use critical discourse analysis to engage in “critical identity work.” They defined this as “the examination of how teachers position themselves and their students and how those positionings relate to issues of power and privilege in schools” (Vetter et al., 2012, p. 4). Vetter and colleagues’ study engaged preservice English teachers in a video analysis teaching project. Each preservice teacher videotaped three five- to 10-minute teaching segments (e.g., minilessons, small group work, facilitation of a discussion) throughout a semester. The preservice teachers transcribed the tape and were guided by a set of questions to engage in a discourse analysis that analyzed how they positioned students, how students positioned them, while considering identity and context. The preservice teachers then wrote two to three paragraph reflections that tied their classroom interactions to the enactments of their preferred teacher identities. Through this critical identity work, teacher educators guided preservice teachers to align their teacher identities with their classroom practice.

Aspiring literacy specialists could engage in similar identity work around their interactions with adults. For example, when they participate in coaching exercises with one another, they could also participate in critical identity work. Aspiring literacy specialists may videotape segments when they are coaching or being coached by a colleague for further analysis. As Vetter and colleagues (2012) outlined above, they would transcribe the tape and engage in

some level of discourse analysis guided by a set of questions about how they positioned or were positioned by the adults they coached. To conclude, they may write reflections that examine power and positioning.

Most recently, Rogers and Wetzel (2014) suggested critical discourse analysis can be used as a pedagogical and research tool. They described the ways discourse analysis, as a research method, aided in their teaching of a literacy practicum in an elementary education program. Their research guided them to reshape their curriculum to engage preservice teachers, both undergraduate and graduate students, with discourse analysis research methods. As an example, Rogers and Wetzel assigned students to write a literacy autobiography, a common assignment used to prompt students to examine their own histories and learning. Upon analysis of students' narratives, Rogers and Wetzel asked students to revisit and reread their narratives more critically, through the lens of race and culture. They reported students came to revisit their previously unexamined backgrounds and experiences. Rogers and Wetzel (2014) invited students to ask: "In what ways do our literate autobiographies shape the types of literacy environments we construct for the students we work with? What connections can you make between your narrative and the narratives of the children you work with?" (p. 53). Over the course of one year, Rogers and Wetzel used narrative analysis, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal discourse analysis in their teaching and research. Each offers distinct ways to examine individuals' perspectives through the study of meaning in people's lives, discourses, social issues, and social events.

Rogers and Wetzel's (2014) suggestions would be relevant for already certified teachers. Graduate level literacy foundations courses often include a similar autobiographical assignment where students examine their own literacy histories. This kind of assignment could be more

critically reflective, as outlined above, by teaching students research methods and having them apply a critical lens to their own work. Another way to follow up with Rogers and Wetzel's (2014) suggestions may be to have graduate students employ these kinds of research methods in local schools with teachers and literacy specialists. Such field work and data analysis may offer an opportunity to interrogate assumptions about specific contexts such as urban schools. It could also give greater insight into the power dynamics in schools related to the roles of literacy specialists.

A number of other activities may be used to support teachers' and literacy specialists' identities in the context of education courses. Alsup (2006) suggested an activity entitled "What is your pedagogy?" Teachers brainstorm definitions to the words "personal" and "pedagogy." After the brainstorm, teachers answer the following questions: What are their definitions? How do they intersect? How do they conflict? To conclude teachers write a one to two page statement about personal pedagogy and how the personal and professional may be integrated. The goal of this activity is to bring forward common essentializing dichotomies that can lead to (un)certainly in teaching, such as public and private or personal and professional (Alsup, 2006; Shapiro, 2010). This activity might guide individuals to explicate the backgrounds they bring to their pedagogy.

Another activity may be to have teachers and literacy specialists make an "Identity Discourse Map" (Alsup, 2006). In small groups, teachers start by listing aspects of popular culture and historical events that have been significant in their lifetime. Next, they are encouraged to think about "societal messages" specific to race, class, gender, and sexuality (Alsup, 2006, p. 203). Independently, teachers then write about messages they may have received from personal, family, or home discourses related to religion, ethnicity, race,

geography, locale, family, class, and sexuality. To summarize teachers write about how, taken together, all of these things affects their views on teaching and learning.

Role play may also help teachers explore identity. Alsup (2006) suggested having teachers write scenarios they may encounter in practice, act these out, and reflect the experience. Pushing it a step further, she required her teachers to articulate why they might have felt a certain way in the “play” experience. Rainville and Jones (2008) recommended role play specific to power-laden situations in schools. They explained that role playing can help literacy coaches to think about how they may deal with a situation in a positive and productive way. Also along these lines, Rainville and Jones (2008) recommended having teachers, preservice or inservice, listen to and analyze audio or video transcripts of teachers and coaches working closely together. This can be an analysis of position and power.

In order to facilitate teachers’ and literacy specialists’ explorations of their identities, in any of the aforementioned ways, teacher educators must commit to exploring their own identity construction. This includes engaging in critical identity work, much like teacher educators may ask students/teachers to do, in and out of the classroom context. It may help teacher educators to learn to navigate this kind of work with a critical friend, perhaps a friend or colleague that can mutually call attention to discourses that operate from deficit perspectives. In the classroom, teacher educators can participate *with* students in critical identity work and provide transparency into their own identities and discourses, showing (un)certainty. Offering such transparency may promote a classroom context where students/teachers feel safe to acknowledge and explore the (un)certainty that may impact their work with students and colleagues. Creating a context that suggests it is acceptable to be (un)certain, may allows teacher educators to also gather information to measure students’ understandings of their identity construction.

Given the diverse teaching experiences of participants in this study coupled with what research has suggested about the roles literacy specialists assume in schools, perhaps program designers need to modify literacy specialists' education. Researchers have suggested that literacy coaches need different or separate training compared to literacy specialists (McLean, Mallozzi, Hu, & Dailey, 2010). Perhaps separate programs could focus in greater depth on leadership skills required to deal with issues around power and positioning. Rainville and Jones (2008) asserted, "We would argue, then, that preparation and ongoing support for coaches might include work specifically around issues of power and positioning and critically 'reading' situations to help them decide how to position themselves" (p. 447). These programs may, too, then require teaching experience for admission, which would separate the teachers with more and less experience, allowing teacher educators to better attend to the persistent needs or questions related to the contexts of literacy specialists'/coaches' work.

My intention, though, is not to discredit the value of the literacy education program at participants' current life juncture. As noted in a previous chapter, like many participants in the present study, I studied literacy education with no teaching experience beyond my undergraduate studies. My studies improved my classroom teaching. I was better prepared to address the literacy strengths and weaknesses of students. Likewise, the literacy education program served its purpose for many participants in this study. They aspired to learn more about literacy to foster students' development in the classroom. Such programs should remain available and be tailored for less experienced teachers who are eager to learn more about teaching literacy with a goal of improving their pedagogy.

Also important is the need to consider students' purposes for extending their studies and the social locations they bring to their work. As literacy teacher educators, it is important to

consider students' social locations and purposes for studying literacy to better meet the needs of those who invest in advanced study. Literacy teacher educators need to be cautious about preparing literacy specialists for contexts where they might lack certainty about their identities and social affiliations in ways that they are willing to marginalize students.

Program designers should also include requirements to reflect on and, perhaps, deconstruct one's preconceived notions about working with other children or adults that are not "like" oneself. Again, the findings in this study suggest that teacher educators need to build time in literacy teacher education for students to engage in identity work to interrogate assumptions about themselves and others. Such identity work may include examining discourses in fine-grained ways that highlight assumptions and deficit Discourses that everyone enacts. As noted in the literature review, examining discourses can be a first step in interrogating how unequal outcomes are produced in schools (Comber & Kamler, 2004). This seems important for literacy specialists who work with students with reading difficulties that are often associated with deficit perspectives like disadvantaged, at-risk, or "poverty=illiteracy" (Comber & Kamler, 2004, p. 295). Such perspectives may impact teachers' expectations and pedagogical decisions.

Literacy teacher educators can also attend to teacher identity construction and development by offering courses on identity for teachers and literacy specialists. Kooy and de Freitas's (2007) study shared that they offered a graduate class entitled "From Student to Teacher: Professional Induction." Participants studied teaching and teacher identity and explored their own development as a teacher. "This process helped to reveal invisible forces at work in teacher identity development" (Kooy & de Freitas, 2007, p. 875). Such courses could be offered to aspiring literacy specialists, too, with a focus on the shift from teacher to school leader.

McVee's (2004) study similarly explored the role of teacher narratives in relation to culture, literacy, self, and other within a graduate course entitled, "Literacy Culture, and Autobiography." Artifacts created as course requirements documented teachers' change and growth. McVee (2004) argued that personal narratives must be represented in teacher education, particularly to promote multiple viewpoints.

The growing body of knowledge of teacher identity and (un)certainly should inform teacher education and ongoing professional development opportunities. Implications point to providing teachers and teacher educators time to engage in critical research methods, interspersing activities that emphasize exploration of identity in classes or professional development workshops, and revising teacher education programs. Researchers and teacher educators must continue to theorize identity and make adjustments to instruction accordingly.

Conclusion

This study provides new details about the complexities and (un)certainly associated with individuals who participate in graduate studies in literacy education. Beginning literacy specialists' discourses revealed how they were figuring out who they were and where they belonged as teachers and as literacy specialists. When they gauged their fit, they drew on discourses tied to race, class, gender, age and religion. These details are important to recognize because such positioning will likely impact their later effectiveness as classroom teachers or literacy specialists. This study also hints of how the social world is part of all educators' identities and of the work that will be needed to develop strategies for deconstructing the reductionist ways people position themselves relative to others. These aspiring literacy specialists help us to begin this work by inviting us into their lives and (un)certainly.

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Appendix A

Transcription Coding System
(Adapted from Tannen, 1984/2005)

<i>Italics</i>	Emphasis
(...)	Pause for seconds
BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS	Loud Volume; Yelling
((double parentheses))	Gestures (e.g., nods, smiles, laughs, points,claps, etc.)
(parentheses)	Different pronunciation
^	Rising Pitch
v	Falling Pitch
SMALL CAPS	Rapid Rate of Speech
[brackets]	Overlapped Speech
—	Interruption
“quotations”	Quoting; Marking
= =	Latching
:::	Lengthened sound
//	Phonetic spelling (IPA)

Appendix B

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
MEMORANDUM

TO: Kathleen Hinchman

DATE: May 5, 2010

SUBJECT: Expedited Protocol Review-Approval of Human Participants

IRB #: 10-118

TITLE: *An Exploration of New Literacy Teachers' Understanding of Their Work*

The above referenced protocol, submitted for expedited review, has been evaluated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the following:

1. the rights and welfare of the individual(s) under investigation;
2. appropriate methods to secure informed consent; and
3. risks and potential benefits of the investigation.

Through the University's expedited review process, your protocol was determined to be of no more than minimal risk and has been given **expedited approval**. It is my judgment that your proposal conforms to the University's human participants research policy and its assurance to the Department of Health and Human Services, available at:

<http://www.orip.syr.edu/humanresearch.html>.

Your protocol is approved for implementation and operation from **May 5, 2010** until **May 4, 2011**. If appropriate, attached is the protocol's approved informed consent document, date-stamped with the expiration date. This document is to be used in your informed consent process. If you are using written consent, Federal regulations require that each participant indicate their willingness to participate by signing the informed consent document and be provided with a copy of the signed consent form. Regulations also require that you keep a copy of this document for a minimum of three years.

CHANGES TO APPROVED PROTOCOL: Proposed changes to this protocol during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval, except when such changes are essential to eliminate apparent immediate harm to the participants. Changes in approved research initiated without IRB review and approval to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participant must be reported to the IRB within five days. Protocol changes are requested on an amendment application available on the IRB web site; please reference your IRB number and attach any documents that are being amended.

CONTINUATION BEYOND APPROVAL PERIOD: To continue this research project beyond **May 4, 2011**, you must submit a renewal application for review and approval. A renewal reminder will be sent to you approximately 60 days prior to the expiration date. *(If the researcher will be traveling out of the country when the protocol is due to be renewed, please renew the protocol before leaving the country.)*

UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS INVOLVING RISKS: You must report any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others within 10 working days of occurrence to the IRB at 315.443.3013 or orip@syr.edu.

STUDY COMPLETION: The completion of a study must be reported to the IRB within 14 days.

Thank you for your cooperation in our shared efforts to assure that the rights and welfare of people participating in research are protected.

Kathleen King, Ph.D.
IRB Chair

Note to Faculty Advisor: This notice is only mailed to faculty. If a student is conducting this study, please forward this information to the student researcher.

DEPT: Reading & Language Arts, 213 Huntington Hall **STUDENT:** Elizabeth Years Stevens

Appendix C

Interview 1:

1. Tell me about yourself. (Prompt on personal and educational background.)

Interview 2:

2. How do you see yourself as a teacher? As a teacher who is becoming a literacy specialist?

(Adapted from Assaf, 2005)

3. Describe the influences on the way you see yourself as a teacher. Describe the influences on the way you see yourself as a teacher who is becoming a literacy specialist.

(Adapted from Assaf, 2005)

Interview 3:

4. Tell me about your life now, since clinic/graduation.
 - a. What are you doing right now for employment?
 - b. What are your short- and long-term plans?
5. I need to fill in some information to understand your biography better.
 - a. Tell me about your memories around your literacy learning as a child at home and school?
 - b. Why did you decide to become a teacher? What about you made this profession a good fit?
 - c. Why did you decide to study literacy?
 - d. [If appropriate] How did being a parent affect your studies and your work, if at all?
6. I also need to fill in some information to understand how you participated in your studies to be a literacy specialist.

- a. Some people talked about being affected by the group dynamics in your student cohort. Did these impact your studies? Why or why not? What about your background or studies seemed to affect these relationships?
 - b. Tell me about the children you tutored during your clinical experiences. What were their backgrounds, as you understood them? What was your relationship with each? What about your background or studies seemed to affect these relationships?
 - c. Tell me about your experiences with coaching, both classmates and, briefly, the summer school staff. Describe your part in these interactions, and the ways your recommendations were or were not taken up. Why do you think these worked the way they did? What about your background or studies seemed to affect these relationships?
7. Now that you've graduated with a degree that allows you to seek certification as a literacy specialist, how do you see yourself as a literacy specialist today?
- a. If you obtained a job as a literacy specialist tomorrow, what would you be good at? Why? What would you need to work on? Why? What makes you think that?
(Prompt background or studies.)
 - b. [If in a classroom job]: Is there anything that you learned in becoming a literacy specialist that you are drawing on in your work now? What, and how?
 - c. What do you know about the political climate around teaching literacy right now? RTI, Race to the Top? Core Standards? New assessment? Tying teacher evaluations to student outcomes? What do you see as the implications of the current political climate for teachers and literacy specialists?

8. In our previous interviews you identified as a [White, middle class woman]. How does your identity as a [White, middle class woman] impact your role as an emergent literacy teacher/specialist? How did it impact your experiences/participation in this program?
9. Research suggests that literacy specialists are mostly White, working or middle class, and female. This was true for your cohort as well. Why do you think that happens? How do you see yourself fitting this profession in this regard? Why?

Appendix D

E: Um (.) ((Smacks lips)) um while you are talking about your family, how do you identify

culturally and ethnically?

#16/27 White, European descent

Implied subject

#2 Unsure or uncomfortable about culture

8: ((Smacks lips)) Um (.) White, Caucasian, is that what you mean like ((laughingly))? Yeah. I

mean my=my mom's mom ((taps on table)) is from the Ukraine. And my mom's dad ((taps on

table twice)) is from (.) like he's=his family came from England but they came over a while ago.

So he's=my grandpa's like third or fourth generation. But my mom=and my mom's grandma

was first generation here from the Ukraine. So (.) that was always a little bit of our culture. Like

at Christmas time my mom, would always, as we were walking in the door like tell us how to say

#2 Not super important

Merry Christmas in the=in Ukrainian I couldn't remember it for the life of me, now still. Um

and my dad's family is Irish and English=or Irish and Italian, (.) but I mean for the most part it

#2 Middle class as norm

was just White ((taps on table)) middle class, you know, values and home life, and the typical

#16 Middle class

#27 Class= values and home life

you know.



Deixis tool

#2 Fill in tool



Subject tool

#16/27 Identity and Discourse tools



Intonation tool

Table 1

Overview of Participants

Participant	Race	Class	Gender	Parents	Teaching Experience (in years)	Jobs (at time of third interview)
Brian	White	Middle	Male		0	Retail worker
Lauren	White	Middle	Female	Mother	9	Special education teacher
Steph	White	Middle	Female		0	Teaching assistant
Stacy	White	Middle	Female		0	Business owner
Isaiah	Latino-Jamaican	Middle	Male		<1	ESOL teacher
Chelsea	White	Middle	Female		0	College athletic coach
Jessica	White	Middle	Female		0	Special education teacher
Avery	White	Middle	Female		>1	Social studies teacher
Jamie	White-African American	Middle	Female		0	Title I readings specialist
Angela	White	Middle	Female	Mother	13	Substitute teacher

Table 2

Documents Produced by Participants

Participant	Lesson plans and reflections	Quick write reflections	Parent comm. notes	Student progress report	Student progress report	Literacy audit materials	Small group plans	Peer coaching rec. and reflection
Brian	38	2	1	3	7	3	6	3
Stacy	65	2	2	3	8	8	0	3
Chelsea	62	2	2	2	9	0	6	4
Avery	36	2	2	3	5	0	0	4
Jamie	34	2	1	2	5	2	6	3
Lauren	33	2	2	2	4	0	0	3
Steph	64	2	1	5	6	4	0	2
Jessica	51	2	1	3	8	4	0	5
Angela	48	2	1	4	14	0	0	3
Isaiah	41	2	1	3	10	0	0	5
Totals	472	20	14	30	76	21	18	35

Table 3

Research Questions and Gee's (2011) Tools

Research Questions:	Other Ways of Asking:	Tools
1) What do beginning literacy specialists' discourses reveal about their evolving identities?	What is central to their narratives?	See tools 1-6; 12
2) On what discourses do they draw?	What gives them agency? What allows them to move forward?	Tools 1-6; 16; 27
3) How are situational, institutional, and societal contexts implicated?	How do these fall into categories (e.g., gender, race, class, and other aspects of the social world) that would invoke special constructions about the way the world works?	Tools 1-6; 16; 27 * I think these tools will best get at the research questions to get started.

Table 4

Tool Work

	Participant 8
Tool #1: Deixis Tool	<p>She/we (previous teacher/peers) p.4 Her/ us (previous teacher/peers) p. 5 Teacher that I am p. 5 She (peer) p. 7 They/their/people p. 8 They (previous, some older, teachers) p. 10 Us/we (cohort) p. 10 They (experienced teachers) p. 12 She/her (co-teacher) p. 16 (as mom) p. 19 They/them (special education) p. 19 We/they/us/I/me (colleagues) pgs. 20, 24 I/we/them (coaching peers) p. 22 We/they/us (coaching) p. 23 They (teachers) p. 25 We (as school community) pgs. 26, 29 That (as helping) p. 28 We (women) p. 29 We/us (those improving literacy) p. 30 I/they (as coach) p. 31</p>
Tool #2: The Fill in Tool	<p>Family oriented p. 1 Teaching as history p. 1 A teacher that is becoming, part of identity p. 1 Competitive p. 1 Values hard work pgs. 2, 3 Family= “good citizens” p. 3 Career focused Having options Life goals= “Be happy” Class issues, “hard work” pgs. 6, 7 Types of teachers pgs. 7, 8, 9, (eg., on p. 16) Still learning pgs. 7, 8 Dichotomized good versus bad school p. 8 What you learn is what you know p. 9 Observation of apprenticeship pgs. 9, 18 School as enjoyable p. 10 Program gives shared experience and beliefs pgs. 10, 11 Value of experience p. 11 Experience as status, particular to coaching p. 11 Coaching as telling how to do something better pgs. 12, 31</p>

Experience lets you tell people how to teach better pgs. 12 (as authority) 22, 25
 Could imagine self as literacy specialist pgs. 13, 24
 Values resources and references p. 13
 Construction of literacy specialist self by program and assignments pgs. 14, 25
 Read as dedicated p. 14
 Power dynamics in schools pgs. 15, 17
 Values ownership p. 17
 Socially acceptable timeline p. 18
 Teaching as time and effort p. 19
 Read as reflective and now knowing p. 20
 Shift in ways of seeing self p. 20
 Perceived ways of being relatable as literacy specialist p. 21
 Sees role as one for building relationships p. 21
 Old versus new teacher dichotomy p. 23
 Draws on growth, wouldn't have been prepared and now is p. 23
 Read as good fit, personality wise for literacy specialist role p. 25
 Helping because of status p. 28
 Saw herself as like her peers p. 28
 Teaching as taking care p. 29
 Teaching as not prestigious p. 29
 Teaching population as historically rooted p. 29
 Well prepared p. 29
 Values balanced approach to teaching literacy p. 30
 "I think..." p. 6
 The teachers p. 8
 People (at other institutions) p. 9
 "I feel..." p. 9
 "I" (as literacy specialist, self-readiness) p. 11, p. 18
 You (as speaking to co-teacher) p. 16
 "One of those" p. 16
 "Sharing knowledge" (put in opposition to coaching) p. 24
 People (others as reading teachers) p. 29
 "Well you're just a teacher." (Laughs) p. 1
 "Awesome" (teacher) p. 4
 "Not to her" (cohort conflict) p. 7
 "Biggest" impact p. 9

Tool #4: The Subject Tool

Tool #5: The Intonation Tool

Tool #16: The Identity Building Tool/
Tool #27: The Big “D” Discourse Tool

-
- “Great” (teacher) p. 9
 “Definitely” (teacher self) p. 11
 “Especially;” “never” taught p. 12
 “Awesome” (unit taught) p. 15
 “Absolutely” love it p. 16
 “Love” to stay p. 17
 “Definitely” p. 17
 “Own” classroom p. 17
 “Loved” it (program) p. 20
 “Could see myself” p. 20
 Experience “teaching” p. 24
1. Middle class > opportunities pgs. 1, 3, 26, 27, 28
 2. Teacher > by heart and nurture pgs. 1, 18
 3. Positioned in the field as “less than” p. 1
 4. A good teacher, “only” teacher pgs. 2, 19
 5. Hard worker > part of culture? pgs. 2, 29
 6. Positioned parents as hard working p. 2
 7. As a role model, example p. 2
 8. White, European descent > uncertain about culture p. 2
 9. Good student > athletic, social pgs. 3, 4
 10. Catholic p. 4
 11. Positioned previous teachers positively > what it means to be a good teacher pgs. 4, 5, 10, 16, 17
 12. Teacher > sees herself as pgs. 6, 30
 13. Positioned peers in conflict, self on outside pgs. 6, 7
 14. Teacher self > authoritative, building relationships, what is valued p. 7
 15. Positioned as novice p. 8
 16. Positioned older teachers pgs. 8, 10
 17. Positioned cohort in alignment p. 10
 18. Positioned self as first ill prepared, now with resources and ideas, but lacking experience p. 11
 19. Positioned teachers, ways of reading inexperienced pgs. 12, 23
 20. Teaching with a literacy cap, not coaching pgs. 13, 24
 21. Positioned as pleaser > not to disappoint p. 14
 22. Confident p. 15
 23. Positioned at mercy of co-teacher p. 15
 24. Advocate for kids (not co-teaching) pgs.
-

-
- 16, 17, 19
25. Positioned teacher as in charge > own classroom pgs. 17, 18
26. Possible literacy specialist in a few years pgs. 18, 20, 21, 31
27. Curriculum coach > “amazing;” “fun job” p. 21
28. Friend > friendly, outgoing p. 21
29. Positioned members of cohort as older and younger p. 21
30. Positioned like peers > able to participate as majority pgs. 28, 29
31. Women > nurturing p. 29
32. Positioned literacy as whole school, life pgs. 29, 30
-

Table 5

Summary of Tool Work

	Participant 8
Tool #1: Deixis Tool	Previous teachers Cohort Experienced teachers Colleagues Coaches Teachers School community
Tool #2: The Fill in Tool	Family oriented A teacher that's becoming, part of identity "Hard working" Types of teachers Coaching as telling Helping because of status Teaching not as prestigious
Tool #4: The Subject Tool	People (other institutions, other reading teachers) I think... The teachers You (graduate of Literacy MS program, co-teacher) I (as literacy specialist)
Tool #5: The Intonation Tool	Quantifying terms Positive-ness Verbs
Tool #16: The Identity Building Tool/ Tool #27: Big "D" Discourse Tool	Middle class Teacher Hard worker Role model Advocate Like peers Women as nurturing Literacy, whole school

Table 6

Data Analysis by Categories

Participant 8: “Novice”	
Teacher Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to see herself as a teacher • Teacher as part of identity, “who I am today” • Still learning • Good fit, “pretty good at it” • Personality: easy going, laid back, authoritative, values relationships • Positioned self against co-teacher • Proficient in small groups • To have her own classroom, “executive decisions” • History: aunts, setting up their classrooms, playing school
Teaching is...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspired by previous teachers • Teaching as time and effort, in and out of the classroom • Less prestigious yet respected • Teachers read as motherly, take care, feminine job • Knowing how students work well together • Interactive • Collaborative
Literacy Specialist Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a few years • Balanced approach to literacy • Better teacher of reading as a classroom teacher • Teaching struggling readers • Relatable • Respectful • Outgoing • Connections with colleagues and students • Lack of experience • Has knowledge and resources but not enough experience to give other people advice • Not comfortable coaching now, ideas would not be respected • Willing to share ideas • Incorporate literacy in content areas • Literacy professional cap always on

Literacy Specialist is...

- Will give recommendations; considered starting a book club
- Authority and experience, essential to be socially accepted
- Experienced
- Coaching, observing and giving suggestions
- Building relationships with teachers
- Knowledge of different strategies and tools out there right now
- Influenced by teacher education and observations of literacy specialists in the field
- Balanced approach
- “Fun” job
- Help with centers, make connections across the curriculum

Other important findings

- Helping others, sharing knowledge, but not coaching
 - Experience essential to be accepted as literacy specialist
-

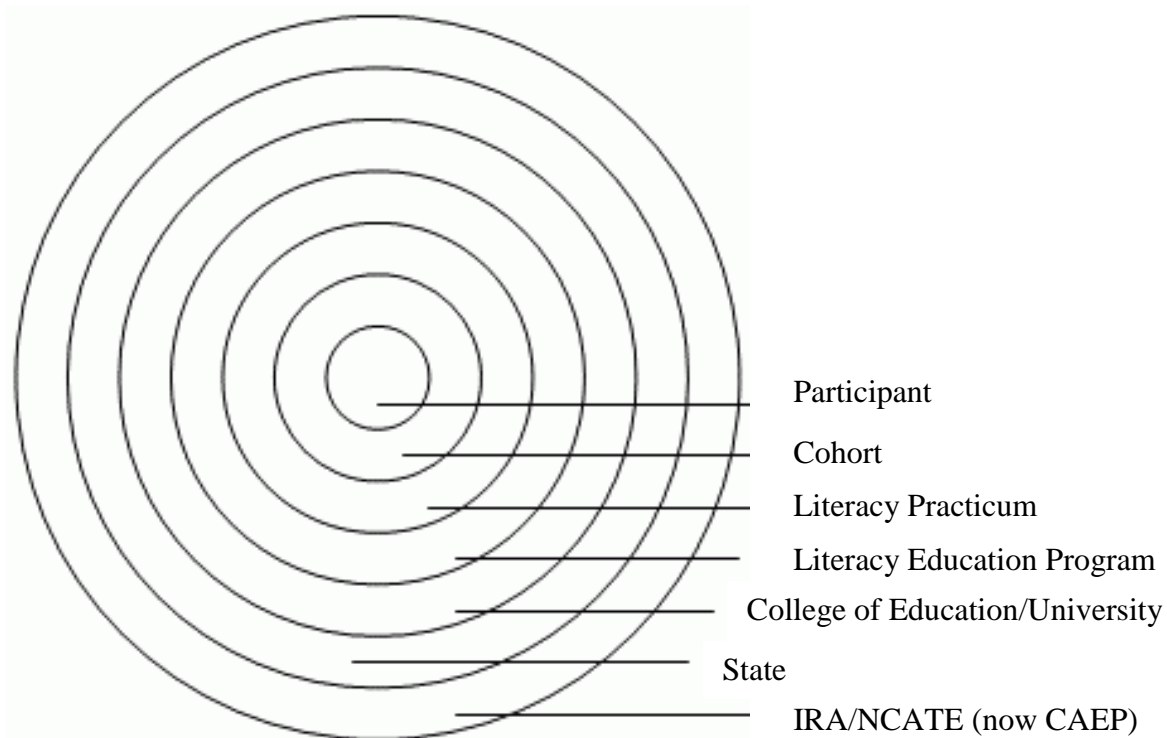


Figure 1. The concentric contexts of participants' studies.

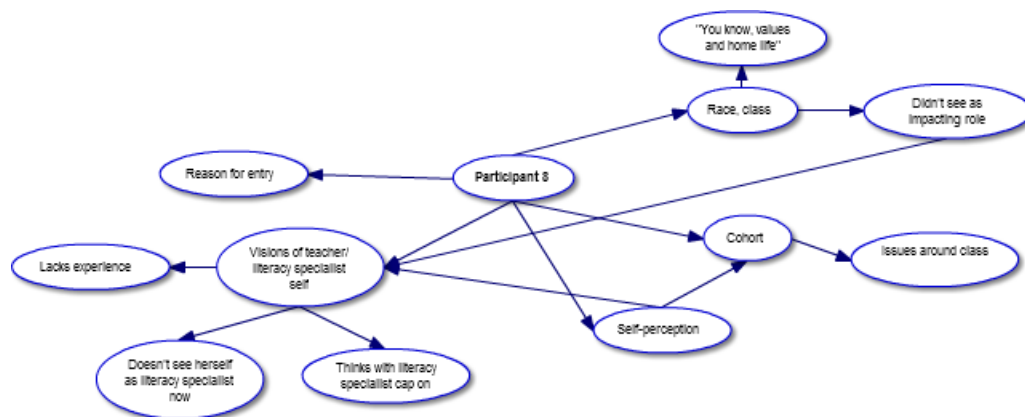


Figure 2. This semantic map represents Jessica’s salient or reoccurring codes. I chose to feature Jessica (Participant 8) as an example because she represented what was somewhat “typical” of the dataset regarding her demographics and the amount she contributed in the interview data.

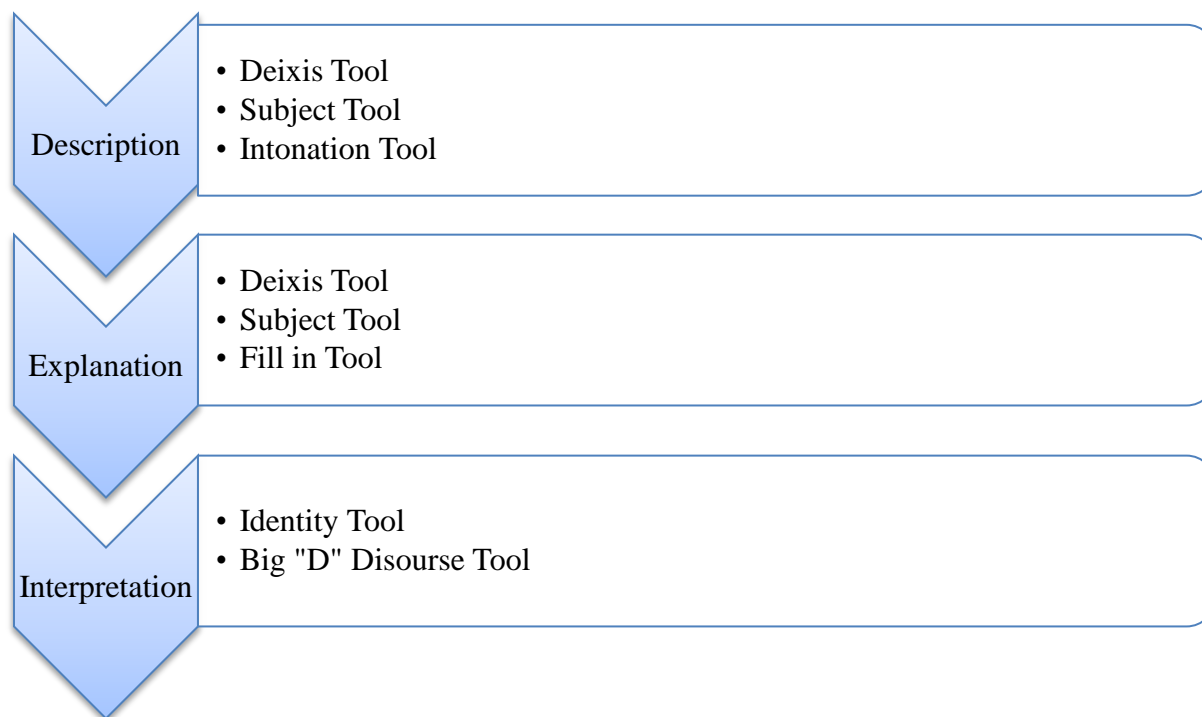


Figure 3. The stages of analysis (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 2011).

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EDUCATION

Syracuse University

Doctor of Philosophy, Reading Education (May 2014)

Dissertation: *Aspiring Literacy Specialists' (Un)certainty: A Critical Discourse Analysis*

- William D. Sheldon Fellowship
- Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award
- Future Professoriate Program
- Gula M. Moench Graduate Fellowship in Education
- Burton Blatt Scholarship

Saint Bonaventure University

Master of Science in Education, Childhood Literacy (May 2003)

Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education (December 2001)

- Outstanding Senior Award, International Society of Women Educators
- Kappa Delta Pi
- Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society

CERTIFICATIONS

New York State Permanent Certification

- Elementary Education N-6
- Reading Education K-12

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Le Moyne College

Instructor

- EDG 625: Teaching Children's Literature (2013)

Syracuse University

Instructor

- RED 746: Perspectives on Literacy and Technology (2010-2013)
- RED 601: Literacy Across the Lifespan (2009-2010)

Summer Literacy Clinic Clinician (2009-2010, 2012-2013)

- Supervised graduate students tutoring elementary students with reading difficulties
- Presented on Genre Study, Word Study, Reading and Writing Workshop
- Organized weekly newsletter for students and their families
- Reviewed graduate students' culminating program portfolios

Graduate Research Assistant (2010, 2012)

- Assisted with data analysis of collaborative research project
- Aided in preparation for teaching of undergraduate and graduate literacy courses
- Presented to undergraduate students on topics including Differentiated Literacy Instruction and Author Study
- Prepared for Spring Literacy Clinic

Saint Bonaventure University

PT³ (Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology) Graduate Assistant (2002-2003)

- Planned and taught professional development for staff and undergraduate students
- Evaluated and researched educational software and new ways to use technology in the classroom
- Documented the progress of the grant by collecting information via digital video

Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY

Sixth Grade Teacher (2003-2008)

- Implemented Reading and Writing Workshop as a comprehensive approach to teaching language arts
- Taught mathematics conceptually through *Connected Mathematics Program*
- Created a weekly newsletter and managed website as forms of home-school communication
- Integrated technology successfully into all content areas: SMART Board, Blackboard, iMovie, Inspiration, Web Quest, Internet Inquiry, PowerPoint, Word, Excel, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), *Decisions, Decisions*, and *Inspirer*

PUBLICATIONS

Mosley, M., Vetter, A., Burke, A., Tenore, B., & Zoch, M., & **Stevens, E.Y.** (in press). Four approaches of discourse analysis in literacy teacher education research. *Classroom Discourse*.

Stevens, E.Y. (2013). Web 2.0 reflective inquiry: A transformative literacy teacher education tool. *Journal of Adult & Adolescent Literacy*, 56(5), 368.

Stevens, E. Y., & Brown, R. (2011). Lessons learned from the Holocaust: Blogging to teach critical multicultural literacy. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 44(1), 31–51.

Stevens, E.Y. (2008). Book Review: *How to Write Your Life Story*. [Review of the book *How to Write Your Life Story*]. *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 18, 81-84.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Stevens, E.Y. (2013, December). The relationship discourse: Navigating local literacies within global atrocities. In B. Crandall (Chair), Lewis, E.C., Chandler-Olcott, K., Nieroda, J., Montero, M.K., *Ubuntu matters: Locating the “we” within literacy communities including Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)*. Literacy Research Association Annual Conference, Dallas, TX.

Stevens, E.Y. (2013, December). *Beginning literacy specialists’ helping discourse: “Helping teachers help kids.”* Literacy Research Association Annual Conference, Dallas, TX.

Stevens, E.Y. (2012, December). Studying to be literacy specialists: A critical discourse analysis. In K. Hinchman (Chair), Bunker, W.W., Marsh, J.P., Krauter, D.R., *Tinker, tailor, soldier, spy: Reading professionals’ identities through multiple lenses*. Literacy Research Association Annual Conference, San Diego, CA.

Stevens, E.Y. (2012, October). *Exploring literacy teacher identity*. New York State Reading Association Conference, Liverpool, NY.

Montero, M. K., Crandall, B., Mwambari, D., O’Toole, J., **Stevens, E.Y.**, & Watson, A. (2012). *From language experience approach to testimonial narratives: Listening to the voices of refugee youth*. Poster presented at the Celebrating Linguistic Diversity, Toronto, Canada.

Stevens, E.Y., & Hinchman, K.A. (2011, December). *One new literacy specialist’s identity: A critical discourse analysis*. Literacy Research Association Annual Conference, Jacksonville, FL.

Stevens, E.Y., Crosby, M., Reid, D.S., Bernard, E., & Brown, R. (2011, April). *Research in action: Connecting literacies and technology with 2.0 tools*. New York State Reading Association Annual Conference, Saratoga Springs, NY.

Mosley, M., Burke, A., **Stevens, E.Y.**, Tenore, B., Vetter, A., & Zoch, M. (2010, December). *Exploring methods of discourse analysis in literacy research*. National Reading Conference, Fort Worth, TX.

Crandall, B.R., **Stevens, E.Y.**, & Watson, A. (2010, April). *Using oral histories/life narratives research methods and narrative inquiry in educational contexts*. Central New York Conference on Public Scholarship in Graduate Education, Syracuse, NY.

Montero, K.M., Crandall, B.R., Mwambari, D., O’Toole, J., **Stevens, E.Y.**, & Watson, A. (2009, December). *Local literacies, global visions: Documenting SIFEs learning histories using oral history methodology*. National Reading Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Stevens, E.Y., & Brown, R. (2009, December). *How graduate literacy students construct meaning through weblogging about the Holocaust and its teaching*. National Reading Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Montero, K.M., Crandall, B.R., Mwambari, D., O'Toole, J., **Stevens, E.Y.** & Watson, A. (2009, April). *Listening to the voices of newcomers to Syracuse: Oral histories on immigration and education*. Syracuse University Showcase.

Years, E. (2002, March). *Student teachers supported by technology*. SITE International Conference, Nashville, TN.

Years, E. (2001, October). *Using technology in a third grade classroom*. PAC-TE Annual Conference, Hershey, PA.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Stevens, E.Y. (2013, October). *Reading aloud nonfiction texts with preschoolers*. Bernice M. Wright Child Development Laboratory School at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Stevens, E.Y., Carroll, V., & Rotondo, M. (2013, March). *Two birds with one stone: Making writing engaging with story Web 2.0 tools*. Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY.

Ewing, J., Luo, H., & **Stevens, E.Y.** (2012, October). *Doctoral studies in the School of Education: What are our doctoral students learning and not learning?* School of Education at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2012, March). *Developing your FPP portfolio*. School of Education at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2012, February). *Literacy and the classroom website*. Central New York Reading Council Annual Literacy Conference, DeWitt, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2012, January). *Enhancing literacy with technology*. J.T. Roberts PreK-8 School, Syracuse, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2011, March). *Word study in the writing workshop*. EDR 600: Writing and the Composing Process at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY.

Stevens, E.Y., & Gangloff, J.M. (2010, June). *Word study grades 1-4*. Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2010, June). *Word study in the writing workshop*. EDR 600: Writing and the Composing Processes at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2009, October). *Word study grades 1-4*. Fayetteville Elementary School, Fayetteville, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2009, March). *Web pages: Literacy and the classroom website*. Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY.

Stevens, E.Y. (2004-2008). *Strategies for a successful student*. Manlius Public Library, Manlius, NY.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY

Technology Inservice Instructor (2004-2006)

- Internet 411: Instructional Activities for the Internet
- Creating Web Pages with Our New Website
- iMovie: Lights, Camera, Action
- Exploring Science and Social Studies Software
- Using Kidspiration in Your Classroom

Curriculum Developer (2004-2005)

- Punctuation and Usage in Context
- Character Education
- Connected Mathematics Curriculum Mapping- grade 6
- Sixth Grade Social Studies Document Based Questions/Ancient Civilizations

NATIONAL SERVICE

Proposal Reviewer, National Reading Conference (2008-present)

Session Chair, 59th National Reading Conference (2009)

Vice-President, Central New York Reading Council (2013-present)

Treasurer, Central New York Reading Council (2009-2012)

Board Member, Central New York Reading Council (2008-present)

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Syracuse University

President of Student Organization of Literacy Educators and Researchers (2011-present)

Member of Student Organization of Literacy Educators and Researchers (2007-present)

Member of Promotion and Tenure Teaching Committee (2009-2010)

- Reviewed teaching material, observed classes, and evaluated teaching quality using School of Education criteria

Saint Bonaventure University

Member of National Alumni Association Board (2007-present)

Co-President of Syracuse Alumni Chapter (2012-present)

SHARE (Supporters Helping Admissions Recruiting Efforts) Bonas (2005-present)

- Participate in annual letter writing campaign to enhance student recruitment
- Participate in local recruitment efforts, Bonaventure Comes to You

PUBLIC SCHOOL SERVICE

Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY

Director of Natural Helper Program (2006-2008)

Leader of Newbery Committee Review Project (2004-2008)

Member of Mentor Program (2003-2008)

Co-Facilitator of Student Leadership Council (2005-2007)

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Educational Research Association

International Reading Association

Literacy Research Association (formerly National Reading Conference)

New York State Reading Association

Central New York Reading Council